

REPORTS

ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

Commission on Archives and History

Rev. Mik King, Chairperson

The Great Plains Annual Conference owns and maintains archival collections at two facilities and provides funding for two half-time archivists. Christy Hyman is director of the Nebraska United Methodist Historical Center/Archives at Nebraska Wesleyan University. Sara DeCaro is archivist of the Kansas United Methodist Archives at Baker University

The Kansas United Methodist Archives had a busy year. Approximately 45 cubic feet of records were received from the merger of the Topeka, Lincoln and Wichita conference offices, and another 16 cubic feet came to the archives after the closure of the Gove United Methodist Church. There were also 113 requests from researchers, mostly via email and telephone. At least six researchers visited the archives in person, including multiple visits from the staff of Lenexa UMC as they researched their church's anniversary. Well over 100 books on Methodist topics were added to the library catalog.

In addition to responding to requests from researchers, Kansas United Methodist Archivist Sara DeCaro added 9 cubic feet of processed records to Archon, the archives' searchable database of archival materials. A survey of the 45 cubic feet of records from the merger of offices and several finding aids were completed by intern Sarah St. John, and intern Anna Gordon arranged and described the records of Hyde Park United Methodist Church.

The Nebraska United Methodist Historical Center/Archives at Nebraska Wesleyan University has also had busy year. There have been over 118 phone requests and 51 by email. Processing and researching these requests takes up the bulk of the archivist's time. Additionally, there have been over 16 visitors. As Nebraska has had inclement weather this year there have been less visitors during the winter. August had the most. Archivist Christy Hyman has also scanned 15 images and has driven to different places in Nebraska to acquire boxes and records. Presently, there has been

Chad Anglemyer.

For providing advice and guidance regarding the investment of discretionary funds, the team along with CFA has an investment committee.

It remains the desire of the team to continue using the resources of Wespath Benefits and Investments for the investment of our discretionary funds until such time the Investment Committee deems it necessary to move the funds.

The following represents benefits and other programs managed and reviewed annually by the board:

- Health Insurance/Health Insurance Allowance

In 2018, the annual conference voted to continue the current health allowance system with an annual allowance of \$15,850 for every eligible clergy person serving three-quarter to full-time. The Pension and Health Benefits Team continued the Emergency Health Insurance Grant which provides up to \$15,000 in additional support to families who have seen their premiums exceed the annual health allowance of \$15,850.

We have received grant requests from families who are facing huge premium costs simply for a base-level bronze plan, not at the levels we had expected. In fact, for this year (2019) we have approved five grants so far for a total amount of \$52,324. This is a decrease from 2018, we are seeing a decline in the cost of premiums. Please note: these health insurance grants are still available to clergy, including those who might face large increases with mid-year 2019 changes in appointment.

While there are families who struggle to afford health insurance, we are also aware of many families who have come to rely upon their health allowance as a significant part of their compensation and from whom any move back to group health would create a different kind of financial hardship.

Considering all these factors, the team has decided to propose continuing the health allowance system in 2020, and to continue to offer the emergency health insurance grants to families struggling to afford their health premiums.

In the event we see coverage health coverage no longer being offered through healthcare.gov in either Kansas or Nebraska, the Pension and Health Benefits Team will request a special session of the annual conference to address the situation at that time.

- Past Service Rate (PSR)

The past service rate is a defined benefit based upon years of service through December 31, 1981. This is the rate received by those that have vested years of service in the Pre-82 Pension Plan.

The team set a projected goal of an annual increase of 2% or COLA which is reflected in the Comprehensive Funding Plan.

2019 PSR is \$791. An increase of 2% (\$16) for 2020 would bring the PSR up to \$807. Any increases to the annuity PSR shall be funded immediately in the year in which the increase occurs.

- Contingent Annuitant Percentage (CAP)

The CAP is the rate of pension that surviving spouses shall receive from the Pre-82 Pension Plan.

The current rate is 85% for the former Nebraska and Kansas East conferences, and 100% for the former Kansas West conference.

The team having set the goal of reviewing the rates annually, did review for the possibility of increasing to 100% for 2020. The current funding level in the Pre-82 Pension Plan will not allow for an increase at this time. The team will continue to review yearly with the possibility of moving the rate to 100% sometime in the future.

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14 cubic feet of boxes acquired, including baptismal and marriage records.

NWU is making some changes both in physical structure and in personnel structure. On a structural side, an egress hallway has been in development. This disrupted operations during the month of July for a bit. Hyman and her son as volunteers were required to move materials six feet out of the way. On the personnel side, NWU has a new president, Darrin Good, as Frank Ohls is stepping down. The new president is a STEM professor involved in healthcare initiatives and more.

Personnel Committee

MINIMUM COMPENSATION PROPOSAL

Rev. Craig Hauschild, Chair

Each year, the Personnel Committee is called upon to make a recommendation concerning where minimum compensation levels should be set for the coming year. We weigh cost of living adjustments, inflation rates, and the welfare of local churches and clergy.

Beginning January 1, 2020, it is the Personnel Committee’s recommendation for minimum cash compensation be raised by 2%.

A comparison chart is provided to see the financial result of the increase:

	2019	2020
Full Time Local Pastor	36,879	37,617
Associate Member	39,266	40,051
Provisional Member	41,653	42,486
Full Member	44,040	44,921

Board of Pension and Health Benefits

The Pension and Health Benefits Team currently has two laity positions and a retired clergy position open to meet the need of six laity, one retired clergy member and five active clergy members. Ex-officio members include the conference treasurer, Scott Brewer, conference benefits officer, Peggy Mihoover, and cabinet rep, Rev.

- Retirement Benefits/Funding Percentage/Use of Reserves

The Conference has an over-funded position in the Pre-82 Pension Plan and substantial pension reserves. In the past, the Team has used the over-funding and reserves to reduce the overall cost of the pension benefits to the local churches. The over-funding of the Pre-82 Pension Plan is used first with the pension reserves used as a backup if needed.

The over-funding in the Pre-82 Pension Plan has been used while maintaining a funding balance more than 120 %. The Team’s funding level for the Pre-82 Pension Plan is not to be reduced below 120 %.

Recommendation for the 2020 local church funding is as follows:

	2019	2020
CPP death and disability	3%	3%
CRSP defined contributions	3%	3%
CRSP defined benefit	2%	3%
Total	8%	9%

Full funding for the clergy pension plan and CPP is 15.2%. The difference between the amount the local church’s pay (9%) and the full-funding cost (15.2%) is subsidized by the conference board of pension and health benefits team.

Members serving 25%, the local churches will fund 10% into the members UMPIP account. The 2% balance required to meet the full funding level of 12% will be funded from the Pre-82 Pension Plan over-funding, and then out of the pension reserves, if needed.

- Funding Percentage

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The Team's funding level for the Pre-82 Pension Plan is not to be reduced below 120%.

- Special Pension Grants

Currently we have two dependent children receiving a grant.

- Incapacity Leave Health Care Allowance

Effective January 1, 2017, those receiving CPP medical leave benefits will receive a health care allowance with the following schedule:

- o First 24 months-the health care allowance will be \$14,232 annually.
- o After the first 24 months payments-the Clergy person will receive \$300 monthly, along with \$300 monthly for the spouse (three-year term) and \$300 monthly for dependents until the age of 26 (three-year term). After the completion of three years, the allowance will be discontinued for the spouse and any eligible dependents.

- Comprehensive Protection Plan (CPP)

Effective January 1, 2017, eligibility is as follows:

- o All three-quarter time ordained, student local pastors and local pastors will be covered by the CPP. Costs to the local church are 3% of plan compensation.
- o Ordained clergy members serving one-half time will receive benefits through UMLife Options with the actual cost being paid by the local church.

- Virgin Pulse Health Miles

This program is available to active clergypersons serving three-quarter time or more along with the spouse, retired clergypersons/spouse, and the conference lay staff/spouse. The participant can earn actual dollars by completing their activity goals.

- Short-term Disability

Short-term disability funding is available to assist member churches in the event a full-time or part-time (half-time or more) clergy or District Superintendent Assignment (DSA) is unable to perform the duties of their appointment due to a documented medical disability when the period of the clergy or DSA's absence exceeds 30 days but is anticipated to be less than 180 days.

A statement from the treating physician with the estimated duration of absence is required. The local church is required to submit monthly statements to the conference benefits officer that documents the name of the interim pastor, dates interim pastor served in some capacity and amounts paid.

- Retiree Health Insurance

The conference partners with Via Benefits through Wespath Benefits and Investments for Retiree Health Insurance. Via Benefits is an exchange that will assist each retiree in selecting the private Medicare plan that best meets their medical needs and budget.

Nebraska retirees retiring through December 31, 2019, that meet the eligibility requirements will receive a health reimbursement account (HRA) providing they use Via Benefits in securing their coverage. The coverage must continue through Via Benefits to be eligible for the HRA. Securing coverage outside Via Benefits will cancel the HRA and it can't be reinstated.

A Retiree Health Valuation is required by Wespath Benefits and Investments every two years.

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- Farmer Fund Emergency Grants

A request for assistance from the Farmer Fund Grant is made through the board on an application form provided by Wespeth Benefits and Investments. Distressed clergy members or former clergy members of the annual conference, their spouses, former spouses, former surviving spouses or surviving dependent children (including adult dependent children) are eligible to apply for a grant. An application for benefits requires the member to substantiate financial resources by completing the income and expenditures statement. Maximum available through the grant is \$4,000. The clergy member can only receive one Farmer Fund Grant per calendar year and must have no less than an ACA Bronze Healthcare Plan.

A statement of approval/acknowledgement of circumstances is required by the District Superintendent.

Written guidelines and applications are available from the benefits department.

- Crouse Fund Grants

Crouse Fund Grants are submitted to the cabinet by the district superintendent (DS) for approval once the DS has determined the need. Funds can only be used for critical/emergency needs for which the Farmer Fund is unable to provide a grant. Maximum available through the grant is \$3,000.

Written guidelines are available from the benefits department.

- Use of Reserves

Upon a request from the mission alignment team, the team continues to draw 5% of pension-designated reserves to help pay for Conference Staff benefits.

The team established a 5% fund spending of the pension reserves to be utilized to offset conference staff benefit cost, with health insurance benefits coming from the share of unrestricted funds.

- Life Insurance

We continue to offer affordable voluntary life insurance. This benefit is available to clergy members and conference lay staff members who work at least 30 hours per week. The benefits can be portable when employees terminate.

- Vision and Dental

We continue to offer affordable vision and dental insurance. This benefit is available to clergy members and conference lay staff members who work at least 30 hours per week. These benefits are optional coverage and the costs are to be paid by the participant on a pre-tax basis.

- Critical Illness and Accident

These optional benefit coverages are available for clergy members and conference lay staff members who work at least 30 hours per week.

- Lockton Consultant Services

The board continues a contractual relationship with Lockton. As our broker, we are provided updates/reporting requirements related to the Affordable Care Act (ACA). Lockton also conducts the bidding processes on all benefits made available to conference members and staff. Lockton provides a variety of training webcasts and meetings at no cost.

- 2020 Comprehensive Funding Plan

The board is required to submit a comprehensive funding plan each year to Wespath Benefits and Investments. Wespath Opinion on Great Plains Conference 2020 Comprehensive Benefit Funding Plan.

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The funding plan meets the standards for a Pre-82 funding plan as established by Wespeth Benefits and Investments and the favorable opinion requirements for a funding plan. Note: The statement above and any written opinion provided by Wespeth do not imply any representation as to the ability or probability of the applicable plan sponsor to fulfill the obligations included in the funding plan.

- Housing Resolution

To meet Federal Guidelines, an annual housing resolution must be approved at annual conference and printed in the journal.

Resolution on Rental/Housing/Household Expense Allowance, in accordance with Federal Guidelines for clergy housing, the following resolution is recommended.

WHEREAS, the religious denomination known as The United Methodist Church (the church), of which this conference is a part, has in the past functioned and continues to function through ministers of the gospel (within the meaning of Internal Revenue Code section 107) who were or are duly ordained, commissioned, or licensed ministers of the church (Clergypersons);

WHEREAS, the practice of the church and of this conference was and is to provide active clergypersons with a parsonage or a rental/housing allowance as part of their gross compensation;

WHEREAS, pensions or other amounts paid to active, retired, terminated, and disabled clergypersons are considered deferred compensation and are paid to active, retired, terminated, and disabled clergypersons in consideration of previous active service; and

WHEREAS, the Internal Revenue Service has recognized the Conference (or its predecessors) as an appropriate organization to designate a rental/housing allowance for clergypersons who are or were members of this conference and are eligible to receive such deferred compensation;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED:

THAT an amount equal to 100% of the pension, severance or disability payments received from plans authorized under The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist (the Discipline), which includes all such payments from Wespeth Benefits and Investments, during the period January 1, 2019, through December 31, 2019, by each active, retired, terminated, or disabled Clergy person who is or was a member of the Conference, or its predecessors, be and hereby is designated as a rental/housing allowance for each such clergy person; and

THAT the pension, severance, or disability payments to which this rental/housing allowance designation applies will be any pension, severance, or disability payments from plan, annuities, of funds authorized under the Discipline, including such payments from Wespeth Benefits and Investments and from a commercial annuity company that provides an annuity arising from benefits accrued under a Wespeth Benefits and Investments plan, annuity, or fund authorized under the Discipline, that result from any service a clergy person rendered to this conference or that an active, a retired, a terminated or a disabled clergy person of this conference rendered to any local church, annual conference of the Church contributions to or accrue a benefit under, such a plan, annuity, or fund for such an active, a retired, a terminated, or a disabled clergy person's pension, severance, or disability plan benefit as part of his or her gross compensation.

Note: The rental/housing allowance that may be excluded from a clergy person's gross income in any year for federal (and, in most cases, state) income tax purposes is limited under Internal Revenue Code section 107(2), and regulation thereunder, to the least of: (a) the amount of the rental/housing allowance designated by the clergy person's employer or other appropriate body of the church (such as this conference in the foregoing resolutions) for such year; (b) the amount actually expended by the clergy person to rent or provide a home in such year; or (c) the fair rental value of the home, including furnishings and appurtenances (such as a garage), plus the cost of utilities in such year. Each clergy person or former clergy person is urged to consult with his or her own tax advisor to determine what deferred compensation is eligible to be claimed as

a housing allowance exclusion.

Council on Finance & Administration Policies

1. Central Treasury

The Great Plains United Methodist Conference (conference) shall operate a central treasury under the direction and supervision of the conference treasurer in accordance with the policies and procedures of The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church, the conference and its Council on Finance & Administration (CFA). The funds of all boards, councils, committees and task forces of the conference (hereinafter called agencies or individual agency) as well as districts and related corporations and their units shall be held in the central treasury, unless otherwise authorized by the CFA.

The conference treasurer shall be the custodian of all Mission Share (apportionment) funds, non-budgeted funds, special offerings and other designated funds. The conference treasurer shall make accounting of all receipts and disbursements in accordance with The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church, and the policies and procedures approved by the CFA.

The conference designates the treasurer and controller as authorized signers for all checks and other disbursements. Permission is given for a local signer on all “petty” cash accounts related to district offices, camps, campus ministries, and new church starts for which the conference is managing the accounting.

Donor restricted funds given to the Kansas East, Kansas West and Nebraska conferences are respected as to both purpose and geography as assets were combined into the conference. Unrestricted funds given to the former three conferences were combined for the benefit of the conference as a whole.

2. Fiscal Year

The fiscal year of the conference shall be January 1 to December 31. All local church remittances that are postmarked within five business days of January 1, will be credited to the immediately preceding fiscal year, unless otherwise designated by the church. All remittances by local churches postmarked and received after that date shall be credited to the next fiscal year, regardless of fiscal year designation. Any variance to this deadline, due to extraordinary circumstances, will be at the discretion of the conference treasurer.

3. Mission Share (Apportionment) Formula

The mission share formula for the conference will be based upon a percentage of each church's total operating income, with total operating income to be equal to the amount reported by each local church as the "total income for annual budget/spending plan" on Table 3 of the Local Church Report to the Annual Conference (annual statistical report). The conference will use 10% of this amount as the mission share formula for the base budget.

4. Mission Agency Support

Each local church in the conference will be asked to contribute 1 % of its total operating income to the mission work of key partner agencies. This amount is over and above the mission share tithe. These agencies are separately incorporated and have a historic missional tie to the work of the conference. In each budget, the list may be adjusted by action of the annual conference. The CFA will recommend a list each year. Money given to Mission Agency Support will be divided proportionately among the agencies listed in the budget section.

5. General Church Special Sunday Offerings

Human Relations Day – January 19, 2019
UMCOR Sunday - March 31, 2019
Native American Ministries Sunday – May 5, 2019
Peace with Justice Sunday – June 16, 2019
World Communion Sunday – October 6, 2019
United Methodist Student Day – November 24, 2019

6. Conference Advance (Specials)

The Great Plains United Methodist Conference Advance list is recommended each year by the Mercy & Justice Team for approval by the annual conference. All ministries on this list have the privilege of approaching the churches of the conference to raise funds in support of their efforts. The full list of approved conference advances shall be published each year as a report to the annual conference.

7. Special Appeals

No agency, institution or organization beyond those in the Mission Agency Support or conference advance lists shall make a special conference-wide appeal to the local church for funds without the approval of the annual conference session, upon recommendation

of the CFA. In case of extreme emergency, approval may be given by the Connecting Council upon recommendation of the CFA.

8. Annual Conference Budget Process

The conference budget is to be developed in the following manner:

a. In the fall, a letter will be sent out to all boards and agencies advising them of the process for submitting budget requests and direction regarding budget building. Boards and agencies shall submit their budget request according to the prescribed process to the conference treasurer no later than January 31.

b. As soon as practicable after the completed reporting of the local church statistics, CFA shall project the income of the conference based on the current mission formula, the expected income from the Budget Reserve Fund, the expected income from the Missional Opportunity Fund and the allowance for unpaid mission shares. The projected income shall be provided to the Mission Alignment Team.

c. The Mission Alignment Team (as selected by the Connecting Council) shall study the budget requests, consult with the agencies of the conference, and recommend to the CFA the total sums they recommend for the respective groups.

d. The CFA shall examine the work of the Mission Alignment Team and bring a recommendation to the Connecting Council and the annual conference of a budget that includes the full amount apportioned to the conference for the several general funds authorized by the General Conference, and that amount shall be apportioned to the churches (The Book of Discipline, ¶613.3).

9. Budget Administration

a. Meeting expense reimbursement:

i. The mileage rate for conference and district board, agency and council meetings shall be 40% of the standard rate established by the Internal Revenue Service for business expense. Clergy and lay participants in such meetings shall submit expenses for reimbursement through the conference, not through their local church. For the sake of both economic and environmental stewardship, the conference encourages carpooling and video venue usage with this policy.

ii. Dependant (child and/or adult) care reimbursement to people attending approved meetings is \$5 per hour for one dependant,

\$8 per hour for two dependants, and \$10 per hour for three or more dependants. The total shall not exceed \$50 per day for one participant.

iii. Lodging may be reimbursed at actual expense if attendance at such meetings requires an overnight stay due to distance traveled. Lodging will be arranged for by leadership of such conference or district boards. Shared rooms will be expected when appropriate.

iv. Meals may be reimbursed if attendance at such meetings requires an overnight stay due to distance traveled. Meals will be arranged for by leadership of such conference or district boards. Reimbursement to participants will be at \$24 per day with that amount prorated for partial day, based on the length of meetings and the travel required.

v. At or immediately following the close of any fiscal year, the CFA shall have the authority to pay any remaining General Church and South Central Jurisdiction mission shares from available cash.

b. Before disbursal, all grants to churches, organizations and individuals shall either:

i. be specifically approved by an established and approved conference structure or

ii. be in accordance with grant-making processes and policies established by an established and approved conference structure. All grant-making policies shall be reported to CFA and subject to its review.

c. From time to time, it is necessary for the conference to purchase goods or services or make other financial commitments such as borrowing funds or entering lease agreements. For purposes of determining the dollar amount of commitments subject to this policy, the amount of commitment shall be the total of all payments to be made under the verbal or written agreement.

Before making purchase or other financial commitments all such commitments that exceed \$5,000 shall require the approval of one of the following: Director of Clergy Excellence, Director of Congregational Excellence, or Conference Treasurer (For example, a 48 month software licensing requiring annual payments of \$4,000 would require the approval of one of the three persons

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noted above, as the total payments to be made under the agreement, \$16,000, exceed the \$5,000 threshold noted above.)

In addition, any such commitments that exceed \$50,000 shall also require the approval of the Council on Finance and Administration. (For example, a 48 month software licensing requiring annual payments of \$20,000 would also require the approval of CFA, as the total payments to be made under the agreement, \$80,000, exceed the \$50,000 threshold noted above.)

In applying this policy, note that the approval or approvals required must be obtained prior to signing contracts, purchase orders, loan or lease agreements, or other documents that commit the Conference to purchase goods or services, borrow funds, or lease equipment or other assets.

The following transactions are exempt from the approval requirements for financial commitments described in the paragraph above:

- i. Employee compensation payments contemplated in the conference's annual budget
- ii. Payroll and other taxes levied by federal, state or local governments
- iii. Payments to local churches, the General Church and Jurisdictional Conference
- iv. Commitments in connection with clergy and employee benefit plans

d. All available funds remaining in the conference budget shall be transferred to conference reserves. Notwithstanding the forgoing sentence, those available funds remaining in the accounts of the three related corporations: New Church Development, Inc., United Methodist Campus Ministry, Inc. and United Methodist Camps, Inc., as well as accounts for the work of the Board of Trustees related to property management, and Missional Opportunities shall not be so transferred.

e. In certain limited circumstances, the conference will account for carryover funds, monies unused during a financial year which are transferred to an individual budget for the following year. Only under the following circumstances will carryover funds be accounted for:

- i. Self-supporting ministries or events for which no Mission Shares are provided.
- ii. Shared ministries with ecumenical partners of other denominations.
- iii. Expenses related to General and Jurisdictional Conferences
- iv. Funds allocated for large capital expenditures by the Conference Board of Trustees
- v. Ministries or events of the conference funded all or in part by grants from external entities
- vi. The Missional Opportunities Fund

f. Spending of Permanently Endowed Funds

Based upon the funded status of endowed funds as of January 1 of the current year, conference groups authorized to expend such funds shall abide by the following policies:

- i. If the account of a permanently endowed fund is funded at more than 110% of corpus then the appropriate committee can spend any amount of accumulated earnings in any given year.
- ii. If the account of a permanently endowed fund is between 100-110% of corpus then the appropriate committee can spend 5% of corpus in any given year.
- iii. If the account of a permanently endowed fund is between 95-100% of corpus then the appropriate committee can spend 3 percent of corpus in any given year limited to not allowing the account to drop below 95% funded.
- iv. If the account of a permanently endowed fund is at or below 95% of corpus then the appropriate committee cannot make any draws until the account rises above 95% funded status.

g. Conference Reserves

The Conference maintains reserves as described below:

Pension Reserve Fund

The conference has designated a Pension Reserve Fund in the amount of \$10,000,000. This fund is restricted by the annual conference and is to be administered by the CFA. This fund is to provide additional protection against stock market downturns for the purpose of meeting potential pension obligations. Each year as part of the budget process, the Treasurer will calculate the 36 month average of the Fund and CFA will determine and apply a percentage not greater than 5% to that average to be

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designated as an income source to support for the next budget year. It shall be withdrawn from the Pension Reserve Fund during the budget year as directed by the conference treasurer.

Missional Opportunities Reserve Fund

The conference has designated a Missional Opportunities Reserve Fund in the amount of \$3,000,000. Each year CFA may designate an amount up to 5% of the Missional Opportunities Reserve Fund to be available to the conference for missional opportunities according to policies set up by the Connecting Council. Any team of the conference, including the Extended Cabinet or Appointive Cabinet, can request money from the Missional Opportunities Fund for any conference-wide strategic purpose or one that implements or strengthens one of the conference's missional priorities.

General Reserve Fund

The remaining balance of conference reserves are for support of the conference budget. Each year as part of the budget process, the treasurer will calculate the 36 month average of the fund and CFA will determine and apply a percentage not greater than 5% to that average to be designated as an income source for the next budget year. It shall be withdrawn from the General Reserve Fund during the budget year as directed by the conference treasurer. The CFA may also designate a special distribution of the fund if its earnings make that prudent and possible. The CFA shall consult with the Investment Committee before making the recommendations contained in this paragraph.

The General Reserve provides for cash flow needs of the conference and shall be used at the direction of the CFA. The goal of the General Reserve shall be to maintain an annual balance of no less than 10% not to exceed 20% of the conference budget. General Reserve balance above 20% at the end of the fiscal year shall be reported to the Connecting Council.

h. Non-Budget Fund Accounts

The conference treasurer may receive and disburse funds for designated purposes, separate from the conference budget. Such funds shall be listed as "Non-Budget Fund Accounts." All

Non-Budget Fund Accounts must be sponsored by an agency of the Conference.

i. Income from money held in Non-Budget Fund Accounts may be credited to the respective account as determined by the CFA.

ii. When an unrestricted Non-Budget Fund Account has been terminated, or has been inactive for a period of one year, the balance shall be transferred to the conference reserve, unless otherwise determined by the CFA.

Investments Policy

Investments of the conference funds shall be made by the conference treasurer, under the direction of the Conference Investment Committee under the policies and procedures for all investment transactions and balances as described below.

1. Purpose

The purpose of the Great Plains United Methodist Conference Investment Policy is to provide governance and oversight to the Investment Committee of the conference with the intent to facilitate and not hinder conference committees, commissions, institutions and agencies in the execution of their duties related to their investment portfolios and in the use of their funds.

In recognition of fiduciary responsibilities and the mandate of The Book of Discipline (§ 613.5), the CFA has approved this Investment Policy governing the Investment Committee of the Conference. This Investment Policy shall comply with the policies related to Conflict of Interest and Investment Management of Annual Conference Pension and Pension Related Funds under § 1508 of the 2012 Book of Discipline.

2. Delineation of Responsibilities

Under The Book of Discipline (§ 612.1), the purpose of the CFA shall be to develop, maintain, and administer a comprehensive and coordinated plan of fiscal and administrative policies, procedures, and management services for the annual conference. The CFA is responsible for establishing principles, policies, standards and guidelines for the investment of all monies, assets and properties of the conference. The CFA is responsible for the financial integrity and oversight of the financial resources of the conference.

By this Investment Policy, the CFA delegates, to the extent provided, to the Investment Committee the management and operations of

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the conference's investment assets, which are made subject to this Investment Policy. Under this Investment Policy, the conference's investment assets are comprised of funds under the responsibility of the CFA, the Board of Trustees (BOT), the Council on New Church Development (CNCD) and the Board of Pension and Health Benefits (BOPHB), except for funds within the conference pension plans. The Investment Committee shall establish investment objectives for the conference funds under the responsibility of the CFA, BOT, CNCD, and BOPHB, except for funds within the conference pension plans, so as not to hinder the stewardship of their respective conference funds as required by the United Methodist Book of Discipline or conference policies and procedures.

The Investment Committee shall be fully accountable to the CFA. The CFA shall review the Investment Policy and the work of the Investment Committee, as needed, to determine the effectiveness of and the overall results of the investments.

The Investment Committee shall:

- a. Define and develop investment goals and operational guidelines;
- b. Select and discharge Investment Managers, and carry out any other duties required for the legal operation of the Investment Committee, including but not limited to hiring outside vendors to perform various services;
- c. Monitor and evaluate the performance results and risk posture of the investment manager(s) to insure they are striving to achieve the investment goals and objectives as formalized by the Investment Committee.
- d. Provide annual written accounts of the investment results, accounting summary and any significant developments to the CFA, BOT, CNCD and BOPHB and to the conference at its annual meeting;
- e. Provide annual written evaluation of the performance of the Investment Managers to the CFA, BOT, CNCD and BOPHB;
- f. Require all portfolios be managed with the aim of optimizing funds available for mission in a manner consistent with the maximization of total return (consistent with the preservation of capital), the Social Principles of The United Methodist Church and shall fully comply with the United Methodist Book of Discipline;

- g. Establish and maintain effective communication procedures between the Investment Committee and the CFA, BOT, CNCD, BOPHB, staff and outside service providers;
- h. Monitor and control investment expenses; and
- i. Report to the CFA any significant deviations from this policy for prior written approval before they are implemented.

The Investment Committee may delegate the execution and administration of certain Investment Committee responsibilities as appropriate to the conference treasurer who serves as its staff;

3. Fiduciary Responsibility

Persons that are charged with investing funds have a fiduciary responsibility for those funds. Fiduciary responsibility requires those responsible for investments to fulfill the legally imposed duties of loyalty, care and prudence. The members of the investment Committee are fiduciaries subject to the rules and laws governing fiduciary behavior.

The Duty of Loyalty prohibits self-dealing by persons who are fiduciaries. They are not permitted to take part in investment decisions that would create a conflict of interest. All investment decisions are to be made with a view to the interest of the beneficiaries, in this case the various agencies, committees, boards and councils of the Conference providing funds for investment, rather than to the personal interests of the fiduciary. When conflicts do arise, they should be disclosed to the chairperson of the Investment Committee (or if a conflict of interest involves the chairperson, then to the conference treasurer) immediately. Advance disclosure in writing will provide evidence of the disclosure in the event the issue of conflict of interest is raised. Any fiduciary with a conflict involving an investment decision should abstain from any participation in that decision and document the abstention in the minutes of the meeting.

The Duty of Care requires that a fiduciary act at all times in good faith and in a manner which is in the best interest of the beneficiaries. Fiduciaries are to be adequately informed about alternatives available at the time of decision. Where specific instructions are left regarding legacies, those instructions must be followed unless changed by court order. The duty of care includes prudence in the investment context (including diligence in attending meetings), efforts to ascertain relevant information prior to decision making, balanced judgment,

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adequate assessment and balancing of potential investment risks and returns and adequate diversification of investments.

Fiduciary responsibility cannot be delegated. The decision of the Investment Committee to engage Investment Manager(s) will not absolve the Investment Committee from its ultimate responsibility for the care of the funds. In order to discharge adequately the duties of care and loyalty, the fiduciary will need to demonstrate that appropriate procedures were used for selecting the Investment Manager(s) and for monitoring the results of the advice received. The Investment Manager(s) should be trustworthy and competent to perform the work as outlined by the Investment Committee. The loyalties of the Investment Managers(s) must run to the beneficiaries, not to the individual members of the Investment Committee.

Fiduciaries are permitted to accept and rely on the advice of an Investment Manager where they can demonstrate that their initial decision to engage the Investment Manager was well-founded and where subsequent development do not give rise to a basis for suspending that reliance.

The standard of care when making decisions is the Prudent Expert Standard, defined as:

“... the care, skill, prudence and diligence under the circumstances then prevailing that a prudent person acting in a like capacity and familiar with such matters would use in the conduct of an enterprise of a like character and with like aims.”

4. Members of the Investment Committee

The Investment Committee shall be comprised of nine voting members, who shall be appointed by their respective councils, boards, and committees, as follows:

- a. Four representatives from the CFA,
- b. Three representatives from the BOPHB,
- c. One representative from the BOT,
- d. One representative from the CNCD.

Conference staff may attend Investment Committee meetings with voice, but without voting rights, on Investment Committee matters.

The Investment Committee members shall be appointed annually by their respective councils, boards and committees. For purposes of consistency, it is desired that the Investment Committee members will serve multiple years, but not to extend past their terms on their

respective councils, board and committees. The Investment Committee, from among its voting members, shall annually elect the chairperson and other officers as deemed necessary. The officers as so elected shall perform the duties traditionally handled by officers with those titles.

The Investment Committee may appoint subcommittees and taskforces to prepare recommendations and review particular issues. These subgroups will not have the authority to act, but shall be information gathering and reporting groups.

5. Investment of Pooled Funds

To the extent possible, funds from individual boards, agencies, councils and committees from within the conference shall be pooled for the purposes of investment. Investors in a pooled fund investment will benefit from economies of scale, which allow for lower trading costs, diversification and management. The pooled fund investors will proportionally share costs, capital gains and losses and earnings. The determination of the funds to be pooled shall be done in consultation with the conference treasurer. Proper accounting and reporting procedures will be established and used to keep accurate records for the purpose of proportional distribution.

6. Time Horizon

The time horizon for investments shall be based on the liquidity needs of each conference account as specified by the conference treasurer. Capital values fluctuate over shorter periods and the Investment Committee recognizes that the possibility of capital loss does exist. However, historical asset class return data suggest that the risk of principal loss over a holding period of at least three to five years can be minimized with a long-term investment mix.

7. Risk Tolerance

The Investment Committee intends that the investment portfolio should be managed in a manner that seeks to achieve the stated rate of return while limiting principal fluctuations over the established horizon for each conference account. Financial research has demonstrated that risk is best minimized through diversification of assets, except in very limited circumstances when diversification may not be prudent. The Investment Committee would present a documented finding as to the nature of such circumstances before limiting diversification.

8. Asset Allocation

The purpose of allocating among asset classes is to insure the proper level of diversification and risk for each investment portfolio. The primary considerations in the asset allocation decision process are:

- a. maintaining inflation-adjusted purchasing power;
- b. growing the corpus of the funds to meet future obligations;
- c. achieving a minimum return in excess of inflation but with minimal annual fluctuations in the corpus;
- d. satisfying the cash liquidity needs of short-term obligations; and,
- e. maintaining the longevity of the assets and their distributions while taking into consideration that there may be no additional contributions.

When mutual funds, commingled funds, ETFs and funds in general are used as an investment vehicle, then it is understood the Investment Committee has adopted the investment policies of those funds. With the adoption of this Investment Policy, the conference establishes the funds into which it allocates its assets as set forth on Appendix A.

9. Investment Performance Benchmarks

The investment performance of all portfolios will be measured against commonly accepted performance benchmarks. Consideration shall be given to the extent to which the investment results are consistent with the investment objectives and guidelines as set forth in this Investment Policy.

10. Investment Manager(s)

An Investment Manager must be knowledgeable and experienced in the prudent investment process, so that they may assist the Investment Committee in reaching investment objectives effectively. Investment Managers shall be selected through a process to achieve the desired investment objectives as stated in this Investment Policy. The Investment Committee may engage one or more Investment Managers from the following categories:

- a. A United Methodist institution;
- b. An independent Investment Manager who receives a fee based on portfolio value;
- c. A bank trust department (not all bank trust departments can offer this service) whose fees may be based on portfolio value. The fees usually vary widely depending on the services needed and are based on a percentage of the managed assets, depending on the type of account, types of assets managed, and market value of the portfolio.

Deciding when to replace a portfolio manager is often subjective as much as objective, however it is a decision that the Investment Com-

mittee will be responsible for and will make when deemed necessary.

11. Responsibilities of Investment Managers

Each Investment Manager will have discretion to make all investment decisions for the assets placed under its jurisdiction, while observing the operating within the guidelines, constraints and philosophies as outlined in this Investment Policy. Specific responsibilities of the Investment Managers include:

- a. Exercising discretionary investment management, including decisions to buy, sell or retain individual securities and to alter asset allocations within the guidelines established by this Investment Policy;
- b. Reporting on a timely basis, quarterly investment performance results in adherence to the Global Investment Performance Standard (GIPS) net of all external and internal fees, as governed by the CFA Institute;
- c. Communicating any major changes to the economic outlook, investment strategy or the investment objective progress of the funds' investment management;
- d. Informing the Investment Committee regarding any qualitative change to the investment management organization, e.g., changes in portfolio investment management personnel, ownership structure, investment philosophy, etc.; and,
- e. Voting proxies, if and as requested by the Investment Committee, and communicating such voting records to the Investment Committee on a timely basis.

12. Rebalancing

Changes in the mix of assets or assignment of assets to different Investment Managers shall be made by action of the Investment Committee at a regular or called meeting with the advice and consultation of the Investment Manager(s). The Investment Committee shall undertake to maintain its desired asset allocation within 5% of the determined mix for any particular assets, except under unusual market conditions.

13. Socially Responsible Investment Guidelines

The Investment Committee shall pursue intentional investment decisions that further the principles of economic and social justice consistent with the goals outlined in the 2012 Book of Discipline and Social Principles of The United Methodist Church.

The Book of Discipline (§717) states: "Sustainable and Socially Responsible Investments, In the investment of money, it shall be the policy of The United Methodist Church that all general boards and agencies, including the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits

and all administrative agencies and institutions, including hospitals, homes, educational institutions, annual conferences, foundations and local churches, make a conscious effort to invest in institutions, companies, corporations or funds with policies and practices that are socially responsible, consistent with the goals outlined in the Social Principles. All United Methodist institutions shall endeavor to seek investments in institutions, companies, corporations or funds that promote racial and gender justice, protect human rights, prevent the use of sweatshop or forced labor, avoid human suffering and preserve the natural world, including mitigating the effects of climate change. In addition, United Methodist institutions shall endeavor to avoid investments in companies engaged in core business activities that are not aligned with the Social Principles through their direct or indirect involvement with the production of anti-personnel weapons and armaments (both nuclear and conventional weapons), alcoholic beverages or tobacco; or that are involved in privately operated correctional facilities, gambling, pornography or other forms of exploitative adult entertainment. The boards and agencies are to give careful consideration to environmental, social, and governance factors when making investment decisions and actively exercise their responsibility as owners of the companies in which they invest. This includes engaging with companies to create positive change and hold them accountable for their actions, while also considering exclusion if companies fail to act responsibly.”

14. Records

The Investment Committee shall keep a proper and prudent record of all-important documents, meeting minutes and other information relating to the management of the Funds. They shall be available at Custodian of the Records, which shall be the conference treasurer.

15. Amendments and Revisions

Amendments or changes to this Investment Policy shall be made to and approved by the CFA and incorporated directly into the policy as a revision and restatement or acknowledged and noted in an addendum until such time as the Investment Policy is revised and restated. The committee may amend Appendix A from time to time upon approval of CFA. Following each such amendment the committee shall replace the respective with one that reflects the amendment approved by CFA.

Surety Bond

The conference shall obtain adequate bond coverage for the Conference Treasurer and staff. Local churches shall provide adequate

bonding of their treasurer(s). The Conference provides bonding for local church treasurers and others handling money only to those congregations that have obtained property and liability insurance through the Great Plains Property and Liability Insurance Group. Congregations not participating in this program are responsible for obtaining adequate bonding.

Annual Audit of Conference Treasury

An annual audit of all conference financial records shall be conducted by an independent certified public accountant as selected by the CFA upon recommendation of its Audit Review Committee. The Audit Review Committee will review such audit and present it to the CFA for final approval. The entire audit report shall be included in the Conference Journal.

Audits of Boards, Agencies and Institutions

The CFA has a fiduciary responsibility to the conference in administering conference funds. Therefore, the CFA is required to review the financial statements of organizations to which grants or contributions of conference funds are made. The CFA shall appoint an audit committee that will have on its membership at least one member of the CFA plus additional members recruited for their expertise. This committee shall work with the auditor of the conference as well as review audits, reviews, and compilation reports of boards, agencies and institutions as described below.

Reports from an independent Certified Public Accountant are required annually from each agency or institution that receives funds from the conference treasury in accordance with the requirements listed below. Funds shall not be transferred to any agency or institution that has not forwarded its annual audit, review or compilation report for the preceding year within six months' time after the close of its fiscal year, (The Book of Discipline, ¶1617). Agencies of the conference using the conference central treasury for all their financial activity shall be included in the conference audit and are not required to submit separate audit reports.

In addition to audit and financial reports submitted to the conference, organizations receiving conference funds shall also provide to the conference a copy of all other required communications received from the external auditor. These communications may include, among other items, comments regarding any significant deficiencies in the design or the operation of the organization's internal controls.

2019 JOURNAL**Reports****1. Audit, Review and Compilation Report Requirements:**

Each agency or organization that has annual gross receipts of \$500,000 or more shall submit a copy of its audited financial statements, together with any required communications from its external auditor and management letter (if applicable).

Each agency or organization that has annual gross receipts of between \$250,000 and \$499,999 is required to submit a copy of its financial statements together with a review report from a CPA.

Agencies and organizations with annual gross receipts of less than \$250,000 must submit financial statements accompanied by a compilation report from a CPA with a CPA review required every third year.

Agencies and organizations with annual gross receipts below \$500,000 may request a variance from the requirements listed above. Any variance granted is valid for the current reporting year only. A variance from these requirements shall not be granted for more than two consecutive years. The organization granted the variance shall submit the following information:

- a. Financial statements. The agency shall submit financial statements that reflect its financial position and results of operations for the fiscal year then ended.
- b. Tax statements. The agency shall provide documentation stating that all necessary tax returns (including payroll tax returns) have been filed in a timely manner. Documentation shall also be required regarding the status of any unpaid taxes to federal, state or local authorities as of the date of the request.

2. Other Circumstances:

Grants or contributions of conference funds to organizations not meeting the above requirements shall not be made without special approval. Special approval shall require a favorable vote of at least two thirds of the members of the CFA present and voting.

Mortgage Indebtedness

Any institution/agency whose board is elected by the conference, and that has mortgage indebtedness, shall provide an annual report to the conference showing the:

1. Total indebtedness
2. Amount paid on indebtedness last year
3. Plans to retire the indebtedness

If any such institution/agency plans to mortgage assets or to pledge endowment funds or to transfer funds from endowments to operating budgets and total indebtedness exceeds 10 percent of total assets or one million dollars, whichever is less, that mortgage must be approved by the conference prior to the transaction, or in an emergency between sessions of the conference, by a joint session of the conference cabinet and the CFA.

Protection of Contact Information

Contact information for clergy, churches and laity held by the conference is for the use and benefit of the conference. Councils, boards, and agencies of the conference, conference and jurisdictional Advances, local churches and districts, and agencies of the General Church may request contact information. Except as provided below, contact information held by the conference, or provided to its respective agencies and institutions by the conference, shall be considered confidential as to outside parties and shall not be provided to any person, group or business beyond those for whom the contact information was compiled, without the written approval of the CFA.

Contact information for clergy, churches, lay members of annual conference, and laity serving in conference or district leadership is printed in the Conference Journal. Directory information placed on the conference website is limited to churches, clergy's business contact information, and a few specific lay leadership positions. Information is not provided in a downloadable list.

Local Church Report to The Annual Conference (Tables 1, 2 & 3)

The local church shall electronically submit the Local Church Report to annual conference no later than 5 p.m. on the last business day of January each year.

If a report is not received by the due date:

1. The only figures that will be reported will be prior year membership and benevolences sent to the conference treasurer.
2. When calculating the church's Mission Share, 10 percent shall be added to the prior year's operating income.
3. The Journal record shall indicate that the report was not received or not received in time to be used for Mission Share calculations.

The pastor is responsible for the accuracy of the information

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submitted and assuring the report is received by the deadline (The Book of Discipline ¶1340.2c(2)(f)). Information about submission of these reports will be sent to the pastor as soon as the General Council on Finance and Administration makes such information available.

Correction of errors with these reports after final submission should be made by the last business day of February each year. If errors are discovered after that date and the adjustment would affect Mission Shares, the district superintendent would need to be contacted. Changes would only be made for extenuating circumstances at the discretion of the district superintendent and the conference treasurer.

Local Church Audits

Church members and others provide substantial financial resources to local churches, and expect church staff and lay leadership to provide proper oversight of such resources to ensure these resources are (1) used in a manner consistent with that expressed through the church's annual operating budget and designated gifts and (2) adequately safeguarded from improper use or loss. In light of expectations, every local United Methodist Church, at a minimum, shall conduct an audit (review) as defined and described in the Local Church Audit Guide published by the General Church Council on Finance and Administration. The guide may be obtained at www.gcfa.org. In addition to such minimum requirements for all churches and consistent with the expectations for integrity, transparency and accountability described above, larger churches shall periodically subject their accounting records and controls to assessment by an independent certified public accountant. Specifically, larger churches (i.e., those with annual total receipts of more than \$500,000) shall adopt one of the following two options (for purposes of this section, "total receipts" of each local church shall be annual total combined funds received through the operating budget; designated or restricted gifts given for a particular purpose, including special offerings collected throughout the year; monies received for capital buildings or improvements or for debt service; contributions received for endowed funds, preschool tuition and fees received; and any funds received from other sources):

1. Have an audit performed by an independent certified public accountant (CPA) in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards; or
2. Have independent CPA perform a set of agreed-upon procedures established by the CFA.

For purposes of this requirement, the frequency of having either

option 1 or option 2 performed shall depend on the annual total receipts of each local church from all sources as described above. For purposes of determining the applicability of this requirement, “total funds received” shall be the **average annual** total receipts (as defined above) for the prior three years. (For example, for purposes of applying this test in 2017, local churches would determine the average of total funds received for the years 2014-2016.) If average total funds received by a local church exceed \$2,000,000, the local church should have audit work performed by an independent CPA under either option 1 or option 2 **annually**.

For those local churches who have average total funds received of less than \$2,000,000 but more than \$1,000,000, those churches should have audit work performed by an independent CPA under option 1 or option 2 **once every two years**. For those who have average total funds received of less than \$1,000,000 but more than \$500,000, those churches should have audit work performed by an independent CPA under option 1 or option 2 **once every three years**. For any year in which a larger church (as defined above) is not required to have work done by an independent CPA under option 1 or 2, such churches shall conduct an audit (review) as described in the first paragraph of this section.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Loyd Hamrick, President

The Great Plains Conference Board of Trustees continues to evaluate, maintain and protect conference-owned properties over the two-state areas of Kansas and Nebraska. Since the last annual conference in Wichita, the board has continued to have meetings and teleconferences to accomplish the task at hand.

Since the last annual conference the CBOT has:

- Sold the conference offices in Wichita and Topeka.
- Marketed for lease or sale the Lincoln office remains following a last-minute cancellation by the buyer due to its state contract falling through.
- Begun talks and actively looking at planning for a building or purchasing a new permanent conference office in Topeka.
- Sold property of five closed churches.

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- Sold four district parsonages and an episcopal residence.

District Parsonages/Episcopal Residence:

- Elkhorn Valley district parsonage, in Norfolk, Nebraska – listed for sale with realtor and sold to a private individual – closed on the parsonage August 31, 2018.
- No other D/S parsonages to be sold this year, currently the conference owns seven parsonages: Blue River – Dodge City – Flint Hills – Hutchinson – Prairie Rivers – Topeka – Wichita East.
- The Wichita Episcopal Residence – listed by realtor and sold just after Annual Conference June 16, 2018.
- On the Episcopal Residence in Topeka, the CBOT approved door replacement and window repairs – approved October 26, 2018 – work scheduled for April 23, 2019.

In the aftermath of the 2019 General Conference, in St. Louis, the trustees continue to work on establishing clear protocols and guidelines for congregations choosing to disaffiliate from the United Methodist Church.

We have developed protocols with the Appointive Cabinet for the disaffiliation of churches should the legislation passed by General Conference be ruled unconstitutional.

We have established an exit price of one year mission shares and the congregation's pro rata share of unfunded pension liabilities based upon a market-based valuation.

The Trustees work on property issues related to the discontinued local churches – here are the church closures we worked on last year and now:

- Cedar Vale UMC, Cedar Vale, Kansas – This church property was sold to the Caney River Cowboy Church on April 26, 2018, and the parsonage was sold by the church with final installment to be received April 2027. This was reported last year, but this is a clearer picture of the sell.
- Glade UMC, Glade, Kansas. – we finally worked through

the closing and a group of pastors are trying to put together a community organization to use the property.

- Gove UMC, Gove, Kansas.– church closed and property was sold to Gove Community Bible Church on March 13, 2019.
- Scranton UMC, Scranton, Kansas – property sold to an individual September 26, 2018.
- Delphos UMC, Delphos, Kansas – this was a continuation from 2018, the property sold April 10,2019 to another church group.
- 2019 closing: Chetopa, St Paul, Kansas – Dexter, Kansas – Hicks Chapel – Kansas City Trinity – Kilgore, Nebraska – Portis, Kansas. – Robinson, Kansas and Walnut, Kansas.

The following is a report of Conference vehicle pool:

Vehicles sold: (4)

- 2011 Chevrolet Equinox from Missouri River, August 9, 2018
 - 2011 Honda CR-V from Gateway ,September 18, 2018
 - 2009 Honda Accord from Topeka Pool, December 24, 2018
 - 2013 Toyota Sienna from Topeka Pool, April 12, 2019
- Vehicles transferred: (4)
- 2016 Ford Fusion, transferred from Elkhorn Valley to Topeka pool July 1, 2018
 - 2015 Toyota RAV4, transferred from Lincoln to Missouri River July 1, 2018

Episcopacy Committee

Rev. Maria T. Campbell, chair

The Episcopacy Committee (as per paragraph 637.3 in BOD), supports the bishop in the oversight of the spiritual and temporal affairs of the church with special reference to presidential responsibilities; is available to the bishop for counsel; and keeps the bishop advised concerning conditions within the area as they affect relationships between the bishop and the people of the conference agencies. The committee has held two meetings with Bishop Saenz and seeks to encourage and support his leadership of our conference and his witness in the

world.

This was a critical year in the life of the United Methodist Church as we prepared for 2019 Special General Conference which was held in February in St. Louis. Bishop Saenz determined that every district needed to have the opportunity to meet with him, so he conducted listening events in the 17 districts. The events were very well-attended and the response was great. The bishop chose not to make public his personal preference of the three proposed plans, so that he could pastorally care for all members of our conference. The Episcopacy Committee prayerfully supported and was grateful for his wisdom and discernment in making this choice. While many would have encouraged him to be an outspoken proponent of a particular plan, the committee was supportive of his stance to be the bishop to the whole conference which positioned him to care for everyone on the other side of the results of the Special Conference.

As of this writing, Bishop Saenz is having gatherings across our conference to be with our members in prayer and conversation. Our bishop feels the weight of the Traditional Plan, which was chosen at GC 2019. As we journey through these difficult times, the Episcopacy Committee is grateful for a bishop who has a deep faith and relies upon God for empowerment and guidance to navigate uncertain waters.

The committee encourages the conference to be prayerful in its discernment as we take steps into the future of the United Methodist Church. We ask for prayerful support for Bishop Saenz and the Council of Bishops. We also pray God's grace to shower upon all of us as we walk into the future that God is still creating.

Treasurer's Report

Scott Brewer

I want to begin this report by thanking the staff of Administrative Services – Niki Buesing, Heather Clinger, Adryan Eubanks, Darci Koci, Lorie Lindenmuth, JoEllen McGranahan, Pat McKaig, and Jan Swift – and I want to give special thanks this year to Peggy Mihoover, our conference benefits officer and Susan Petersen, our Human Resources Manager, both of whom joined our staff leadership in the past year and have brought such commitment, energy, and passion

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Great Plains Budget Summary

	2018	2019	2020	2019 vs 2020		
	Approved Budget	Actual	Approved Budget	Approved Budget	\$ Chng from 2019 to 2020	% Chng from 2019 to 2020
INCOME:						
Mission Shares	\$14,244,434	\$14,164,724	\$14,367,202	\$14,285,185	(\$82,017)	-0.6%
Less: Allowance for Unpaid Mission Shares	(\$833,248)	(\$1,409,145)	(\$858,957)	(\$856,664)	\$2,293	-0.3%
Net Mission Share Income	\$13,411,186	\$12,755,579	\$13,508,245	\$13,428,521	(\$79,724)	-0.6%
% of Mission Share Asking	94.15%	90.65%	94.02%	94.00%		
Other Income:						
Restricted Reserve-Budget Support (5%)	\$1,831,306	\$974,982	\$1,843,669	\$1,901,525	\$57,856	3.1%
Restr Reserve-Budget Support Special Distribution	\$133,983	\$0	\$138,350	\$0	(\$138,350)	-100.0%
Use of Mission Opportunity Reserves	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	
Total Income	\$15,376,475	\$13,730,561	\$15,490,264	\$15,330,047	(\$160,218)	-1.0%
EXPENSES:						
Personnel						
Wages and Housing	\$3,683,897	\$3,428,950	\$3,604,584	\$3,544,400	(\$60,184)	-1.7%
Other benefits & Payroll taxes	\$801,584	\$563,215	\$704,224	\$829,988	\$125,762	17.1%
Total Personnel	\$4,285,481	\$3,992,175	\$4,308,808	\$4,369,388	\$60,579	1.4%
Episcopal Office						
General Church Ministries for Episcopacy	\$735,550	\$662,394	\$710,738	\$702,039	(\$8,699)	-1.2%
Episcopal Office Expenses	\$184,081	\$59,284	\$51,995	\$70,628	\$18,633	35.8%
Episcopal Residence Maintenance	\$15,000	\$14,867	\$15,000	\$15,000	\$0	0.0%
District Office Expenses	\$298,840	\$251,089	\$308,445	\$316,215	\$7,770	2.5%
Cabinet Operations	\$654,000	\$502,732	\$785,700	\$683,900	(\$91,800)	-11.7%
Total Episcopal Office Budget	\$1,887,471	\$1,490,356	\$1,871,878	\$1,797,782	(\$74,096)	-4.0%
Clergy Excellence						
General Church Ministries for Clergy Excellence	\$838,907	\$755,449	\$910,609	\$900,688	(\$9,921)	-1.2%
Board of Ordained Ministry	\$175,500	\$163,816	\$176,000	\$176,000	\$0	0.0%
Trans Into Ministry Mission Share Request	\$209,088	\$90,059	\$228,270	\$227,000	(\$2,070)	-0.9%
Clergy Excellence Programming Expense	\$95,000	\$69,948	\$197,000	\$211,000	\$14,000	7.1%
Clergy Excellence Office expense	\$32,500	\$31,524	\$32,650	\$32,600	(\$50)	-0.2%
Total Clergy Excellence Budget	\$1,340,975	\$1,111,638	\$1,445,529	\$1,447,488	\$1,959	0.1%
Congregational Excellence						
General Church Ministries for Leadership Development	\$409,621	\$388,777	\$395,707	\$390,865	(\$4,842)	-1.2%
SCJ Ministries for Leadership Development	\$97,643	\$87,924	\$97,643	\$97,643	\$0	0.0%
Congregational Leadership/Training	\$195,500	\$83,784	\$140,800	\$228,600	\$87,800	62.4%
Campus Ministry Mission Share Request	\$617,968	\$617,968	\$625,000	\$640,000	\$15,000	2.4%
Camping Mission Share Request	\$712,500	\$712,500	\$712,500	\$712,500	\$0	0.0%
Resource Center Mission Share Request	\$26,920	\$26,683	\$4,000	\$2,000	(\$2,000)	-50.0%
Intergenerational Discipleship Ministry	\$112,400	\$80,637	\$112,400	\$120,000	\$7,600	6.8%
Ethnic Mission Share Request	\$442,424	\$317,047	\$468,500	\$438,500	(\$30,000)	-6.4%
New Church Starts Mission Share Request	\$545,255	\$545,255	\$550,708	\$525,000	(\$25,708)	-4.7%
Congregational Excellence Office Expense	\$65,700	\$49,665	\$72,100	\$61,900	(\$10,200)	-14.1%
Total Congregational Excellence Budget	\$3,226,831	\$2,890,240	\$3,179,358	\$3,217,008	\$37,650	1.2%
Mercy and Justice						
General Church Ministries for Mercy and Justice	\$2,483,784	\$2,236,704	\$2,400,000	\$2,370,626	(\$29,374)	-1.2%
Disaster Response	\$18,600	\$9,899	\$23,600	\$28,250	\$4,650	19.7%
Mercy and Justice Ministries	\$150,600	\$134,637	\$169,000	\$167,100	(\$1,900)	-1.1%
Mercy & Justice Office expense	\$20,200	\$18,454	\$20,195	\$24,450	\$4,255	21.1%
Total Mercy and Justice Budget	\$2,681,184	\$2,399,694	\$2,612,795	\$2,590,426	(\$22,369)	-0.9%
Administrative Services						
General and SCJ Ministries for Admin Services	\$420,704	\$378,854	\$408,541	\$404,278	(\$4,263)	-1.0%
Administrative Committee Expenses	\$91,002	\$109,456	\$94,200	\$97,295	\$3,095	3.3%
Administrative Services Office Expense	\$167,850	\$122,991	\$155,550	\$147,552	(\$7,998)	-5.1%
Information Technology	\$174,400	\$172,872	\$174,400	\$204,000	\$29,600	17.0%
Annual Conference Expense	\$129,600	\$65,506	\$162,750	\$143,032	(\$19,718)	-6.4%
Site Gatherings	\$15,100	\$144,641	\$166,950	\$142,500	(\$24,450)	-14.6%
Conf Office Building Maintenance expense	\$169,157	\$167,070	\$211,705	\$220,000	\$8,295	3.9%
Trustees- Insurance, Auto, Dist Office & Personage	\$412,450	\$374,161	\$412,450	\$361,300	(\$51,150)	-12.4%
Communications Program Expense	\$145,350	\$193,907	\$145,350	\$146,000	\$650	0.4%
Total Administrative Services budget	\$1,826,613	\$1,697,658	\$1,921,896	\$1,907,957	(\$13,939)	-0.7%
Missional Opportunity fund request	\$150,000	\$150,000	\$150,000	\$0	(\$150,000)	-100.0%
Total Great Plains Conference Budget	\$15,376,475	\$13,730,561	\$15,490,264	\$15,330,047	(\$160,218)	-1.0%
Net Income (Loss)	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0		

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Great Plains Budget Summary

	2018		2019		2020		2019 vs 2020	
	Approved Budget	Actual	Approved Budget	Approved Budget	Approved Budget	\$ Chg from 2019 to 2020	% Chrg from 2019 to 2020	
Mission Agency Support:								
1% of line 67 for Agencies	\$1,424,443	\$1,084,080	\$1,436,720	\$1,428,519		(\$8,202)	-0.6%	
Colleges/Universities								
Nebraska Wesleyan Univ - Lincoln, NE	\$115,100	\$81,567	\$103,600	\$103,600	\$0	\$0	0.0%	
Baker University - Baldwin City, KS	\$115,100	\$81,567	\$103,600	\$103,600	\$0	\$0	0.0%	
Saint Paul School of Theology - KS/OK	\$115,100	\$81,567	\$103,600	\$103,600	\$0	\$0	0.0%	
Kansas Wesleyan University - Salina, KS	\$115,100	\$81,567	\$103,600	\$103,600	\$0	\$0	0.0%	
Southwestern College - Winfield, KS	\$115,100	\$81,567	\$103,600	\$103,600	\$0	\$0	0.0%	
Health & Welfare Institutions								
Aldersgate Village (Good Sam. Fnd) - Topeka, KS	\$67,600	\$47,930	\$58,000	\$59,000	\$1,000	\$1,000	1.7%	
Asbury Park, (Good Sam. Fnd) - Newton, KS	\$31,500	\$23,718	\$27,000	\$28,000	\$1,000	\$1,000	3.7%	
GraceMed Health Clinic - Wichita and Topeka, KS	\$45,100	\$35,119	\$39,000	\$40,000	\$1,000	\$1,000	2.6%	
Released & Restored - NE	\$27,000	\$20,134	\$24,000	\$28,000	\$4,000	\$4,000	16.7%	
EmberHope (Youthville) - KS	\$31,500	\$45,899	\$31,000	\$35,000	\$4,000	\$4,000	12.9%	
Epworth Village - York, NE	\$31,500	\$29,280	\$29,000	\$31,000	\$2,000	\$2,000	6.9%	
Tyree Health and Dental Clinic - Wichita, KS	\$19,100	\$13,534	\$24,000	\$25,000	\$1,000	\$1,000	4.2%	
Ministries with the Poor								
United Methodist Ministries - Omaha, NE	\$182,300	\$129,960	\$167,000	\$167,000	\$0	\$0	0.0%	
Immigrant Legal Center(JFON) - NE	\$144,400	\$102,332	\$132,000	\$138,000	\$6,000	\$6,000	4.5%	
Friendship House of Hope - Ogden, KS	\$17,000	\$12,968	\$14,500	\$10,000	(\$4,500)	(\$4,500)	-31.0%	
Wesley House - Pittsburg, KS	\$65,100	\$47,217	\$58,000	\$59,000	\$1,000	\$1,000	1.7%	
Fellowship and Faith - Topeka, KS	\$9,000	\$14,421	\$7,500	\$4,000	(\$3,500)	(\$3,500)	-46.7%	
Living House-Omaha, NE	\$36,300	\$27,142	\$34,000	\$0	(\$34,000)	(\$34,000)	-100.0%	
UM Open Door - Wichita, KS	\$67,400	\$67,838	\$58,000	\$59,000	\$1,000	\$1,000	1.7%	
Genesis Family Health (UM Mex-Amer Minist), KS	\$49,300	\$39,907	\$39,000	\$40,000	\$1,000	\$1,000	2.6%	
Ecumenical/Interchurch organizations								
Rural Response Hotline, NE	\$23,200	\$18,597	\$19,000	\$19,000	\$0	\$0	0.0%	
Total Mission Agency Support Budget	\$1,424,600	\$1,084,080	\$1,279,000	\$1,260,000	(\$19,000)	(\$19,000)	-1.5%	
Net Mission Agency Support Income	(\$397)	\$0	\$167,720	\$168,519	\$169,461			

For information Only - included in the above budget

General Church Apportionments								
Episcopal Office	\$735,550	\$662,384	\$710,738	\$702,039	(\$8,699)	(\$8,699)	-1.2%	
Africa University	\$74,869	\$75,449	\$72,363	\$71,478	(\$885)	(\$885)	-1.2%	
Black College	\$334,632	\$67,459	\$323,344	\$319,387	(\$3,957)	(\$3,957)	-1.2%	
Ministerial Education	\$938,907	\$301,338	\$810,609	\$800,888	(\$9,721)	(\$9,721)	-1.2%	
World Service	\$2,483,784	\$2,236,704	\$2,400,000	\$2,370,626	(\$29,374)	(\$29,374)	-1.2%	
General Administration	\$294,929	\$265,584	\$284,980	\$281,492	(\$3,488)	(\$3,488)	-1.2%	
Interdenominational Cooperation	\$65,609	\$59,084	\$63,396	\$62,620	(\$775)	(\$775)	-1.2%	
Total General Apportionments	\$4,628,300	\$4,347,982	\$4,665,429	\$4,608,330	(\$57,099)	(\$57,099)	-1.2%	
South Central Jurisdiction Apportionments								
Lydia Patterson Institute	\$97,643	\$97,924	\$97,643	\$97,643	\$0	\$0	0.0%	
SCJ Respite restoration	\$7,536	\$6,766	\$7,536	\$7,536	\$0	\$0	0.0%	
SCJ Mission And Administration Fund	\$52,630	\$47,400	\$52,630	\$52,630	\$0	\$0	0.0%	
Total SCJ Apportionments	\$157,809	\$142,110	\$157,809	\$157,809	\$0	\$0	0.0%	

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to their work.

These staff make my work possible, and I am deeply grateful for their commitment to serve all of you.

It is an honor and a privilege to serve as your conference treasurer. This is my second annual report and last year's, I think, went pretty well. I even had a couple of people say to me, "that's the best treasurer's report we've ever heard."

Thanks, Mom and Dad.

I only had to pay them \$5 to say that. Each.

It was, I think, a good report, except for one minor, minor aspect: In a fit of extemporaneous exuberance, I maybe said something like, "numbers were never my thing." Those words have clung to me this last year like stink on an old gym sock. Let face it, "numbers were never my thing" is not exactly what you want to hear from your conference treasurer.

So, with this year's report, we're going to go in a different direction: Overcompensation. Prepare, my friends, for the numerical onslaught.

Two.

For the second year in our history as a conference and the second year in a row, you and your churches achieved an over 90% payout on Mission Shares in 2018!

In fact, over 75% of our churches fully paid their mission shares last year, and 10 of our districts paid at least 90%. So let's do a shout-out for Missouri River (91.9%), Salina (92.4%), Hutchinson (92.8%), Elkhorn Valley (92.9%), Kansas City (92.9%), Flint Hills (93.4%), Great West (94.9%), Prairie Rivers (96.2%), Gateway (97.8%), and Blue River (98.1%).

Negative (\$3.98 million)

A significant end-of-2018 drop in the equities market, contributed to a reduction in available CFA reserves of \$3.98 million, or 9.4%. Also contributing to this drop as \$250k used to support New Church Development grants, \$279 used for the office consolidation process, and \$975 used for conference budget support.

The good news is that thanks to sound investment strategies and the

good work of the Kansas and Nebraska Foundations and Wespeth Benefits and Investments, as of the end of April our total reserves have rebounded to 41.3 million, just one million under where we were at the beginning of 2017.

We remain one of the most financially sound conferences in the denomination with the lowest mission share as a percentage of local church income or expenditures in the nation.

1.3 billion

This is the current estimate of the costs related to the flooding in Nebraska in March of this year.] Since that times, millions in additional damage has been caused by more flooding in Kansas and Nebraska, and a damaging thunderstorms and tornados that have ravaged communities like Lawrence and Linwood just this week.

All of this within the context of another disaster. Which we'll get to here in a few moments.

Yet amidst great challenges and deep division, the people of the Great Plains Conference have, as of Wednesday night, we've contributed \$701,165 to Disaster Response this year.

1%

One of the many, many great things about being Treasurer in the Great Plains is how incredibly consistent our churches have been in their support of mission shares. Between the years 2015 to 2018, the range of cumulative percentage paid on Mission Shares has always stayed within a range of 1%: every month, of every year. I don't think there's any other conference in the nation that enjoys that level of consistency.

This year is different. Since February, we have seen a significant decline in the percentage paid on mission shares. Were' currently off 9.6% from this time last year. A drop of over \$1.26 million in total remittances.

But it's going to be okay. Based upon verbal commitments I have received from several congregations who are currently holding some of their mission shares, I anticipate we will see giving to the portion of mission shares that supports conference ministries rebound significantly, perhaps narrowing this shortfall for the conference budget as much as 3.1% by the end of June.

That said, this is still an unprecedented reduction in mission share income for the Great Plains, and we have no sense of how these trends

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may change through the remainder of the year, and particularly the last three months of the year when we as a conference receive a third of our Mission Share income. CFA and your staff continue to closely monitor the situation, and we are ready to make adjustments in spending plans, should conditions make it necessary.

The Budget that Zach Anderson, our CFA President, will present to you in a few moments is a 1% reduction from last year's. This is in line with our current practice of apportioning 10% of the 2018 operating income your churches report on Table III as your congregation's mission share for 2020. This fall, the CFA and the Mission Alignment will review current giving conditions and determine what adjustments may be necessary to total planned spending, staffing, and programmatic priorities to better support this new reality that we're all living into.

Greater Than

Okay, admittedly this is not a number, but its math, so close enough.

This is an interesting time to promote connectional ministries. The Methodist connection is in the midst of its greatest existential crisis since the 1840's. Our future, will not look like our present or our recent past. But we still have this connection, friends, this web of relationships and support that goes back generations. A web that started hospitals, homes, schools that are still healing, helping, educating today. It is a connection that has mobilized hundreds of volunteers and hundreds of thousand of dollars to support our neighbors as they seek to recover from this spring's natural disasters. It is a connection that offers pastoral internships to colleges students considering ministry, in fact, 40% of our pastoral interns have decided to go to seminary, and another 40% are considering it or have become inquiring candidates.

It is a connection that serves 630 college students across 10 campuses. It is a connection that hosted over 5,000 campers, of which over 400 accepted Christ for the first time, 1700 rededicated their lives to Christ. 800 campers a call to serve in the church, 490 felt a call to ordained or licensed ministry. It is a connection that trained over 1,200 leaders about Fresh Expressions and has committed to starting 4 new congregations this year. It is a connection that in 2018 alone conducted 255 Active Shooter Trainings, 16 Emergency Response Team trainings, 4 Connecting Neighbor Trainings, 2 Red Cross Trainings. It is a connection that in the next few years will seek to invest millions in communities to develop self-supporting

faith-based mercy and justice efforts in urban and rural communities throughout out two states.

This conference is not just an amalgamation of churches, or a bureaucratic system, it is us, all of us, working together to make disciples of Jesus Christ and transform the world. We are great than the sum of our parts.

A year ago, when I gave my first report, there was plenty of talk I heard about how, “we’d love to get started on something new and vital, but well, now is just not the right time. Let’s just wait for the 2019 special session to get everything settled and then we can get started on that.”

I know, because I said it.

So now, friends, do we wait for 2020?

We are living into a time of disagreement, ambiguity, difficult conversations, and hard choices. But the call, our call, has not changed. And the work is not going to get any easier. Here are some sobering numbers from last year. In 2018: 72% of churches held no confirmation class, 54% of churches received no one on profession of faith or faith restored, 41% of churches held no vacation bible school, 37% of churches reported having no ministries with the poor in their communities, 23% of churches reported having no children or youth

These are not mere percentages, friends, these are lost opportunities for building the kingdom of God. We can wait, and wait, and wait, and the right time is still never going to come. As I like to tell our staff, you have been called to serve God and the church in this time and this place, whether you like it or not.

Amidst all of our struggles and fears, I hope we can give thanks, for the tremendous resources of people and money God has provided to us because may not be everything that we want, but it is enough. We have enough.

In these coming months, we’re going to face many difficult decisions, together. Our responsibility in Administrative Services will continue to be to walk along side you and your churches, providing you with as much information as promptly and transparently as possible, not because we all agree, but because our commitment is to serve every church and every person who has supported the ministries of this connection, whether we like it or not.

Thank you for your time today, and may God bless you and your ministries in the year ahead.

Connecting Council

Rev. Nancy Lambert, Director of Clergy Excellence/Assistant to the Bishop

The Connecting Council meets twice a year to align conference initiatives with the missional priorities of the conference, to act as a decision-making body between Annual Conference sessions as permitted in the Plan of Organization, and to develop communication across the conference. Membership consists of the Bishop, Cabinet, Directors, Conference and district lay leaders, chairpersons of many conference teams and committees, as well as clergy and lay at-large members.

At the October meeting, the Council discussed a summary of Generating Buy-In and then had dialogue about what our strategic story as a conference is. The story line that emerged from the conversation is that “our churches are places where people matter and where lives are changed through life with Christ.” We also had discussion to identify core behaviors of leaders of the conference, and the vision for the Connecting Council.

Cabinet members shared about their work of establishing district strategies for focus the work of the districts.

Congregational Excellence and Clergy Excellence staff are working collaboratively with the districts to equip networks to develop specific programs and strategy.

The cabinet and treasurer have redesigned the weekly metrics that are reported with the hope that online worship and Fresh Expressions groups are reported consistently across the conference.

The Communications Team has been working with the Nominations team to develop a way to determine the gifts and talents among lay people in the conference. They hope to match people’s gifts with the needs of their church or even other local

churches.

Members of the Mission Alignment Team were elected. The Mission Alignment Team is a sub-team of the Connecting Council with the responsibility of reviewing the budget requests submitted by Directors or committee chairs each January to align the budget presented to the annual conference with the missional priorities adopted by the conference.

The Mission Alignment Team met February – April. They reviewed the budget requests and sent questions about the requests to each director or team leader. They also scheduled time for conversation with the directors to further understand the work of each team and the requested funding. The Mission Alignment adjusted the budget requests and then sent a balanced budget to Council of Finance and Administration.

At the April meeting, Connecting Council members had discussions on two chapters from the book “Community: The Structure of Belonging” by Peter Block.

Updates were given by directors and staff on Readiness 360; Fresh Expressions; clergy retreats; Mission Share receipts; Nebraska flooding relief efforts; and the regional gatherings.

Rev. Sarah Marsh, Chair of Mercy and Justice, presented a proposal for “Doing Justice Initiative,” a comprehensive program to provide congregations the opportunity to become engaged in effective action to address local needs through justice ministry. This would be in partnership with two organizations, DART and WORC.

John Aeschbury, executive director of DART, an urban-based organization, presented a five year plan to organize people of faith to collectively act to bring about major, system-wide improvements to the policies, practices, and procedures in the systems that far too often neglect the concerns of the poor, stranger, widow and orphan (criminal justice, education, mental health, housing, etc.).

John Smillie, executive director of WORC, presented a five year

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proposal to undertake a rural organizing project in Nebraska and Kansas. WORC - Works toward conservation of land water and energy resources and building healthy local food systems and sustainable local economies.

No action was taken on these proposals, but consideration will be given at the fall 2019 meeting for inclusion in the budget planning for 2020 and 2021.

CLERGY EXCELLENCE

Clergy Excellence Director Report

Rev. Nancy Lambert, director of clergy excellence/assistant to the bishop

Our vision: Clergy in the Great Plains Conference will lead congregations to be healthy, vital places of worship, mission, and spiritual growth. Our mission is to recruit and develop clergy, whether local pastors, associate members, Elders or Deacons who serve in the local church, who are persons committed to **Excellence in Ministry**.

The events and learning opportunities that we develop meet three objectives:

- High quality – we aim for excellence in who the leaders are and in the content of the event
- Affordable – low registration cost relative to the cost of the event to encourage clergy to participate in ongoing learning throughout their ministry
- Within the bounds of the annual conference – to reduce travel costs

In addition to the ways that the Clergy Excellence team support the work of the Board of Ordained Ministry, there are four main areas where our programming is focused.

1. Seminars/Workshops

These focus on skill development and knowledge attainment --- preaching and worship development is a primary skill we focus on as worship is the most public event for the church. Every year, there is at least one seminar, workshop, or retreat focused on preaching and worship. We recognize that all clergy can become better preachers, whether they have preached for 3 years or 25 years.

We are in process of planning a workshop specifically to help our international pastors and new clergy better understand clergy taxes and our pensions plans,

2. Retreats

Retreats are longer than seminars or workshops and include an overnight stay at a retreat center. Retreats might focus on skill development, but they also have intentional time in the schedule for personal reflection time and intentional spiritual growth. Retreats create space for clergy to reconnect with God, to slow down and process ministry, and to renew themselves so they can be more effective leaders.

Roots for Your Soul retreat was offered for the first time this past spring and gave clergy 48 hours away from the demands on their time to focus on their relationship with God. Clergy who attended this retreat shared that they didn't know how much they needed the spiritual nourishment they received at this retreat.

This fall we are planning a retreat called After the Flood for clergy in Nebraska who have been giving an immense amount of pastoral care to the persons in their communities devastated by floods and blizzards this past winter and early spring. This will be a time for rest, for soul-care, and for emotional healing as we know that the recovery will be long-lasting. In order to continue giving pastoral care, they need their own emotional and spiritual well-being cared for.

3. Coaching

Working with a trained coach creates a relationship in which a clergy person can comfortably explore how best to use the skills, resources, and tools they already have at their disposal to become more effective in ministry. Coaching draws on a person's natural giftedness and begins with the belief that the person is creative, resourceful and whole. It can help a person recover joy and delight in ministry.

- Coaching focuses on asking questions to tap into a person's self-awareness to solve problems, cast new vision and move beyond the status quo
- Coaching helps clergy and churches break through barriers that prevent them from becoming more vital in today's context of ministry to lead toward new levels of success.
- Clergy who have been in coaching relationship report greater confidence in leading teams in their churches because they have better questions to ask. They have been able to draw on their internal resources and strengths so that these become the framework for how they lead.

Transition into Ministry

Transition into Ministry program is designed to develop young clergy in their first 5 years of appointment. The clergy in this program have given us, the Clergy Excellence team, insight that continues to influence programming that we schedule for all clergy. These pastors have grown in their ministry skills, have greater appreciation for lay involvement, and have developed their administrative skills -- something not taught in seminary or Course of Study. The feedback and input of these pastors have helped us develop a preaching retreat, resources for clergy transitions, and tools to help clergy develop plans for their personal growth.

The role of clergy is demanding, diverse, emotionally draining at times, and yet the best job in the world for those called to ministry. It is an opportunity to receive the blessing of being obedient to God's call so that others can know or live out more faithfully a life in the healing, reconciling, powerful love of Jesus Christ.

Transition into Ministry Program

Rev. Ashlee Alley Crawford, Clergy Recruitment and Development Coordinator

The Transition into Ministry (TiM) program, established in 2011, seeks to support young clergy, 35 and under, in their first five years of ministry through the network of collegial relationships, mentoring and coaching, and intentional collaboration with lay leaders in their congregations. The vision of the program is as follows:

TiM Pastors will be excellent preachers, collaborative clergy and confident leaders who will empower the laity and be empowered to flourish in ministry. The TiM program will aid Clergy Excellence staff in identifying best practices for training and developing all Great Plains clergy for excellence in ministry.

In July 2018, we welcomed five new clergy to join 10 others. One of the new TiM Participants had served as a solo appointment for two years post-seminary. The other four graduated from seminary just prior to joining the program.

The Phase 1 pastors (those in their first two years of the program) met regularly with a mentor pastor for support and opportunity to reflect on their pastoral role and identity. Each

mentoring pair has the opportunity to apply for a continuing education grant for a shared experience within their two years in Phase 1. This year, pairs attended the following conferences: the Exponential Conference, the Festival of Homiletics and “Listening to the Heartbeat of God” at Ghost Ranch. TiM Pastors in Phase 1 also met six times throughout the year as a group and were supported in leadership development through the Kansas Leadership Center’s Your Leadership Edge curriculum.

The Phase 2 pastors (those in the last three years of the program) met with the Rev. Nancy Lambert periodically for a Clergy Community of Practice. Additionally, two of the pastors, Rev. Brenda Kostner Johnson at Anthony, Kansas, UMC and Rev. Tyler Kaufmann at Lawrence FUMC—West Campus, received a Fruitfulness Grant to help their congregations grow in fruitfulness. The grant process develops leadership skills in the pastor and congregation as they learn how to assess needs in the church/community that have opportunity for increasing fruitfulness, cultivate a plan for growth, measure progress and tell stories that celebrate fruitfulness. The key marker for fruitfulness is this: inner faithfulness leads to external fruitfulness. Thus, the church is invited to cultivate faithful practices as they grow.

Two pastors, Rev. Kostner Johnson and Rev. Aaron Duell, will graduate from the TiM Program in 2019.

GREAT PLAINS BOARD OF ORDAINED MINISTRY

Rev. Amy Lippoldt, Chair

There are a lot of different ways to tell the story of the work of the Board of Ordained Ministry over the last year. One way is to attend the ordination and commissioning service. There you will see men and women who have been guided by our work and are now launching into their vocation as clergy in the UMC. It will be inspiring and full of joy!

Another way is to ask a BOM member about the hope they felt reading through paperwork, conducting interviews, and creating programs over the last year. The signs of hope we have seen are too many to name here. But trust me when I say God is

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calling talented and resilient people into ministry and they are saying “yes!” despite the troubles of the church. It gives me, and the BOM, great hope to hear their experiences and see their commitment.

Another way to tell our story is by the numbers. Of course, every number below represents a person, which takes us back to the things I mentioned above.

- 32 attended candidacy summits in 2018-2019 (first steps into vocational ministry)
- 46 current certified candidates by April 26, 2019
- 17 attended licensing school this year
- 9 people to be commissioned at Annual Conference 2018
- 22 people continuing as Provisional Members
- 12 people to be Ordained (and one more welcomed into full membership)
- \$149,674 given out in seminary scholarships 2018 (a 70% increase from 2017!)
- \$25,638 given out for Course of Study Scholarships in 2018

I really hope that during this week of Annual Conference you will seek out someone currently in the credentialing process and give them a word of encouragement. If they are just starting the process, ask them what dreams they have for the future. If they are in school, ask them what they are learning that excites them. If they are serving a church, ask them what is challenging them at the moment. Your interest and support will not only be a blessing to them, but it could also be the thing that makes the Great Plains feel like home.

Thanks to all the members of the Board of Ordained Ministry, members of the 17 District Committees on Ordained Ministry, and the Clergy Excellence Staff for another year of excellent work.

CONGREGATIONAL EXCELLENCE**Congregational Excellence Director Report**

Rev. Nathan D. Stanton, Director

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed, citizens

can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.” — Margaret Mead

Since the 2018 Annual Conference, the Department of Congregational Excellence helped shut down operations in Wichita and supported the move of primary operations of the Great Plains UMC to the new conference office space in Topeka. In that transition three members did not continue and the department subsequently added three new members all in less than 12 months. The department remains passionate, committed and open to the Spirit of God, who is leading us to strengthen the churches of the Great Plains one conversation and one resource at a time.

I am deeply grateful for the members of the team who have remained through the transition this year; The Rev. Nicole Conard, young adult and campus ministry coordinator; the Rev. Hollie Tapley, disaster response coordinator, Sara Shaw, camping ministry coordinator and the Rev. Kalaba Chali, mercy and justice coordinator. These individuals have helped provide continuity through a time of transition to engage a deeper level of teamwork within the department as well as a focused effort to provide resources and tools for church vitality across the Great Plains United Methodist Connection.

New staff members have brought new energy, new insights and fresh eyes to the processes we have undertaken. The Rev. Melissa Gepford, intergenerational discipleship coordinator was hired and began the role in early 2019. This role will continue the development of discipleship for all ages with a special emphasis on children and family ministry. Shane Warta, lay leadership development coordinator was hired in the fall of 2018. He is working with the formal lay leadership of the Great Plains and cultivating connections and processes to raise up lay leadership for the church today. Finally, Donna Ernest, congregational excellence administrative assistant was hired in 2018 and has almost been with the department for a whole year. She has been a positive and spiritually supportive presence to the work of the whole department. We're all deeply grateful for her work.

Congregational Excellence exists to support the local churches of the Great Plains by working with all 17 districts in the Great Plains.

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Each of the staff members of the department has been assigned two to three districts as a representative of the department and as a staff member to that district. Many of our districts do not have budgets nor do they have assigned staff members who have a focus on that district only. Assigning a member of the department to be part of the operations team of the district will ensure closer relationships between conference and district staff and networks of churches. It is believed that these closer relationships will provide a sense of belief that in our collective faith and mission, all things are possible with God's help and guidance.

Specific goals of the include:

- Zero Decline
- Resourcing the launch of 50 Fresh Expressions in the Great Plains
- 50 Churches engaged in the Readiness 360 survey and coaching process
- Excellent relationships with key conference stakeholders
- Ongoing improvement to be more efficient in our work with districts and networks
- 100% of the District Ministry Strategies implemented
- Zero negative impact to conference resources

Vital Congregations Team

Rev. Dr. Trudy Kenyon Anderson, Chair

The mission of the Vital Congregations Team is to equip and connect local congregations so that they may become more vital and effective in the mission of the church. Vitality is intrinsically linked to a church's local context; therefore, to be vital, a church must intentionally be on a journey of learning, growing and leading as disciples of Jesus Christ. Our vision is to help posture every congregation in the Great Plains Conference as a great church who makes disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. We seek to help put churches in a long-term process of growth and vitality.

By grasping key initiatives of the district superintendents that can be done conference wide, the Vital Congregations Team stewards

support for districts; ensuring the most effective and efficient use of resources and tools for local church vitality. The Vital Congregations Team comes alongside innovative and burgeoning ministries, offering support through financial resources.

Fulfilling the purpose of the Board of Discipleship ¶1630, Board of Laity ¶1631, Disability Concerns ¶1653, Parish and Community Development ¶1633.5, and Young Adults ¶1650 (The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church, 2016); this team provides special attention to the development of lay leadership, ministries with ethnically diverse people, and ministries of small membership churches as well as ministries with populations of 50,000 or more.

The following highlights our work this year and outlines our 2020 priorities:

Lay Ministries:

We oversee financial support for the development of Lay Servant Ministry training opportunities and congregational and coaching support for Readiness 360.

Ethnic Ministries:

The previous nomenclature of “Hispanic Ministries” has been replaced with “Ethnic Ministries” in order to extend support to all ethnically diverse communities throughout our conference. Since October 2018, \$131,000 has been approved for four diverse mission fields.

Networks:

We are charged with evaluating and supporting the culture of networks which provide spiritual covenants and accountability to groups of churches across the conference.

Fresh Expressions:

One hundred, \$500 grants will be awarded over 2019 -2020 for innovative Fresh Expressions.

Urban Ministry Grants:

Since October 2018, the VCT has reviewed and approved \$102,425 to four churches serving mission fields with 50,000-plus populations.

General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM)

Rev. Victoria Robeck

As the leadership development agency of The United Methodist Church, the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM) builds capacity for United Methodist lay and clergy leaders to discover, claim and flourish in Christ's calling in their lives. The agency creates connections and provides resources to aid in recruitment, education, professional development and spiritual formation. Every elder, deacon and licensed local pastor benefits from our training and candidacy programs. Many young adults find help in clarifying God's call in their lives through our discernment opportunities.

Through its Office of Strategic Leadership, GBHEM refined plans for a center for leadership development and spiritual formation. It is drawing on research to plan the expansion of leadership training offerings to churches and communities through a range of means such as face-to-face training, online conferencing, consulting, and recommending resources and experts.

The Division of Ordained Ministry (DOM), using extensive research on the components of effective ministry, introduced a new formation process, Effective Ministry 360 (EM360), which guides pastors and congregations to plan and execute mission and ministry objectives. EM360 also offers assessment modules for candidacy, district superintendents, eight-year clergy assessment and Course of Study. DOM provides introduction and orientation sessions about the process.

The Division of Higher Education (DHE) has initiated research to inform a "leadership pipeline" process for university leaders on United Methodist campuses. Among the books GBHEM published this year, "Missio Dei and the United States: Toward a Faithful United Methodist Witness" (book and study guide) exhibits the best of church and academy collaboration. Contributors explore how the church can reengage its Wesleyan heritage as it participates in God's mission.

The Office of Loans and Scholarships announced an increase in the maximum amount of money United Methodist students can borrow to pursue their education. The annual maximum is \$10,000, with a lifetime maximum of \$40,000. On average, the agency distributes \$5.5 million in scholarships annually.

Partnering with churches and institutions, GBHEM has promoted projects, programs, initiatives, education and leadership development in various cultural contexts within United Methodism and in pan-Methodist relationships. The agency expanded the Methodist Global Education Fund for Leadership Development, supported the work of regional networks with the International Association of Methodist Schools, Colleges, and Universities, and established Regional Hubs for Leadership, Education and Development. In 2018, hubs were active in nations in Africa, Asia, Europe and England, North America and South America.

New Church Development, Inc.

Rev. Nathan Stanton, Director of Congregational Excellence

The Great Plains New Church Development Board continues to be excited about the purpose of supporting the missional priority of the Great Plains Annual Conference by developing great new faith communities. New Church Development continues to work on this missional priority through the “20 by 2020” plan which sets forth a challenge to start 20 new churches by the year 2020. The process by which NCD is doing this is three-fold.

Great Plains Planter Incubator – Great Plains Laity and Clergy are encouraged to participate in a five retreat process to learn planter competencies and live them out in their current setting of ministry. GP coaches provide check-ins along the way in order to support the accountability and the living out of the competencies. Participants have the opportunity to be assessed for starting a new church in the Great Plains. Participants also have the option to pitch a new plan for ministry at the Great Plains Shark Tank.

Great Plains Core Crucible – Clergy and laity who are appointed to GP innovations, plants or that have a new idea for ministry participate in a year-long cohort to develop a core team. Each participant in this cohort received monthly coaching to develop their core team, mission, vision and values and a revised plan to launch their new ministry. Participants in the Core Crucible will pitch revised plant

plans during the Great Plains Shark Tank.

A third level of the New Church Development process is the “Church Quest.” Churches that move beyond the first-year launch period are supported by New Church Development Board with five touches per year; two onsite benchmark meetings, one continuing education event, on face to face meeting with New Church Development and one year-end meeting with the DS and congregation.

GP NCD has also supported the development of the Fresh Expressions strategy for the Annual Conference by financially supporting the Vision Days and Roundtables this past winter. The Board also requested and received \$170,000 to grant to the 17 districts in the Great Plains in support of Fresh Expressions ministries.

The Great Plains Annual Conference celebrates the chartering of its second new church since the our conference’s inception; Urban Abbey in Omaha, Nebraska, chartered, Sunday, February 17, 2019.

The current Great Plains New Churches:

- Neighbors UMC – Lincoln launched, January 2017
- Aldersgate Renew – Wichita launched, September 2016
- Connection Point – Lincoln launched, July 2017
- Olathe Common Grace – Olathe launched, July 2017

Expenses for this past year:

- \$127,372.39 total new pastor training
- \$24,999.96 grants to existing churches (Wichita Saint Mark)
- \$546,827.88 paid out in 20 by 2020 grants
- \$\$130,173.10 was paid back by KC Hispanic in 2018, resulting in a net of \$416,654.78 in grants

GREAT PLAINS UNITED METHODIST CAMPS, INC.

Stuart Mack, chair; Sara Shaw, coordinator of camping ministry

So what’s the goal of the GP Camps?

Bring children to the faith, also youth and adults and helping to build and strengthen congregations. Our camps create a holy space devoid of cellphones, and video games. A safe place, a place of peace, that brings a respite for God’s people in God’s creation. 2018 was another year of growth for the camps. Although the conference contributed \$712,500 to the ministry, insurance costs continue to be a significant expense for the camps. The camps must be diligent at keeping their

operating and personnel expense.as low as possible.

It must be noted, Camp Comeca remains financially challenged. The director and site council continue to work hard to increase use at the camp. Camp user fees are an important part of the revenue source. Justin Hoehner, the director, has created a scholarship fund for kids who can't afford the camp fee. At the end of 2018, Camp Comeca had a yearly negative balance of approximately \$50,000. This brings the total net cumulative loss to \$231,000. Unfortunately, this is not sustainable. Folks, the number one way to reverse this is for congregations to send kids to camp. Our kids benefit by building their faith and at the same strengthening their congregation.

For 2018 the Great Plains Camping Ministry had an 8% increase over 2017 in attendance.

- 5193 Campers (including day campers)
- 839 Campers who accepted Christ
- 499 Campers who felt a calling
- 1192 Campers who desired to be involved in their congregation

Camps continue to monitor this data. The camping ministry continues to try to build relationships with their congregations. This support can come in many forms.

At the 2018 annual conference, a delightful 12 year old camper shared how her camping experience effected her. "and I didn't like church when I first started going because, like, I had to sit for a while and do nothing. I got bored. So then when I went to camp it helped me, like, learn about God better cause I had fun while doing it. So yeah, when I went to camp I thought – I learned more about God and what he does to help people and that made me feel better about my spiritual life and church because it doesn't have to be boring, it can be fun."

I asked each camp director to share their excitement for the coming 2019 camping season.

Meg Mayle, Norwesca

Going into 2019 summer camping season, I feel driven to ensure that each camper, retreat group, volunteer and staff member feels valued and cared about so that they feel at home at Norwesca, feel safe growing in their faith at camp, and have the confidence to share their faith in their world outside of camp.

Trent Meyer, Fontenelle

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As of 2019, Camp Fontanelle will be celebrating 60 years of service. Camp Fontanelle desires to make disciples of Jesus Christ to help transform the world. In an effort to make an even larger impact, Camp Fontanelle is building for the future by wanting to double the number of lives impacted each summer. To double the 765 campers the camp had in 2018, will require a new retreat center with 60 additional air conditioned beds, including modern conference/retreat space. Since 2017, \$2.12 million has been pledged/raised toward the goal of \$2.7 million. We have come along way to help make this vision a reality.

Joel Wilke, Horizon

Camp Horizon is excited for the year ahead. With a new swimming pool and recreation space, our campers have all sorts of new activities to enjoy! With a full summer program, we are beginning to offer more programming in the spring and fall. Be on the look out for some exciting new programs for children, youth and adults.

Kristin Jessop, Lakeside

I am so fortunate to be the new director at Camp Lakeside. Every year I attended summer camps at Lakeside. It shaped my faith and helped to make me the person I am. Starting this summer, having the opportunity to instill that same passion and excitement for Christ to my campers is so special.

Justin Hoehner, Comeca

The thing I am most excited about is our new scholarship program. We understand the incredible testimony of experiencing Christ in a unique way at camp. We also noticed that many people may be limited financially, to the point that regardless of the cost it will always be too expensive. So this year we have been seeking generous donations so that these children can also experience Christ a camp at zero cost to them!

James Richner, Chippewa

Summer camp, what a great opportunity to immerse ourselves in the outdoors, have great fellowship and share the GOOD NEWS! As of May 1, summer camp registration is up 10% from 2018 and 2018 registration was up 9% from the 2017 camping season. That is almost a 20% increase in registered campers that will have the opportunity to experience Christ in a natural setting! What a special opportunity for campers to experience God's creation, led by a devoted group of summer staff. Members of the Camp Chippewa and the Institute teams have committed to serving, growing and living out their faith as they explore the Great Plains Camping theme "Peace Works", for the summer of 2019. Volunteers and generous supporters truly are

the backbone of the ministry and continue to bless the camp with their time, talents, and treasure, so that Camp Chippewa will continue to be a place where “Faith and Fun Come Together”.

Campus Ministry

Rev. April Wegehaupt, chair

Rev. Nicole Conard, coordinator of young adult leadership

Great Plains United Methodist Campus Ministry, Inc.

The Great Plains United Methodist Campus Ministry Board (GPUMCM) fulfills missional priorities of the conference under Congregational Excellence in leadership development.

Our continued vision is to develop 2,000 student leaders to be disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world by the year 2020.

Our adopted philosophy for ministry is, “Campus Ministry is a movement of grace empowering students to live transformed lives to transform the world.” We seek to achieve this philosophy by creating spaces where students can encounter grace, experience equipping love, and discover engaging transformation.

Campus Ministries in the Great Plains have three core values.

1. **Missional.** The campus ministry is a missional outpost to the campus. Colleges are mini-cities with residents who have their own language, rules and values. Our campus ministers, just like any out-of-country missionary, must learn this culture in order to minister to the society in which the college student is immersed. Also, just like an out-of-country missionary, our campus ministries must raise money in order to support themselves. The conference supports only a portion of their budgets and everything else, like, volunteer hours, building needs and ministerial funds come from generous partners who understand the importance of campus ministry to college students.

2. **Methodist.** Methodists started when John and Charles Wesley, and a few of their friends gathered together in a “holy club” at Oxford University. The club met to discuss religious concerns and to help each other lead disciplined, methodical lives of worship, study and service. Because of their method, other students called them “Methodists.” Two hundred years later, the United Methodist Church is still on campuses inviting students to gather in worship, service,

study and fellowship.

3. **Movement.** Campus ministries are an extension of the church, reaching students and young adults in this generation. The campus ministries go to students, invest in their lives, invite them to practice their faith, and connect them with a loving God so that they can be sent out in the world with a christian view of who they are and how God is calling them. Higher education and campus ministries invite and send forth changing campus populations.

The GPUMCM Board has continued to work to ensure improved funding for ministry sites. We also have continued to look into building evaluative measures flexible enough to be applied to each unique campus, determine where support is needed for each ministry, each minister, and each campus ministry local board.

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The following are several steps the GPUMCM Board is taking to live into its 2020 vision, some of these steps have already been put in place:

- We have continued to evaluate and implement a new grant allotments application with detailed narrative assessments of ministry vitality
- We once again are hosting an annual conference dinner to share the story of campus ministry and unique dynamics of doing ministry with students on college campuses
- Developing local church connections is at our focal point along with encouraging local church contributions and fundraising to their unique ministry sites. Again this year we are offering \$1,000 grant to churches to help them start or grow a campus ministry with their local college.
- We have conducted site visits in the fall and spring semesters with district superintendents, a GPUMCM board representative, conference staff, a local board representative, the campus minister, and students
- We have offered training for local boards in each state-school or private-school campus ministry
- We are asking our Great Plains churches who know students who may be attending college to share their information and the information about our United Methodist campus ministries.
- We have restructured the times we meet together as campus ministers and Campus Ministry Board to work towards being the most effective we can be with our time and resources. Last August we held our second retreat together which was highly effective in using the time we had together most effectively.
- Lastly, We held our second retreat together in August.

The Great Plains has 10 Campus Ministries and 4 United Methodist Schools.

United Methodist Schools –

- Nebraska Wesleyan University (Lincoln, Nebraska),
- Kansas Wesleyan University (Salina, Kansas),
- Baker University (Baldwin City, Kansas)
- Southwestern College (Winfield, Kansas)

Our Great Plains United Methodist Campus Ministries are present at the following campuses:

- University of Nebraska-Lincoln – (Lincoln, Nebraska)
- University of Nebraska – Omaha (Omaha, Nebraska)
- University of Nebraska – Kearney (Kearney, Nebraska)
- Creighton University (Omaha, Nebraska)
- Kansas State University (Manhattan, Kansas)
- University of Kansas (Lawrence, Kansas)
- Emporia State University (Emporia, Kansas)
- Fort Hays State University (Hays, Kansas)
- Washburn University (Topeka, Kansas)
- Wichita State University (Wichita, Kansas)

Want to know more? Look us up at www.greatplainsumc.org/campusministries

MERCY AND JUSTICE

Mercy and Justice Team

Rev. Sarah Marsh, chair

When the Great Plains Conference was born, the Mercy and Justice Team was charged with the purpose of “equipping and empowering local congregations in the work of mercy and justice ministries.” In 2017, we established a five year plan to focus our work on the area we identified as the greatest need and opportunity in our conference: justice ministry.

The Doing Justice Initiative

In 2018 we completed the “Waves of Justice” framework, a pathway to justice ministry inspired by the words of the prophet Amos, “But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an everflowing stream.” Each “wave” we have identified in this framework is a step a church will take to move into the work of justice. To equip churches with the resources they will need to advance from wave to wave, we initiated a conversation with two national organizations with

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extensive track records of engaging people of faith in impactful justice work in local communities, the Direct Action Research and Training (DART) Center and the Western Organization of Resource Councils (WORC).

At Bishop Saenz's invitation, 11 leaders from the Great Plains, including seven members of the cabinet, attended DART's Clergy Conference in February to explore justice ministry with partners from DART and WORC. This delegation shared our team's assessment that partnerships with these organizations was well worth exploring. In response to our invitation, DART and WORC have created a plan to equip every interested United Methodist church, network and district with expert assistance in justice ministry over a five-year period. This plan, including a projected budget of \$2.1 million of seed money for the development of six (non-profit) justice ministry organizations, was presented for exploration at the Connecting Council meeting on April 6, 2019. The executive directors of DART (Rev. John Aeschbury) and WORC (John Smillie) attended the meeting to share information and answer questions from the Council. We anticipate the plan will move to CFA for review sometime this summer. You can read more about the Doing Justice Initiative in the April 10 GPconnect article "Justice ministries may get boost from two proposals for conference."

Leadership Development and Education

In other efforts, the team continues to support our social justice internship program for young adults, the Micah Corps. This summer, under the direction of returning co-coordinators, Maria Penrod (first-year student at Garrett Evangelical Theological Seminary) and Maddi Baugous (second-year student at Garrett Evangelical Theological Seminary), half of our interns will be placed with partners in justice ministry in Omaha and Topeka: Omaha Together One Community (OTOC) and Topeka Justice and Unity Ministry Project (Topeka JUMP). In October 2018, our annual education event For the Transformation of the World focused on gender, sexual violence, and faith in the #MeToo era. Bishop Saenz, retired Bishop Ann Sherer-Simpson, and Dr. Gerise Herndon of Nebraska Wesleyan University shared in a panel discussion as the highlight of the event.

We are pleased to report as well that we continue our conference financial support for four students from La Gonave, Haiti, in the University at Port-au-Prince, three students from the Jalingo Orphanage in Nigeria at Africa University, and one student from the Fairfield Orphanage at Old Mutare, Zimbabwe, also attending Africa University. These students would be unable to attend college without Great Plains support. It is our prayer and hope that God would richly bless these young adults and call them into servant leadership in

Haiti, Nigeria and Zimbabwe.

Disaster Response

Rev. Hollie Tapley, disaster response coordinator; and
Russell Anderson, chair

During this past year, the Great Plains Disaster Response has been busy serving Christ by assisting those who have had their lives disrupted by disaster. It was with much joy that in July 2018, with the assistance of over 1,000 volunteers, the bulk of the work orders from the Eureka tornado events were completed. Throughout the summer months of 2018, the Great Plains Disaster Response continued working with the Eureka LTRO being the hands and feet of Christ by finishing up the few remaining homes in Eureka. As the summer of 2018 progressed, many more volunteers were called upon to be Christ's love and grace assisting homeowners with various isolated disasters involving flash flood clean-up in several Nebraska and Kansas counties. Moreover, because of the generous gifts that had been given to the Great Plains Disaster Response over the years, we are able to assist families financially with things such as replacement of clothes and furnishings, and hotel rooms after home fires. Several isolated thunderstorms prompted our financial and personnel assistance from hail damage. A few of the Great Plains ERTs even helped do some much-needed repair work at the Pittsburg State University campus buildings.

The early spring storm of March 2019 that moved across the state of Nebraska caused extensive widespread flooding. All told, there were 53 counties and 54 communities that were declared states of emergency. This is still an on-going response. With much gratitude, the Great Plains Disaster Response appreciates the generosity of the its church's and people from around the conference. Over \$180,000 was raised to assist those affected by the March 2019 Nebraska floods. Numerous volunteers have given their time to muck out homes, build and move cleaning and hygiene kits to where they are needed, and offer prayers and assistance in a multitude of ways.

During the past year, the Great Plains Disaster Response Team has been able to add a few new persons to fill vacant coordinator roles, which helps when disasters come. However, we still have several vacancies to be filled. The Great Plains Disaster Response continues to offer various disaster response trainings but are limited by the

number of trained individuals to provide that training. New UMCOR ERT manuals and training videos were released in the summer of 2018. As always, thank you for your support of this vital ministry within the conference.

General Board of Global Ministries – From Everywhere to Everywhere

www.umcmission.org

Jerry Feese, Conference Secretary of Global Ministries

In January 2019, Jerry Feese assumed the duties of the Great Plains Conference Secretary of Global Ministries (CSGM) from Carol Ekdahl-Garwood. In December 2018, I attended the Mission Ambassadors Summit in Atlanta, GA. There UMC mission representatives from across the US and beyond met with most of the staff from General Board of Global Ministries (GBGM) who explained their roles and the various programs offered through GBGM.

GBGM focuses on 15 Areas of Impact, which include Missionaries, Disaster Response and Recovery, Global Health, Hunger and Poverty, Migration, Evangelism and Church Growth, Volunteers, Water and Sanitation, Education, Racial and Ethnic Ministries, Scholarships, Community Development, Creation Care, Women and Children, and Sustainable Development. Global Ministries has personnel, programs and mission partners in over 100 countries.

All GBGM projects and missionaries are supported 100% by donations given through the Advance. Each Advance project has been vetted and approved by Global Ministries. The Advance works with church leaders around the world to ensure that projects are aligned with the goals of the United Methodist Church in the local area, help develop partnerships that are mutually advantageous, and report on how giving is making an impact.

In 2018 churches in the Great Plains Conference donated \$543,320.54 to Advance projects.

In 2019 GBGM will celebrate the bicentennial of Methodist mission. For more information on that see methodistmission200.org.

If you have any questions regarding the General Board of Global

Ministries or the Advance, you can email Jerry Feese, Great Plains CSGM, at feedell@sunflower.com.

Peace with Justice Ministries

Andrea Paret, peace with justice coordinator

<http://www.greatplainsumc.org/peacewithjustice>; [facebook.com/peacewithjusticeministriesgp](https://www.facebook.com/peacewithjusticeministriesgp)

“God says: Don’t be afraid. I am with you.” Isaiah 45:5

We are challenged by the brokenness of the world that we experience daily in our own lives, in our neighborhoods, our communities and around the world. So many of God’s children are living in fear, fear of losing their lives to war, violence and hunger, or fear of the unknown, the other, of change, of lacking what might have been available at other times in our lives. Fear often causes us to make bad decisions, to not be able to act with love and compassion and empathy towards our sisters, brothers, our siblings nearby and around the world. And yet God tells us to “fear not” numerous times throughout the Bible. God promises abundant life for all (John 10:10). Are we taking God’s promise seriously? If God wants abundant life for all, didn’t God create the world so there is enough for all if we share and use resources responsibly? What role is God calling us to take on in bringing abundant life to all?

William Willimon, a retired United Methodist bishop and professor at Duke University Divinity School, writes in his book “Fear of the Other, No Fear in Love”: *“Our problem, in regard to fear, is that we fear the Others more than we fear the God who commands, ‘Love each other.’”* (p. 39)

“It is the nature of the body of Christ that locked doors are ultimately more costly to the survival of the church than open doors. There is a high price to be paid for fearing the threat of the Other more than we fear disappointing Jesus.” (p.19)

Across the Great Plains Conference many work tirelessly for peace with justice, not an uneasy peace of keeping conflicts and injustices hidden and suppressed but true peace aimed at changing unjust structures and circumstances. Church members reach out to others to get to know them and their situations and develop relationships and friendships. They organize visits with

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2020 Conference Advance List

Great Plains Mission Partnerships	Activity	Project
Nigeria Hope for Children of Africa	300	
Nigeria Scholarship for Students	301	
Haiti Covenant	302	
Zimbabwe Chabadza Covenant	303	

Campus Ministries	Activity	Project
Emporia State, Emporia, Kan.	320	29
Fort Hays State, Hays, KS	320	30
Kansas State, Manhattan, Kan.	320	31
University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kan.	320	33
Washburn University, Topeka, Kan.	320	35
Wichita State, Wichita, Kan.	320	36
University of Nebraska, Kearney, Neb.	320	37
University of Nebraska, Lincoln, Neb.	320	269
University of Nebraska/Creighton, Omaha, Neb.	320	270

Great Plains Camping, Inc.	Activity	Project
Camp Chippewa, Ottawa, Kan.	321	38
Camp Comeca, Cozad, Neb.	321	39
Camp Comeca Capital Campaign	321	192
Camp Fontanelle, Nickerson, NE	321	40
Camp Horizon, Arkansas City, Kan.	321	41
Camp Norwesca, Chadron, Neb.	321	42
Camp Lakeside, Scott City, Kan.	321	43

Great Plains Ethnic Ministries	Activity	Project
Hispanic/Latino Ministries, general	345	
Cristo Poder de Dios, Grace UMC, Hastings, Neb.	347	
Centro de Alabanza y Adoracion, Gering, Neb.	350	
El Mesias UMC, Wichita First UMC, Wichita, Kan.	352	
Centro de Gracia, Olathe, Kan.	354	
Nueva Vida, Holton Evangel UMC, Holton, Kan.	355	
Casa de Oracion, Dodge City First UMC, Dodge City, Kan.	348	
Rosa de Saron, Liberal, Kan.	349	
Comunidad Cristiana, St. James UMC, Bellevue, Neb.	357	
Center of Grace Hispanic Ministry, Grace UMC, Omaha, Neb.	362	
Native American Ministries	360	
Sacred Winds Native Mission Congregation, Lincoln, Neb.	361	
Korean UMC, Wichita, Kan.	370	
Danner Memorial Scholarship for African-American Students	375	
New Visions Community UMC, Lincoln, Neb.	996	

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Conference Advance List (continued)

Great Plains Local Missions	Activity	Project
Seminary Scholarship Endowment	900	
New Church Development	934	
Lincoln Connection Point	934	357
Great Plains Peace with Justice	960	
Hunger	967	
Disaster Response Fund	975	
Rebuilding Great Plains Churches Fund	976	
Volunteers in Mission	981	
Common Ground, Elwood, Kan.	982	
Crowell Health Services, Blair, Neb.	990	
Crossroads Center, Hastings, Neb.	991	
Fairfield Outreach & Sponsors Association (FOSA)	992	
Wesley Towers, Hutchinson, Kan.	993	
First UMC Television Ministry, Wichita, Kan.	995	
Sunrise Community Services, Chadron, Neb.	997	
Forest Park Conference and Retreat Center, Topeka, Kan.	1000	

Mission Agency Support (All agencies receiving Mission Agency Support are automatically part of the Conference Advance list.)

Colleges/Universities	Activity	Project
Nebraska Wesleyan University – Lincoln, Neb.	700	
Baker University – Baldwin City, Kan.	701	
Saint Paul School of Theology – Leawood, Kan., & Oklahoma City, Okla.	702	
Kansas Wesleyan University – Salina, Kan.	703	
Southwestern College – Winfield, Kan.	704	

Health & Welfare Institutions	Activity	Project
UM Homes/Aldersgate Village (Good Samaritan Fund) – Topeka, Kan.	710	
Asbury Park (Good Samaritan Fund) – Newton, Kan.	711	
GraceMed Health Clinic – Wichita, Kan.	712	
Released and Restored – Lincoln, Omaha, Tecumseh and York, Neb.	713	
EmberHope (Youthville) – Newton, Dodge City and Wichita, Kan.	714	
Epworth Village – York, Neb.	715	
E.C. Tyree Health & Dental Clinic – Wichita, Kan.	716	

Ministries with the Poor	Activity	Project
United Methodist Ministries (The Big Garden) – Omaha, Neb.	720	
Immigrant Legal Center (JFON) – Nebraska	721	
Friendship House of Hope – Ogden, Kan.	722	
Wesley House – Pittsburg, Kan.	723	
Fellowship and Faith – Topeka, Kan.	724	
UM Open Door – Wichita, Kan.	725	
Genesis Family Health (UM Western Kansas Mexican-American Ministries) – Kan.	726	
Living Hope UMC – Omaha, Neb.	727	

Ecumenical/Interchurch organizations	Activity	Project
Rural Response Hotline (Interchurch Ministries of NE)	731	

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legislators at the state and the federal level, they participate in letter-writing campaigns advocating for better laws or they contact their legislators regularly and faithfully by phone. They attend vigils and marches. In her book, "Raise your voice" author Kathy Khang encourages us to ask ourselves the question: "How did God design you to communicate with others? Not everyone is called to be a writer or community developer, but everyone is called to do something and be present." (p. 60) And reflecting on the story of Moses being called by God to confront Pharaoh, she says, "We don't know the power of our voices until we try it." (p. 33) How can we invite more people to join us on the journey of working for peace with justice? To use our voices?

In 2018, many churches in the Great Plains Conference supported Peace with Justice Sunday with their prayers and offerings. As always, 50% of the offerings go to the General Board of Church and Society for peace and justice projects around the world. Fifty percent stay in our conference. During the last year, PWJ funds helped support the following:

Scholarships for seven people to attend 2018 Ecumenical Advocacy Days in Washington, D.C., and make congressional visits advocating for immigration reform treating each human being as a child of God.

The Micah Corps internship ministry in a variety of ways. Immigration events in collaboration with the Omaha Area Sanctuary Network and the Schlegel Center for Service and Justice at Creighton University in Omaha with a variety of speakers and activities.

United Methodists for Kairos Response in their work for peace with justice for all who live in the Holy Land. Peace organizations in Kansas and Nebraska who do excellent work: Nebraskans For Peace, the Topeka Center for Peace and Justice, and the South Central Peace and Social Justice Center in Wichita.

The PWJ coordinator activities throughout the year included speaking at several events and sharing in worship, working with the Holy Land Task Force in support of an educational speaking tour last fall, and being active with the Great Plains Immigration

Rapid Response Team and the South Central Jurisdictional Immigration Task Force. Resources are shared when requested or through facebook and articles in GPconnect.

Great Plains churches – PLEASE support Peace with Justice Sunday. This year, Peace with Justice Sunday falls on June 16 (it is always the Sunday after Pentecost). Local churches can also choose another Sunday to observe this special Sunday. Resources can be found at <http://www.umcsgiving.org/ministry-articles/peace-with-justice-sunday>.

“God says: Don’t be afraid. I am with you.” Isaiah 45:5

Holy Land Task Force

Carol Ekdahl Garwood, chairperson

The resolution “Christians in the Holy Land”, passed at the 2015 Annual Conference, called for the creation of a task force to review and research actions that can be taken to respond to requests by our UMC missionaries and our Palestinian sisters and brothers in Christ to formulate recommendations for our Great Plains conference delegates to General Conference. The goal is “to reject all acts of aggression and violence, to respect the equality and dignity of all the region’s people, and to forge solutions based on the principles of international laws and human rights.”The task force has been offering educational events about the current situation in the Holy Land in the following ways:

- Two resolutions were presented at the 2018 Annual Conference session; “Consider Investing in Wespath’s ‘Social Values Choice’ Suite of Funds’,” and “Advocating for the Rights of Children Living Under Israeli Occupation.” Neither of the resolutions passed, but the conversation and discussion around the resolutions was informational.
- In September, the task force hosted events in Topeka, Salina, Grand Island, and Lincoln, Nebraska. The events featured Janet Lahr Lewis, a recently retired commissioned missionary with the General Board of Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church.

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- Lahr Lewis volunteered as personal assistant for H.E. Archbishop Emeritus Elias Chacour in the Galilee at Mar Elias Educations Institutions (a UMC Advance Project), where the campus was still under construction from 1994-1997. During her many years serving as the United Methodist liaison in Palestine and Israel, she has shared her experiences and her knowledge of the region, its history and the current struggle of the Palestinian people with many Volunteer in Mission Teams.
- In October, I traveled to the Holy Land as a participant on a Living Stones Pilgrimage with “Pilgrims of Ibillin,” an Israel/Palestine Study Tour. This trip provided me with an opportunity to meet Pilgrims of Ibillin’s peace-building partners in Ibillin, Zababdeh, Ramallah, Jerusalem, Bethlehem and Ramle. I was also able to hear from leaders of organizations on both sides of the Green Line that seek a nonviolent path to just peace. One of the highlights of the trip for me was meeting with british journalist, Jonathan Cook.

I continue to serve on the Steering Committee for United Method-ists For Kairos Response.

Information is being shared on the “Holy Land Task Force – Great Plains Conference” Facebook page.

OTHER**Committee on Lay Servant Ministry**

Mary Feit CLSp, Director of Lay Servant Ministry

The mission of the Great Plains Conference Committee on Lay Servant Ministry is to empower and strengthen the role of laity in the missional priorities of the conference. Recognizing that all Christians are called to faith and discipleship, the goal of the Lay Servant Ministries program is to enhance lay person’s leadership and discipleship skills to better equip them to live out their call to mission and ministry.

We did apply for and received a grant from the Nebraska United Methodist Foundation to provide financial support for lay persons in leadership positions to attend advanced leadership development at the Leadership Institute, sponsored by the Church of the

Resurrection. Applications will be made available this summer.

We continue to record lay persons activity on our database and have made it available to District Superintendents and Administrative Assistances. The database provides a permanent and accessible tool for identifying lay persons and their gifts and talents, plan for training events, and for maintaining up-to-date contact information.

The GPCCLSM is offering for lay leaders through the district networks and strategic planning teams. We believe this will strengthen the clergy/laity partnership and enhance the missional focus of local churches and provide opportunities for lay persons to more fully be involved in discipleship opportunities.

The role of the lay servant in the mission of the conference is supported by offering a wide variety of LSM training throughout the conference which focus on developing leadership as well as discipleship skills. We advocate for laity by identifying the role of the Lay Servant in the conference strategic plan as well as providing informational sessions to district superintendents, district administrative assistants, clergy, as well as laity, on the role of the Lay Servant.

Great Plains Conference Lay Leader Report

Lisa Maupin, Conference Lay Leader

The laity of the Great Plains have continued to lead in our communities with humility, grace, love, energy and compassion. Every day the laity in our congregations are teaching Sunday School, providing meals to grieving families, reaching out to the community in mission and justice, and developing new ministries to energize congregations and communities.

Challenges and perseverance

2018-2019 proved to be a challenging year for the United Methodist Church and our congregations as clergy and laity navigated the information, discussions and concerns surrounding the 2019 Special Called Session of the General Conference in St. Louis. Lay and clergy leaders were called upon to be not only informed but interpreters of the information to others. It was a difficult navigation process for many individuals and congregations in terms of emotional, spiritual and personal uncertainties.

The Great Plains also experienced devastating natural disasters in the spring. Communities in both Nebraska and Kansas experienced extreme flooding and resulting devastation to towns, farm and ranch

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land and infrastructure. Laity were one of the groups that responded in an immediate and efficient manner as deployed trained early responders, raising funds and UMCOR kit collection, leading, hosting and participating in early response training, providing meals and boarding to teams of ERTs.

Through all of the challenges presented this year, the laity of the Great Plains continued their work of doing amazing ministries in their mission fields. People were fed and clothed. Choirs sang. Children and youth were sent to camp. VBS and Sunday School was taught. Community outreach activities planned and celebrated. The hands, feet and voice of God was experienced, seen and heard.

Additions to the conference lay leadership team

Two new conference associate lay leaders are joining the Lay Leadership team. Randall Hodgkinson, (First UMC Topeka, Kansas) and Robin Bock, (Grace UMC, Macksville, Kansas) have joined Keith Olson, (Grant UMC, Grant, Nebraska) as the Great Plains associate lay leaders. Each associate brings unique gifts, talents and experiences to the leadership team and are great representatives of the breadth of laity in the Great Plains Annual Conference.

Looking forward

The lay leadership team will be working with other laity groups such as lay servant ministries in the conference to identify leadership training tools, mentor new leaders, strengthen existing lay-driven ministries and promote resources for local congregations to develop laity.

It is an exciting time for leadership development in our conference and it is our intent to be of assistance in this effort on the local, district and conference levels.

Great Plains United Methodist Women

Karen Dunlap, conference president

United Methodist Women inherits the vision and toil of women's missionary societies of eight denominations since 1869. Its 150-year legacy started when the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society first organized in Boston in response to a lack of women's health in India.

Women in the Methodist and Evangelical United Brethren traditions organized about the same time in history (1869-1893) when women and children were legally classified as "chattel, legally

dead, non-persons.” There was little service to women because of prejudice and limitations of cultural attitudes in the church and in society.

In 1869, Mrs. William Butler and Mrs. Edwin Parker, wives of missionaries to India, were home on furlough. They spoke to a group of eight women in Boston. Mrs. Butler told about the desperate spiritual and physical needs of women in India. A male doctor could not treat women. Schooling for girls was almost non-existent. Single, trained and dedicated women were needed for medical and educational work.

The women who were present called another meeting of women, wrote a constitution, and organized the Methodist Woman’s Foreign Missionary Society (WFMS). By November 1869, the newly formed organization raised funds and sent Isabella Thoburn, an educator, and Dr. Clara Swain, a doctor, to India.

Thoburn began a school with six young girls in Lucknow. This school expanded to include Isabella Thoburn College, the first women’s college in Asia. Dr. Swain began her medical work, resulting in the establishment of the first women’s hospital in Asia. Both institutions are still serving the people of India.

MISSION AGENCIES

Colleges/Universities

Baker University

Dr. Lynne Murray, President

Since 1858, Baker University has been committed to providing a rigorous, relevant education to generations of students in the United Methodist tradition. The values statement of the university includes these words:

- **Student learning and academic excellence.** We provide quality learning environments promoting intellectual, professional, and personal development resulting in lifelong learning.
- **Critical thinking, inquiry and freedom of expression.** We challenge all participants to think critically using open inquiry

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and freedom of expression.

- **Integrating learning with faith and values.** We expect all participants to be open to questions of faith and values as part of intellectual inquiry in the United Methodist tradition. In particular, we expect personal and professional responsibility that is based on high standards of ethical conduct.
- **Connections.** We promote a community of belonging and Baker family connections, which result in lifelong associations.
- **Inclusiveness.** We embrace diversity of community, thought and expression.
- **Service to the community.** We address the civic, social, health, and environmental needs of our global community.

We are proud of our strong affiliation with the United Methodist Church.

The current academic year has brought much growth and achievement to Baker, and we are looking forward to the future. As Baker endeavors to develop responsible global citizens who think critically, communicate effectively, act ethically, serve generously, and live fully, two December graduates exhibited these characteristics by participating in an excavation in Israel last summer with Dr. Nicholas Pumphrey. The director of the dig was highly impressed by our students' desire to work hard and ability to think critically. We also inducted two members to our Faculty Hall of Fame in February: Dr. Peggy Harris, who was active in the education of undergraduate and graduate students during her 30 years of service to Baker, and Prof. Kay Osinski, whose tenure at the School of Nursing started in 1991, the year it was established.

Baker students excel in the classroom and on the playing field. This fall, football and men's soccer qualified for their national tournaments and three members of the cross country team ran in the national meet. Wrestler Lucas Lovvorn won his second national title, and Moses Watson was the national champion in the indoor 3,000-meter race walk.

The Rev. Kevin Hopkins is completing his fifth year serving as minister to the university. He is the third minister in Baker's long history. Spiritual life thrives at Baker. Osborne Chapel overflows

during Thursday chapel services, which are student led and spirit-filled. Six Baker students are exploring calls to ministry. The Baker Ambassadors continue to provide a source of spiritual leadership to the university and the surrounding community. Called to Greatness and Fellowship of Christian Athletes also offer spiritual opportunities for our students, and the Chapel Praise Band and BU Concert Choir make weekend visits to area churches.

I am privileged to serve as Baker's 29th president. We continue to raise funds to support scholarships for students and for academic and faculty excellence. I will continue to build on the foundation of past presidents and faculty members.

Kansas Wesleyan University Matt Thompson, president & CEO

Kansas Wesleyan University believes in the United Methodist commitment to intellectual and spiritual development occurring together at higher education institutions. We share the common belief that education is a part of the redemptive work of the church. In the last year, the university focused on blending strategy and spirituality into a singular educational focus centered on student experiential growth and opportunity. President and CEO Dr. Matt Thompson committed to writing that belief in the form of a three-year strategic plan titled "The Power of Kansas Wesleyan," an adjunct to the oft-heard campus mantra of "The Power of And."

The plan was developed by faculty and staff over the course of two years, a natural follow-up to a five-year strategic plan that had reached its conclusion by January 2018, and takes the unique approach of strategizing for the long-term future with short-term goals. The concept is simple in its philosophy (better serve students and better serve the region), yet detailed in its breadth and execution.

First, it's a three-year strategic plan rather than the typical five years, a timeline that pays homage to the rapidity of change in today's scope of higher education, fraught with challenges ranging from changing high school graduate demographics, the role of college degrees in society, and evolving needs and expectations of employers.

With that, “The Power of Kansas Wesleyan” focuses not just on the classroom, but also embraces the concept of holistic, integrated learning experiences (academics, co-curricular, and extracurricular activities) tailored to the needs of our students and our communities.

Holistic education involves every aspect of the student experience so they are developed fully, and prepared upon graduation to march into their new world as freshly minted leaders. The strategy dictates that those experiences be in alignment, including spiritual well-being.

One approach has been the formation of a Campus Ministry Visioning Task Force. This task force has focused on allowing Kansas Wesleyan to strengthen the reach and effectiveness of its Campus Ministry programs for students, faculty, staff and community members. Some early outcomes of the task force are the creation of peer ministers in residence halls, and working in conjunction with faculty and staff to bring a message to local United Methodist Churches to form partnerships with willing congregations. That is in addition to other ministry services, such as Monday Night Alive, a gathering each week of students interested in furthering their spiritual understanding.

Our 3+3 Master of Divinity Program offers students the opportunity to earn a Bachelor of Arts degree with a Christian Leadership major and a Master of Divinity from Saint Paul School of Theology in Leawood, Kansas, or Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. With an accelerated path to a M.Div. upon graduation, students will be ready for ministry in a church setting, chaplaincy, nonprofit or other forms of religious leadership. Students condense the four-year degree requirements for the Christian Leadership major into the first three years, followed by the completion of the three-year Master of Divinity. The first year of the M.Div. courses at Saint Paul count as electives to complete the bachelor’s degree at KWU. Students then continue the final two years at Saint Paul to complete their master’s degree. Especially using the 3+3 program, it is more important than ever in our restless world for persons of faith to step into positions of leadership. Our close local partnerships provide every student with the opportunity to put their faith into action in real-world settings through field

placement and meaningful local and regional internships.

The overall Kansas Wesleyan experience prepares students to become liberally educated faith leaders who can think critically, solve complex problems and demonstrate strong communication skills.

Excellence in extracurricular activities is rooted in the plan, as well. Our athletics involvement this past fall was the buzz about campus, the community and the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA). For the first time in our 132-year history, the football squad advanced to the national semi-final game in the playoffs, while our men's and women's soccer teams won division championships and national playoff berths in their own right. The women's volleyball team had a stellar season that included a playoff spot, and the women's basketball team earned an invitation to its national tournament.

Off-campus also stands to be a beneficiary of the extensive planning document. KWU believes its mission includes answering the question of how to better serve our local community through a firm and dedicated belief that the community is a significant part of the educational experience for our students.

The proof is in the pudding: Last summer, KWU was named by online media site Thrillist as the best school in Kansas to attend if you wanted to find a job upon graduation. The rankings were based on data collection by Zippia, a career expert company, using the U.S. Department of Education's Integrated Post-Secondary Education Data System.

In final analysis, Kansas Wesleyan charted a course for a bright future for faculty, staff and students. That light continues to shine bright, and the entire campus gets to share in those benefits.

The campus community has concerns related to the recent General Assembly vote for the Traditional Plan. We will watch the outcome of the coming months and the finalization of the plan. This plan is not in alignment with our beliefs. You may read President Thompson's open letter in the Salina Journal regarding the church's vote: <https://www.salina.com/>

[news/20190305/umc-vote-not-representative-of-kwu](https://www.kwu.edu/news/20190305/umc-vote-not-representative-of-kwu).

We continue to value our relationship with the Great Plains Annual Conference. As you visit with the youth of your congregation, we hope that you are encouraging them to attend one of your United Methodist affiliated colleges and universities as they pursue their degrees. To do so allows them to grow in faith and intellect, which allows them to best be prepared to be successful citizens.

For more information, visit www.kwu.edu. Go Coyotes!

Nebraska Wesleyan University

Nebraska Wesleyan University continues to be a community dedicated to intellectual and personal growth within the context of a liberal arts education and in an environment of Christian concern. In this we pursue the educational mission of the United Methodist Church, in partnership with the Great Plains Conference.

One of our greatest accomplishments was the opening of Acklie Hall of Science in January. This is the first academic building constructed at NWU since the 1980s. It houses the biology, chemistry and psychology departments. We welcomed the largest group of new traditional undergraduates since the university's founding, with 545 first-year and transfer students. Our retention rate for these students from first to second semester was high at 94%. Students are finding meaning in their education at Nebraska Wesleyan and demonstrate it by the multitude of ways in which they serve in the community.

In August, we invite first-year students along with staff and faculty to participate in a service learning event called "Lend a Hand to Lincoln." This serves as their introduction to social responsibility. The campus community raises money for Relay for Life, participates in blood drives, and contributes to the United Way. This year we also sent two teams to serve in reconstruction efforts in Puerto Rico. Through UMCOR and the Methodist Church of Puerto Rico, we assisted in rebuilding homes of three families devastated by Hurricane Maria. We recently assisted in flood relief efforts in Nebraska by gathering supplies for the Ponca Nation. We look forward to other opportunities to volunteer with flood relief efforts.

This was the first year that NWU's interfaith student organization, Bridge, had a presence on campus. Bridge students are committed to interfaith cooperation and literacy on campus. They have raised awareness about different religious holy days and have built bridges through dialogue between people of different faith traditions.

In July, we will welcome NWU's 17th president, Dr. Darrin Good. He comes to us from Whittier College in California. Dr. Good completed his doctoral degree at the University of Kansas. He is committed to NWU's core values of excellence, diversity, community, stewardship, liberal arts, and personal attention to students. We look forward to his leadership in the years to come. Dr. Good will build upon the achievements of our current president, Dr. Fred Ohles, who is retiring after 12 years of devoted service. We are grateful for Dr. Ohles' mission and ministry at Nebraska Wesleyan University.

As a university, we are committed to our relationship with the United Methodist Church. The decision made by the General Conference in February 2019 was deeply disappointing for us as a campus community. We will continue to work with the United Methodist Church, as we also continue to be in conversation over the best way in which our relationship enables us to prepare young minds for a diverse world.

Finally, our work as a university can only be possible through the support of the churches from the Great Plains Conference. Your support helps provide scholarships to United Methodist students. During 2018-19, 191 United Methodist students received \$3,583,938 in scholarships, grants and tuition waivers provided by Nebraska Wesleyan University. This includes 98 students who received \$82,250 in need-based Great Plains United Methodist Scholarships and four ministerial dependent students who received \$66,504 in ministerial discounts. NWU continues to partner with Lydia Patterson Institute (LPI); in 2018-19, we equipped four students with \$150,478 in tuition, fees and other waivers.

Your partnership helps us to be faithful to our mission and to the transformation of the world. Thank you for your support.

Southwestern College

Southwestern College continues to see **positive enrollment**

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growth. The college welcomed 194 freshmen on move-in day. The first, second and fourth largest freshman classes have enrolled at Southwestern in the last three years; currently holding the third spot is the Centennial Class of 1985. Main campus enrollment for the fall of 2018 reached 611 students, representing the **largest total main campus enrollment in 25 years.**

The college continues to press forward, making charted **progress on a path to financial strength.** Reduced expenditures and increased enrollment revenue have greatly improved the college's position. President Brad Andrews affirmed at his recent State of the College address that we are on track to reach a **balanced budget state in two to three years.**

While the college continues to make strides to strengthen viability and market position – the faculty continues to offer a curriculum rooted in transformational education. In support of a strong student experience, donors have recently announced gifts allowing for the dedication of a **Center for Career and Vocation** as well as a **Collaborative Learning Lab for the Natural Sciences** – both are anticipated to open in the fall of 2019.

The **Discipleship program** under the leadership of the Rev. Molly Just has 37 students in the program, 12 of whom say they are interested in serving in vocational ministry, and six of whom are exploring theological education after college. Last summer, the program took an education and service trip to Portland, Oregon. This summer, they will travel to Belize. www.facebook.com/DiscipleshipSC

Worship Outreach, directed by Martin Rude, celebrated its 25th anniversary this academic year. The team continues to play in Wednesday chapel services and lead worship at local churches once per month. www.facebook.com/WorshipOutreach

The **campus chaplain**, Rev. Ben Hanne, moved from the Social Sciences division into Student Affairs and now has an office in the student union. He continues to host weekly chapel services on Wednesdays and serve communion every Thursday. www.facebook.com/chapelsc

Great Plains elder, the Rev. Wendy Mohler-Seib, will be the **visiting**

scholar for 2019-2020 academic year. She will add that role to her work as director of faith formation for the Institute for Discipleship. Wendy is currently pursuing her doctoral work in practical theology through Nazarene Theological College at the University of Manchester in England.

The college hosted **three camps for teens** last summer:

- Summit Youth Academy, which explores a faith-filled approach to vocational discernment; especially how that relates to social issues such as poverty.
- Amp It Up worship band camp, which helps young people learn to work together to lead worship music.
- The Wichita East and West districts' first confirmation camp, especially geared at churches which don't host confirmation classes within their church.

The Richard & Julia Wilke Institute for Discipleship launched a new series of online ministry certifications this year through BeADisciple.com. Certifications are currently offered in Evangelism, Spiritual Formation, and Children's Ministry. Certifications in Youth Ministry, Congregational Care, Rural Ministry, Ministry on the Margins (urban ministry), and Christian Education are planned for later in 2019. www.beadisciple.com/ifd-certifications/

The Institute also launched "The Listening Chair" podcast last fall, which focuses on stories of personal vocational discernment. It featured several members of the Great Plains Conference during its first season and recorded several interviews at The One Event in January. www.institutefordiscipleship.org/podcast

Last fall, Charles Kopke, a longtime supporter of Southwestern College, donated a beautifully preserved **1611 Geneva Bible** to the college. The Bible is on display in Deets Library.

The **circa. 1892 Rev. Augustus Phillips George Victorian-era crazy quilt**, gifted to the Kansas West Conference in 2013, was given a new home in Wroten Hall on the Southwestern campus last fall. Rev. A.P George was on the committee that determined the location of the new "Southwest Kansas Conference College," served as the first Presiding Elder of the Garden City District, and had a life-long interest in education. We're so proud to host this artifact from the early days of Methodism in the Great Plains.

Learn more about the Center for Career and Vocation and other happenings at Southwestern by reading our most recent edition of the Southwesterner <https://issuu.com/southwesterncollege>, additionally, an archive of news releases can be found at www.sckans.edu/news-and-events/

Health and Welfare Institutions

Aldersgate Village

Jerry Ney, President & CEO

Aldersgate Village is a faith-based, senior living neighborhood open to people of all denominations and backgrounds, and our goal is to ensure that seniors receive compassionate, person-centered health care in a warm and welcoming community. Established in 1904, our organization has been fulfilling this mission for 115 years.

Major Accomplishments

Located on a scenic 168-acre campus at 7220 SW Asbury Drive in Topeka, Kansas, Aldersgate Village features 423 total living units, including 156 maintenance-free, independent living villas, cottages, garden homes and apartments; 12 Home Plus units; 59 licensed assisted living apartments; and a skilled nursing care facility with a 196-bed capacity.

One of our most important achievements during 2018 was to add a state-of-the-art Home Plus residential option on our campus. Home Plus is an innovative senior living alternative that marries the comforts of home with individualized levels of care. Aldersgate Village's Home Plus features 12 private suites with full baths; a staffed kitchen; and shared dining, living and outdoor areas. Construction of the new facility was completed in December 2018, and 11 of the 12 rooms are now occupied.

While this level of care has traditionally been offered in assisted living facilities, Home Plus enables individualized clinical care to advance into nursing-home-level care if necessary—all in a comfortable, home-like setting. In addition, with Aldersgate's on-site rehabilitation and skilled nursing facilities, we are uniquely able to continue serving Home Plus residents as their

care needs evolve.

An additional benefit is that revenue generated by the new Home Plus is helping offset the costs of unreimbursed care in the Health Center for the many poor and elderly residents who have exhausted their resources and have nowhere else to turn. This is the heart of our charitable, faith-based mission—providing quality, loving health care for seniors in need.

New Initiatives

To ensure that we remain the region’s leader in senior care, our strategic initiatives continue to take a forward-thinking and trend-setting approach. As a result, we are continuing into 2019 with capital improvements throughout our facility, with a focus on incorporating the latest innovations in aging services.

Renovations are already underway for many of our independent living residences. Remodeled apartments now incorporate modern finishes and a welcoming open floor plan to more easily accommodate seniors with mobility issues, and the exterior of the apartment complex is being aesthetically updated to achieve a new, modern look for our campus. Likewise, our cottages and garden homes are being modernized and attractively enhanced for notable curb appeal.

By keeping our facilities up-to-date and visually appealing, we are maintaining our long-term value and affirming our leadership position in the senior services market. We are also ensuring that our community beautifully represents our residents, our organization, and our extended Methodist family.

In addition to updating current buildings, we will also be completing an analysis of market opportunities for future development on our campus. Stormont Vail Hospital has begun site work for a new medical clinic on seven acres of land near our frontage property, which our organization sold to Stormont Vail in 2016. This development has sparked enthusiasm for additional commercial development, and we look forward to determining the possibilities.

Improving the Lives of Seniors

As a faith-based organization, we provide both health and spiritual

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care for seniors and are blessed to have a chaplain available for on-site pastoral services. Residents enjoy participating in weekly worship services and Bible studies. They are also grateful to receive prayer, counseling and guidance from trusted clergy.

Caring for seniors, including those who have exhausted their resources and are unable to pay, is also part of Aldersgate's Christian mission. In response to this calling, we lovingly accept many needy seniors who rely on Medicaid, despite that these services are not financially profitable. As a result of this service, Aldersgate Village provided \$3.3 million in uncompensated care in 2018 making us, once again, Kansas' largest provider of long-term care services under Medicaid.

In addition to the uncompensated care of the Medicaid services we provide, we also offer additional charitable care through our Good Samaritan Fund. Through this fund, which receives some support from the conference, Aldersgate Village provided \$190,000 in direct charitable care to frail and needy seniors in 2018.

Strong ties with our church family

Despite all the challenges of fulfilling this difficult mission day after day, we are able to continue fighting the good fight because of the prayerful support of our United Methodist Church family. We especially rely on the wisdom and guidance of the Rev. Kay Scarbrough, Topeka District superintendent, whose continued service on our board of trustees is highly valuable to our organization – much like the prior clergy who have graciously served.

We have also been blessed to have strong relationships with many local United Methodist churches, and we look forward to continuing to build relationships throughout the Great Plains Conference. Please hold us up in prayer, so we may continue fulfilling our mission of faithfully enhancing the lives of seniors served.

E.C. Tyree Health & Dental Clinic

Schaunta James-Boyd

This has been another exciting year for the Tyree Clinic to fill in the gap in care to many throughout our community. The team has continued to work closely together to improve communication, best practices, and visioning for the future of Tyree.

This has been a year full of changes in preparation for submitting our application to become a federally qualified health center look a like. The team has worked with an array of consultants to assist us in pieces of the application. The Clinic has undergone implementing two new electronic health records systems for both our medical and dental components. A variety of new policies and procedures, trainings, and board members. We are almost ready to begin our application. It is our goal to be able to apply before the end of the year.

Tyree has provided care for 4,904 individual patients and 8,056 clinic visits. The Clinic has written off over 436,000 in charitable care for 2018. We have continued working with individuals and families to explore options and enroll in health insurance plans.

The Healthy Smiles Program has maintained partnerships with 12 USD 259 schools. We have added one additional USD 259 school for a total of 13 schools. The dental outreach team continues to work with all three TOPS Learning Centers and continue to work on other organizations to partner with throughout the community. The Healthy Smiles Program brings oral health education, screenings, fluoride varnish, sealants and cleanings to the schools. We refer back to the clinic if patients aren't connected to a dental home.

A new partnership was started with Open Door at Opportunity Drive. It is our hope to bring both medical and dental services to the facility and be able to refer patients back to the Clinic and connect them to care.

I continue to be amazed at all that God is doing through the clinic and its staff. I request continued prayers for increase in positive publicity, resources in funding, and impactful partnership to take

the clinic to a new level of excellence.

EmberHope

Nickaila Sandate, President and CEO

This past year, EmberHope Youthville embraced our historical roots in the Kansas Methodist Church and Great Plains Conference with a joyous return to our original home in Newton. At the same time, we set our sights to the future by creating the framework for an alternative school environment for at-risk youth and developing programs to strengthen support for families in need.

Guided with the knowledge that the Methodist church founded our organization to provide aid to children in need and to help parents care for children during times of crisis, our strategic goals remain focused on the physical, emotional and spiritual health of children and families. With 60 percent of the board leadership being United Methodist clergy, a steadfast focus on serving others is of critical importance to EmberHope Youthville.

We are privileged to have served more than 200 females, ages 9 to 18 years of age, in 2019 from our Newton campus. And proud to report a 95 percent success rate in either successfully discharging them from the system or maintaining placement for these fragile girls in one of more than 200 foster care homes.

Each month, approximately 225 EmberHope Youthville foster homes provide a stable, caring environment to an average of 300 children. Guided by EmberHope Youthville staff with a thorough understanding of trauma-informed care, our goal for the coming year is to enhance the support we provide to our foster parents by offering trauma training to them as well.

Our Community of Hope initiative provides the opportunity for the church to minister and serve children and families. Children in care in 2019 have severe emotional and mental health needs. God calls us to support the families that are willing to assume responsibility for care of these youth.

Many have answered the call.

- Cherished are the churches that adopt foster families into a Community of Hope, supporting them with prayers, meals, donations and volunteered time
- We realized a 100% increase in the number of ornaments collected during Christmas Connection, providing foster families much needed resources during the holiday
- Twelve UMC provide office space for EmberHope Youthville workers across the state, allowing critical access to provide service to foster families
- Numerous UMC offer space for training classes for new foster parents and staff
- Many host donation drives, replenishing frequently used items

Opportunity Academy opened with a pilot classroom during January of this year. In partnership with Newton Public Schools, the class consisted of seven female students, all residents of Ember-Hope Youthville cottages. With the guidance and assistance from a trauma based relational informed (TBRI) instructor from the public-school system, each girl completed online coursework at her own pace. We were proud to celebrate three high school graduates from Opportunity Academy in the first year.

Due to the success of the pilot class, the school will open with an administrative staff and serve 36 to 50 students from the Ember-Hope Youthville campus and Newton community. Renovations to the school building which was built in 1975 will begin during the summer months.

Opportunity Academy graduates will be armed with the education and workforce skills needed to break the cycle of poverty that exists for so many of the children that age out of the child welfare system. Mission funds from the Great Plains Conference and the numerous Kansas Methodist churches, UMM and UMW assisted with this important project – vital to meeting the needs of today's children.

We are encouraged by the movement forward over the past year but there is still much to be done. The need for services continues to grow. Renovations to Opportunity Academy and sorely needed updates to the housing for youth living on campus, as well as new programming opportunities to help fami-

lies stay together bring challenges and exciting new opportunities for the coming year. We continue to rely on clergy as leaders and support on the part of the church to make our work possible.

Epworth Village

This year Epworth Village is celebrating 130 years of serving children and families! Join us in celebrating our 130th anniversary October 17, 2019, at our Heart of the Matter fundraiser and anniversary celebration. Visit our website or call for more information: www.epworthvillage.org.

This past year, Epworth Village served a total of 421 people from infants to adults. This was a 24% increase from 2017. We continue to grow our programs and aspire to serve even more families and children with our high impact and quality services this year.

On May 15, 2018, we opened our new program, Little Jewels Child Care & Enrichment Center, and by year-end we served 41 infants through pre-kindergarten, 30 families/households and 49 parents with quality care and early childhood education, parent education and family resources. One of our goals in opening Little Jewels Child Care & Enrichment Center was to make quality care and education accessible, regardless of family income, with a special target population of low-income families- especially single mother head of households. For this group in York County the US Census Bureau estimates 100% poverty when at least one child under the age of 5 is in the household. Forty percent of the families we served last year were low-income and 33% of the families served were single female head of household. We are proud that we are able to do this and provide affordable quality child care and early childhood education for these families and their children.

Our In-home Family Services program served a total of 259 people which included 123 adults/parents and 136 children by providing quality services, support and advocacy individualized to meet the needs of each family, parent and child. By working with the family as a whole we are able to empower the entire family with the tools necessary for long lasting

positive impact. This past year, our Foster Care program was consistently the top performer in the state of Nebraska for the highest percentage of foster homes with older youth ages 12 through 19, which the state considers a harder group to find foster placements for. We are blessed with committed, talented, and loving foster families.

Epworth Village is transforming lives through our high quality services that not only improve lives in the short-term but also provide long-term impact whether this is through providing access, regardless of family income, to quality early childhood education which enhances each child's long-term educational trajectory and provides life lasting impact; through working with the whole family and providing services tailored to each family's needs in order to provide them with the tools necessary for long-term impact; or through providing 24/7 high quality services, responsiveness and support to our foster families and foster children.

We have several initiatives in 2019. We are initiating a recruitment drive for new foster homes, a plan to increase the number of enhanced level foster homes and enhanced training for foster parents. Our child care center will be partnering with our local public school in the 'Child Care Partnership' for teacher training and family engagement/parent education activities.

As a National Mission Institute of the UMW and a ministry and extension of the United Methodist Church, we are a part of a symbiotic relationship and a community of service that serves those in need with God's love and compassion. We continually strive to provide Epworth volunteer service opportunities for United Methodists to put God's love in action. Currently, we are able to provide the Prairie Rivers Disaster Response space for Early Response Training and lodging for volunteer groups that will assist in the relief efforts in Nebraska.

The United Methodist Church support, which includes prayers, volunteers, financial and in-kind donations, of our mission and work with children and families truly helps bring hope and healing to the troubled families and children we serve. We are so grateful for all this love and support that has been given to Epworth Village for 130 years.

GraceMed Health Clinic, Inc.

2018 was a year of growth and change for the GraceMed health care ministry. First, we served a record number of unduplicated patients, 49,966 to be exact, through 124,215 patient visits. This number reflects the fact that GraceMed touches the lives of one out of every 10 residents of the communities we serve: Wichita, Topeka, McPherson and Clearwater. Services provided included primary medical, preventive and restorative dental, vision, behavioral health and pharmacy services. We expect to increase our services to nearly 55,000 unduplicated patients in 2019.

In 2018, we took a step of faith and assumed responsibility for a clinic in Clearwater, Kansas. And, we are currently remodeling a former Safeway grocery store at 1150 N. Broadway in Wichita to become our administrative center. It is a 20,000 -square- feet facility and will house our call center, oral health care outreach, Community Cares, Navigators, referral, medical records, IT, facilities, development, marketing, chaplain and senior management staff. This facility will allow us to bring all our administrative staff under one roof rather than leasing four separate offices. We expect to open this new facility by June 2019. Fund-raising is underway to cover the remodeling cost.

Once all staff have moved into this new building, our main Helen Galloway Clinic will be remodeled to add six dental and six medical rooms – more capacity to provide quality care for more people.

We have been and continue to advocate for Medicaid expansion in Kansas. In 2018, we provided care for over 17,000 uninsured patients. We estimate that at least 15,000 would qualify for Medicaid if expanded. Can you imagine the day when these people no longer have to be concerned about the overwhelming cost of healthcare and whether they are on accident away from bankruptcy. Everyone should have access to quality healthcare and we will continue to advocate for issue – it should be an issue of justice for the church.

Why do we keep growing, you may ask? First, God has called us to ensure that everyone has access to high-quality, affordable health

care. We have a long way to go before that objective is fulfilled. And, secondly (and more importantly), the platform for providing health care is one of the most effective ways to share Christ and the Hope he provides each of us in life. As patients develop professional relationships with their respective medical, dental and/or behavioral health providers as well as our Chaplains, trust is established and with trust, we have the opportunity to pray with our patients and encourage them in their life journey. As the Spirit of God leads, we often ask patients if they have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and, if not, would they consider such a relationship? Our mission is not only to heal the physical body, but also the mind and the spirit of each person who walks through our doors. We trust the Great Plains Conference recognizes that GraceMed is one of the most effective evangelical ministries within the conference.

We do appreciate our relationship with the Great Plains Conference and the opportunity we have to enter UMC churches and share about our ministry. And, we certainly appreciate the prayers and financial support from the conference, individual church mission committees, women's groups and individuals. With God's continued guidance and strength, we will continue to glorify Christ through our ministry until he comes again. Blessings to all!

Released and Restored

Rev. Ruth Karlsson, director

Released and Restored continues to share the grace, mercy and love of Christ Jesus with an extremely marginalized population group, prison and jail inmates, the "very least of the least of these."

Ministry Highlights

- EMPWR (Embracing My Personal Worth and Resiliency) – EMPWR our newest program, launched in January 2018 at the Nebraska Correctional Center for Women. It is a 40—contact hour, trauma-informed-care program developed by Released and Restored to address the unique and specific needs of incarcerated women—more than 80% of whom have experienced repeated physical, emotional or sexual violence throughout their lives. EMPWR enables women to accept and believe in their own innate

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dignity and worthy, emboldens them to leave and avoid toxic intimate partner relationships, and equips them to become self-directed and self-sustaining women who can care for themselves and their children.

- Planning With Purpose (PWP) – this our original program, developed by Released and Restored in December 2004. It has been provided continuously for the past 14.5 years. This 40-contact hour program teaches critical thinking and problem solving skills, and invites participants to examine how faith practices and spiritual disciplines influence and enhance those skills.
- Life Skills/Re-Entry Prep (LSRP)— this 40-contact hour program designed by Released and Restored, prepares women and men life productive and law-abiding lives post-release. It focuses on teaching critical thinking, problem solving and conflict resolution skills; as well as preparing women and men to obtain and maintain long-term gainful employment; and teaches basic money management skills.
- Jobs Readiness/Life Skills – this program was designed by Released and Restored for jail inmates who are serving much shorter sentences than those in prison. It is a 12—contact hour program that prepares individuals to return to, or obtain long-term gainful employment, and teaches basic money management
- Worship and celebration of holy communion once a month at the Nebraska State Penitentiary.
- Weekly pastoral care provided at Special Management Units, Lincoln Correctional Center, Nebraska Correctional Center for Women, Nebraska State Penitentiary, Lancaster County Adult Detention Facility, and the Tecumseh State Correctional Institution.
- Ongoing partnerships with Nebraska Wesleyan University, and Concordia University to provide service-learning opportunities to students each semester. In addition, several also serve as interns for us.
- Continued collaboration with the New Visions Community UMC in Lincoln. The Released and Restored offices, computer lab

and classroom are located at the St James Campus of the NV Community in Lincoln. It is at this location that we conduct our Life Skills/Re-Entry Prep program each weekday for individuals from the Community Corrections Center-Lincoln.

The amazing staff and volunteers, many of whom have served time themselves, continue to make this ministry grow and thrive. We are truly, blessed by each of them and their desire and ability to share the love, mercy and grace of Christ with our sisters and brothers who have been, or are incarcerated.

We'd love to hear from you!!! There are tons of ways for you to be involved.

Please like us on facebook, visit us at our website, send us an e-mail, give us a call!

Facebook – Released and Restored

Website – www.releasedandrestored.org

Phone – 402-806-0565

e-mail – info@releasedandrestored.org

Ministries with the Poor

Ogden Friendship House United Methodist Church and House of Hope

Rev. Diana Chapel, pastor and director

“For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.” Matthew 25:35-36

With your generous donations of funds, clothing, household goods and food, Ogden Friendship House of Hope provides for people in need in the small town of Ogden, Kansas. While our church is small, our impact is large in this community of 2,000 residents.

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In 2018 we served 3,369 individuals through a mobile food pantry; 428 persons at our in-house food pantry; provided emergency financial aid for 57 families; hosted an afterschool program for 24 elementary aged children; hosted Narcotics Anonymous, provided food for community feeding programs and served over 2,500 clients in our thrift store.

However, the assistance we provide goes far beyond providing for the physical needs of our clients. We offer relationships friendship, emotional support, compassion and a listening ear. We don't tally the number of these relationships. Nor can we put a price on these relationships and the impact they have. But God surely knows and rejoices.

Two particular instances stand out. C.T. was released from prison after serving 14 years. C.T. had been mentored by our church prior to her release. The House of Hope provided almost everything she needed to set up a household. C.T. has successfully re-integrated into society in Topeka, Kansas, is employed, is involved in her church, and visited our church to tell her story and give her thanks.

A.M. was a combat veteran who was struggling with PTSD. She came in several times a week to shop - but most often just to talk about her struggles. She decided to check out the church and was SO excited about what she was learning in Sunday school and in reading her brand new Bible. On Palm Sunday 2018, she was baptized and joined the church. She had become part of our church family in a very big way.

Six weeks later, A.M. went missing. Church members were part of the search team. After several weeks with no sightings of A.M. the church held a vigil and her family came from all over the country to be present and to continue the search.

Sadly, A.M.'s remains were found in the fall, and a homicide investigation continues to this day. A.M. was given a beautiful celebration of life, both in her adopted home of Ogden and her hometown in Indiana. Her family has become our family. Despite the pain and agony of this situation, her family is comforted that she received Christ in her life just weeks before her disappearance. We will all see her again.

Friends, these relationships and the resources that are provided through the House of Hope would not be possible without the over 30 partnerships we have formed with local businesses, civic groups, individuals and most importantly, churches and church-affiliated groups. We could not do what we do without the support of our conference, our local churches and our United Methodist Women.

This will be my last report to the conference as director of the Ogden Friendship House of Hope, and it has been a privilege and blessing to have served in this capacity for the past nine years. We will continue to serve under new leadership and are blessed to be a blessing to the community of Ogden, Kansas.

Immigrant Legal Center (formerly Justice For Our Neighbors-Nebraska)

Emiliano Lerda, J.D., LL.M., Executive Director

The mission of the Immigrant Legal Center (ILC) is to welcome immigrants into our communities by providing high-quality legal services, education, and advocacy. Our organization was started by the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) and continues its strong connection with the national Justice For Our Neighbors network. In 2019, ILC is proud to celebrate 20 years of service as a Justice For Our Neighbors affiliate.

Last year was an eventful year for ILC. We completed the renovation of our Omaha headquarters at 4223 Center Street and opened five new offices in smaller communities across Nebraska, bringing our statewide total to seven. We are pleased to continue our close relationships with Trinity United Methodist Church in Grand Island and First United Methodist Church in Lexington. We look forward to building relationships with United Methodist Churches and other local community members in Columbus, Crete, Nebraska City, South Sioux City, and Scottsbluff.

ILC is truly grateful for the constancy of the Great Plains Conference's support throughout our organization's growth and development. With your support in 2018, we are proud to report ILC staff

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completed 903 initial client consultations and worked on 3,829 cases. We closed the year with 2,076 open cases among 880 clients. As the immigration policy and enforcement climate has grown more hostile toward the population we serve, ILC recognizes that it is crucial to defend and advance immigrants' interests through policy and advocacy work, as well as through direct legal services. In 2018 our client service and advocacy work included:

- Responding to large-scale immigration raids in O'Neill, Nebraska on August 8, 2018: ILC immediately placed attorneys and paralegals in central Nebraska from Wednesday, August 8 through Tuesday August 14. ILC staff worked tirelessly to coordinate legal services, complete intake forms, locate detained individuals, and meet with or arrange for volunteer attorneys to meet with detained individuals. Once all detainees were identified and located, ILC worked to place those who requested assistance with pro bono attorneys or other nonprofit legal service providers. Out of the 133 individuals detained during the raids, ILC compiled intake information for 85 individuals and worked to secure non profit or pro bono representation for those individuals unable to hire private attorneys. ILC's legal services would not have been possible without the coordination and commitment of the United Methodist Church in O'Neill, the Mercy and Justice Team, and other community organizations to meet the basic food, shelter, and comfort needs of the individuals and families impacted by the raids.
- Contributing to national impact litigation related to asylum access for victims of domestic violence.
- Providing technical legal trainings to nonprofit legal service providers in Nebraska and Iowa.
- Coauthoring Nebraska Legislative Bill 826 (which became an amendment to LB 670): The bill ensures Nebraska judges make findings needed for abused, abandoned, and neglected immigrant youth eligible for Special Immigrant Juvenile Status. Not only was the bill signed into law, the Nebraska Supreme Court issued two favorable decisions, creating statewide precedent protecting vulnerable immigrant youth in Nebraska. See *In re Carlos D.*, 300 Neb. 646 (2018) and *In re Luis J.* 300 Neb. 659 (2018).
- Leading education and advocacy efforts regarding the Depart-

ment of Homeland Security (DHS) proposed changes to the public charge test for immigrants: Until recently, the U.S. government followed the practice of allowing immigrants and their families with certain types of legal status within the United States to seek essential public benefits without fear that it will harm their immigration cases. In 2018, DHS proposed changes to this policy that would make it more difficult for immigrants to maintain or obtain lawful permanent residence in the U.S. The proposal has already created a chilling effect, as some Nebraska families with U.S. citizen children have stopped applying for benefits.

Through all our work, ILC strives to empower the most vulnerable immigrants who have the fewest resources:

- those living in extreme poverty,
- victims fleeing domestic abuse and violent crimes,
- children who have been abused, neglected, and/or abandoned,
- those who would be persecuted if returned to the countries from which they fled.

Together with the compassionate volunteer support of our legal clinics and advocacy efforts, as well as ongoing consultation with the Mercy and Justice Team, the Immigrant Legal Center will continue to serve the mission on which UMCOR founded our organization 20 years ago. We are thankful for the Mission Agency support that we receive from the Great Plains Conference, which helps us fulfill the biblical mission to welcome the stranger as we're directed in Leviticus 19:34, "The alien (stranger) who resides among you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself for you were aliens in the land of Egypt."

United Methodist Open Door, Inc.

Open Door is a public charity that provides food, clothing and shelter to those in need in south central Kansas. The agency:

- operates the largest food pantry in the Wichita area;
- distributes government commodities to elders in 11 Kansas counties;

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- operates a day shelter for the homeless that serves over 200 a day;
- provides housing to homeless families and the chronically homeless;
- provides intensive home-based case management with low income families to prevent homelessness.
- Operates a free clothing store for anyone who needs all types clothing and small household items

Last year the agency served almost 30,300 unduplicated individuals.

The new Food Distribution Center continues to be a blessing. It allows the agency to more effectively serve not only those in our immediate community but also the other ten counties in south central Kansas that participate in the government food program. The space enables better flow for guests but also for us to appropriately store bulk deliveries for more efficient distribution.

This past year the agency worked with United Way of the Plains to customize a food program workgroup in the existing database (HMIS) used for homeless services. The new workgroup allows Open Door to more accurately track participants in both the Community Food Ministry and Commodity Supplemental Food program and to more efficiently complete reports for both internal and external evaluators and funders. The hope is the customized database workgroup might eventually be used by other food providers so that the community can better understand participant usage county-wide and how to more effectively assist people in the long-term stabilization process.

Another significant change in program occurred within the Homeless Resource Center. Over the past couple of years staff have identified a significant challenge of untreated mental health and substance use disorders among the homeless. Both of these diseases, if untreated, can lead to problematic behavioral side effects. To deal with these behavioral issues, the agency reduced the hours of operation slightly and hired a security firm. To help address the need for longer term solutions, the Executive Director joined the newly formed Mental Health & Substance Use Coalition to look at reducing barriers to treatment, innovative programming and long term stability for people, including the homeless.

Finally, the agency recently completed a new Strategic Plan that will aid us over the next several years as we look toward the future needs and dreams for the agency. The four focus areas are: Talent Development, Financial Sustainability, Marketing Capacity and Innovate Programming. Most of these areas focus on being healthy in our operations so we can provide the best programs and ministry to and with those in need.

One area of transition for the agency is with volunteers. Many of our long term volunteers are now at an age where they are no longer able to continue serving. We miss them dearly. Each volunteer is key to our having a vibrant work place but also in doing daily ministry with our clients. The agency needs both one-time special project volunteers and those who are willing to give a few hours each week/month. Please pass along this need to anyone who might be willing to be in ministry with us.

Open Door is very thankful for the close connections between our mission and the Great Plains Conference. Together, we are truly United Methodist in action!

For more information of ministries of United Methodist Open Door, visit www.umopendoor.org, email administration@umopendoor.org or call 316-265-9371.

The Big Garden/United Methodist Ministries

Nathan Morgan, executive director

The Big Garden/UMM's mission is to cultivate food security by building community gardens, creating opportunities to serve, and providing education about issues related to hunger. The Big Garden was founded in 2005 with a goal of creating 12 community gardens in food-insecure neighborhoods of Omaha. As of 2019 we have planted more than 175 gardens across Nebraska, Kansas and Southwest Iowa.

In 2018 we reached hundreds of children and youth with our garden-based programming. Our Grow Your Own summer program provided eight weeks of garden-based education to approximately 900 low-income children and youth each week. Our Farm to School and Garden to Table programs reached nearly 500

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children and youth each week with gardening and nutrition education. Our programs are leading to exciting changes in these young people's eating habits. These students report that they are eating more fresh produce and eating it more often after competing our garden programs. This can lead to improvements in long term health outcomes including improved nutrition and reductions in childhood obesity.

Our Growing Gardeners workshop series is extremely popular with nearly 900 individuals attending workshops on topics ranging from raised garden bed construction to healthy eating habits on a budget. These workshops are offered free to the public and have led to hundreds of residents starting gardens in their back yards.

Our Volunteers in Mission program continues to offer life-changing mission experiences to nearly 200 United Methodist youth from three states. These young people engage in acts of mercy by tending gardens and volunteering in homeless shelters. They also learn about how acts of justice are equally important as we work to alleviate hunger and poverty. Many of the concepts they learn while at The Big Garden they take back with them to their churches and communities.

As always we are grateful for the steady support of the Great Plains Annual Conference and the support of individual United Methodists from across Kansas and Nebraska. Through that support we are able to grow thousands of pounds of fresh produce, teach hundreds of low-income children and youth how to grow their own food and provide life changing mission experiences to hundreds more United Methodist Youth. Thank you.

Wesley House

Rev. Marcee Binder, executive director/pastor

Greetings to the Great Plains Annual Conference:

Grace and peace to you as we come to together imagining a brighter future. Your faithful support has allowed us to serve some of the most vulnerable people in Crawford County. Thank you for your support of Wesley House.

Wesley House is an outreach mission of Pittsburg First United

Methodist Church. Our two largest projects are the emergency food pantry and the daytime homeless drop-in center. Last year, over 11,300 people came through our doors utilizing one of our helping programs. We were able to assist over 9,600 clients with emergency food. We also served over 73 homeless people. I am very proud of my staff's work and commitment to the clients of Wesley House. The mission of Wesley House is to provide a safe, welcoming place for individuals and families of Crawford County to seek assistance, advocacy, education and hope for a brighter tomorrow.

The identification program is in its third year. It continues to help people become employed and housed. Last year over 130 people were served through the identification support program. This program has ballooned into an opportunity to transport qualified individuals to the nearest Social Security Office.

Programs and the availability of emergency assistance are dependent on financial contributions, donations, grants and private foundation support. Volunteers, financial support and donations are provided by a wide variety of organizations, civic groups, area churches and individuals. Funding continues to be a challenge as many financial resources are being cut or decreased because of the overabundance of need. We are very appreciative of the churches who continue to pay their mission shares. Thank you again for your support and prayers. We are blessed to be able to serve in this capacity.

East 12th Street, Pittsburg, KS 66762
Phone: 620-232-3760 Fax: 620-232-6602

South Central Jurisdiction

Lydia Patterson Institute

Dr. Socorro de Anda, president

As the only institution related to the South Central Jurisdiction of the United Methodist Church, it is my great honor to render this report to members of your conference. Lydia Patterson Institute prides itself in being the only institution of the United Methodist

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Church that sits right between three states bordering two countries and serving predominately Hispanics.

In 1913, when Lydia Patterson opened its doors to immigrants looking for a safe place for their families and settling in South El Paso, Mrs. Patterson would not know that more than 100 years later, La Lydia would still be serving in a like manner, but to a much larger degree. Today, students are sheltered from violence, drug wars, and economic distress with the most effective weapon, a superior education. Every year, hundreds of young men and women are led to higher education to change their lives and transform the world.

Lydia Patterson sits amidst the challenges of our times including immigration, walls and fences, and related border issues. Throughout the past century, Lydia Patterson has been that bridge which unites the two countries and brings hope to those in need. No walls or bridges have ever existed for La Lydia nor will they ever will. As the church struggles with critical issues, Lydia Patterson remains that bridge among the denomination that honors the name of United Methodist Church.

This year has been one more year of dealing with the aforementioned challenges, but its mission moves forward and is stronger than ever. Students are getting an excellent education with the latest state-of-the-art technology, thanks to those of you who have supported and shared your resources in our Capital Campaign. Classrooms have been renovated with the latest computer and science labs. With the new changes, La Lydia has moved up to a level of competition with any other school and beyond. Students compete in Robotics, Chemistry Olympiad, Rotary Interact, Ethics Debate, STEAM, Chess, Mini Lyons Tech and many other academic activities. As a result, their academic scores are higher than ever. We pride in that our students are well prepared and are all moving on to higher education.

Education is the means for achieving professionalism, but core values complete the whole body for spiritual and socio-economic success. Through our Student Lay Ministry Program, students are serving churches throughout the jurisdiction and beyond. Many are following their call to ordained ministry. This is Lydia Patterson Institute's mission—to prepare

bilingual leaders for our society and form Disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

As I write, we are preparing to celebrate the designation of Lydia Patterson Institute as a Historical Site by the General Commission on Archives and History. This is a very deserving honor for over 100 years of service. Thank you for being a part of this God-given ministry.

UNIVERSITY & SEMINARY REPORTS

Africa University Report

James H. Salley

Associate Vice Chancellor for Institutional Advancement

Africa University thrives in ministry because of the steadfast support of local congregations of The United Methodist Church. Thank you to the leaders and members of the Great Plains Conference for prioritizing Africa University with the contribution of 90.23% of the asking to the Africa University Fund (AUF) apportionment in 2018. The students, faculty, and staff value every gift. For the university community, the ongoing strength of this support is encouraging and indicative of the sacrifices that are being made as the Great Plains Conference strives to achieve an investment of 100 percent of the asking to the AUF.

Through its generous support for the Africa University Fund, the Great Plains Conference affirms the university's core mission of nurturing leaders who help communities to know Jesus Christ and to experience peace, sustainable livelihoods, food security and abundant health. Thank you, Great Plains United Methodists, for your gracious and steadfast support.

Institutional Update:

- Africa University remains a top choice for African young people who are seeking a relevant and life-changing educational experience. In 2018, Africa University enrolled more than 700 new students and maintained an overall enrollment of around 2,000 students. There were 25 African countries represented in the student body.
- Women made up 53 percent of the student population, which is almost twice the average for African higher education institutions. Among Africa University's close to 9,000 alumni, women graduates are emerging as the change leaders of their

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generation, whether empowering victims of gender-based violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo or working alongside rural women to establish and operate community-based telecommunications infrastructure and provide internet connectivity to underserved communities across Africa.

- Throughout 2018, Africa University weathered the challenges of Zimbabwe's depressed and uncertain socio-economic environment with creativity and prudence. The university delivered teaching, learning and community service activities of high-quality without interruption, while also renewing and expanding its infrastructure. Key enhancements in 2018
- included the refurbishment of three residence halls for women students and the full implementation of an ERP software system to integrate and manage all facets of the university's operations.
- For the first time in five years, there is new construction on the Africa University campus thanks to a 25th anniversary gift from Highland Park United Methodist Church in Dallas. In December 2018, work began on the foundation for a new residence hall. The university subsequently broke ground for the construction of phase two of its Student Union and Cafeteria building. Both projects are progressing well and are expected to be in use by August 2020.
- With conflict, poverty and the impact of climate change persisting as the key drivers of food insecurity and the rise in internal displacement, migration, and refugeehood in Africa, the university consolidated its position as a trailblazer by offering new graduate training and research opportunities. Africa University has also continued to provide scholarships for refugee women so that their experiences, talents, and ideas are integrated into the search for sustainable solutions.
- Africa University delivered critical data for reducing malaria deaths in southern Africa and controlling the spread of insect-borne diseases world-wide. AU's insectary—a laboratory for rearing and studying live insects, such as mosquitos—shares its findings through the Southern Africa Centers of Excellence for Malaria Research. This data informs regional policies, practices, and malaria control efforts.

The students, faculty, administrators and trustees of Africa University thank the members of the Great Plains Conference for their prayers and support, which continue to grow and sustain this

ministry. Thank you for all that you have sown into Africa University over the past 27 years. As Africa University and the Great Plains Conference move forward together in missional engagement, we trust in God's unending grace for the increase.

Boston University School of Theology

Mary Elizabeth Moore, Dean

Dear Colleagues in Ministry:

Greetings from Boston University School of Theology (BUSTH) as we live together as disciples in uncertain times!

BREAKING NEWS:

- **Students:** We continue to increase and celebrate diversity in our student body, creating remarkable opportunities for in-depth exchanges and fruitful collaboration.
- **Faculty:** We welcomed two amazing faculty this year: Shively Smith as assistant professor of New Testament, and Nicolette Manglos-Weber as assistant professor of Religion and Society.
- **Online Lifelong Learning:** We are launching a new online lifelong learning program at the school, offering webinars, workshops and reading groups for professional enrichment.
- **Scholarships:** We continue our offer of free tuition to UMC registered candidates for ordained ministry, and we continue to build student scholarships and housing as a central campaign priority. New scholarships include the Korean Student and African Student Scholarships, and leadership fellowships for promising leaders: Raíces Latinas for Latinx leaders, Sacred Worth for leaders in the LGBTQIA+ community, Howard Thurman for African-American leadership, and Indigenous Studies Fellowships.
- **Faith and Ecological Justice Program:** This new student program undertakes initiatives to increase ecological awareness, education, and activism in ecological justice.
- **Theology and the Arts Initiatives:** Recent exhibits and events include "Moments in Time" and "Transcending Conflict."
- **Grants:** Henry Luce Foundation has awarded a 3-year grant to support the Educating Effective Chaplains Project. The grant supports work with other seminaries to develop models that

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can better prepare chaplains for effective ministry.

- Website: After several years of planning, a new school website will launch in fall semester 2019.
- PARTNERING FOR MINISTRY AND TRANSFORMATION:**
Preparing students for ministry means meaningful partnerships with the local spiritual community.
- Creative Callings: Our vocational project is an exciting partnership with local churches, seeking to create “a culture of call.” It is sponsored through a grant from the Lilly Endowment.
 - Engagement with the UMC: Many of our students are delegates, project leaders and assistants, and class participants in General Conference 2019.
 - Congregational courses: The Continuing Scholar program offers current BUSTH courses to alums and local clergy as continuing education credit for a small fee per course.
 - Doctor of Ministry: The D.Min in Transformational Leadership is soaring with lively student cohorts that are broadly ecumenical, culturally diverse, and global. The model includes intensives, online courses, and faculty mentoring.
 - Religion and Conflict Transformation Clinic: The clinic provides internships and workshops that foster justice and peace-building.
 - Travel seminars: These courses engage students with immersion journeys to the Arizona-Mexico border, Israel and Palestine, Argentina and other sites of learning and ministry. Attendees from the recent Serbia and Croatia Seminar presented to the 2018 Parliament of the World’s Religions in Toronto.
 - Ecumenical partnerships: We continue to build robust Communities of Learning with the Episcopal Church and United Church of Christ, and to develop new communities with the Unitarian Universalist and Baptist Churches.
 - Partnership with Hebrew College: Together we are able to enrich interreligious learning through joint courses and public events, and also co-sponsor The Journal of Interreligious Studies and State of Formation cohort of emerging leaders.

TAKING ACTION GLOBALLY AND LOCALLY:

- Campus action: Work to improve accessibility and sustainability. BUSTH is the first certified Green School in BU, and participates actively in the Green Seminary Initiative. It has

also been named as one of the “Seminaries that Change the World” for the second consecutive year.

- Internships in global service and peacemaking: We provide internships that support students who engage in ministry with churches and service organizations across the world.

COMMITMENT TO JUSTICE: Celebrating differences while joining in action.

- Faculty and students have led and participated in UMCOR; support efforts with victims of hurricanes and fires; protests on behalf of Puerto Rico, Texas and Florida; protests of white supremacist movements; services with immigrants and DACA young people; and ecumenical and interreligious witnesses for justice in the city of Boston.
- Through student-led Town Hall meetings, the community has had deep conversations on issues that divide (including theological differences). We seek to foster respectful listening that builds community life and communal action.

OTHER NOTABLE NEWS:

2019 marks the 180th year of the School of Theology, originally founded as the Newbury Bible Institute in 1839.

Our major development campaign for BUSTH will end in September 2019, and we continue working toward grand success for the future of our School and the vitality of your ministries.

As BUSTH looks to the future, we celebrate transformational leaders of the United Methodist Church, who keep the word of Jesus Christ alive. Your living legacy and faithful witness give us hope and courage for the future.

Candler School of Theology

Mary Lee Hardin Willard, Dean and Professor of
Christianity and World Politics

For more than 100 years, Candler School of Theology at Emory University has prepared real people to make a real difference in the real world. Since our founding in 1914, more than 10,000 students have graduated from Candler, where they have been shaped as thoughtful, principled, and courageous leaders

dedicated to transforming the world in the name of Jesus Christ.

This is especially important to note amid the current uncertainty in our denomination. It is an honor and a privilege for Candler to be one of 13 official seminaries of The United Methodist Church. Yet true to the Methodist tradition of ecumenical openness, Candler has enthusiastically welcomed the entire Wesleyan family to our community for generations. Faculty, staff and students from the AME Church, the AMEZ Church, the CME Church, Free Methodists, Nazarenes and others have worked, worshiped, learned and prayed alongside United Methodists, and have been a vital part of shaping Candler and our mission. This diversity has been a wonderful gift and a rich blessing. As we move forward from the Special Session of General Conference, we will continue to invite and welcome wholeheartedly those from all expressions of the Wesleyan tradition. Indeed, we will continue to welcome all those who follow Jesus Christ.

Candler is also privileged to be one of seven graduate professional schools of Emory University in Atlanta. With the resources of a top-tier research institution and the reach of a global city, our students benefit from a rich academic and hands-on learning environment: The General Board of Global Ministries is in Atlanta, as are numerous public health, international development, and social service organizations. Candler's intentional involvement with our surrounding community has contributed to our inclusion on a list of "Seminaries that Change the World" for six years running. In short, there is no better place to prepare for ministry that engages our major denominational priorities: developing leaders, starting and growing churches, ministry with the poor, and improving global health.

In order to keep pace with the needs of the church and the world, Candler offers 16 degrees: six single degrees and 10 dual degrees pairing theology with bioethics, business, international development, law, public health and social work. Our Doctor of Ministry degree is 90% online, so students can remain in their places of ministry and immediately apply to their context what they learn in class. Our teaching parish program allows eligible United Methodist students to serve as pastors in local churches while they're enrolled—they earn a salary as they

earn course credit and pastoral experience, plus they are mentored by an experienced United Methodist elder.

Candler's student body continues to reflect the diversity and breadth of the Christian faithful, with an enrollment of 453, reflecting 51 % women, 39 % people of color (U.S.), and a median age of 27 among MDivs. Students represent 44 denominations, with half coming from the Methodist family.

Candler has a deep commitment to alleviating student debt and promoting financial literacy. In 2018-2019, we awarded \$5.8 million in Candler scholarships, with 100 % of M.Div students receiving aid. Plus, our comprehensive Faith & Finance program teaches money management skills that serve our students now and will continue to serve them—and the churches they lead—well into the future.

Candler draws considerable strength and inspiration from its relationship with The United Methodist Church. Our ability to fulfill our mission of educating faithful and creative leaders for the church's ministries throughout the world depends upon your prayers, partnership, and support. Thank you for the countless ways you advance this vital ministry in the life of our denomination. Visit us in person or online at candler.emory.edu to see firsthand how Candler prepares real people to make a *real* difference in the real world.

Drew School of Theology

Javier A. Viera, Vice Provost - Dean of the Theological School

Drew University Theological School continued its multi-year self-transformation by launching its new curriculum for the Master of Divinity in the fall of 2018. This entirely reconceived degree seeks to form graduates that are rooted in the Christian story and traditions, capable of effective and creative leadership, and spiritually and socially resourceful for cultivating the transformative gospel of Jesus Christ in, with and for the church and the world. A new two-year degree, the Master of Arts in Theology and Ministry also launched, and offers students the opportunity to prepare for public leadership or a specialized vocation through deep theological and ethical reflection informed by biblical, historical, theological and practical sources. New pathways in the Master of Arts, the Master of Sacred Theology, and the Doctor of Ministry were

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also created as part of the curriculum transformation process which seeks to more intentionally focus the school's service to the church, as well as to the academy and civil society. Drew welcomed 145 entering students this academic year, its largest entering class in over a decade, with an overall enrollment of 350 for the current academic year. In the coming year a new 5-year strategic plan will be developed, new degree delivery options that increase accessibility and affordability for prospective students, as well as new partnerships with annual conferences, other church bodies, and values-based organizations that share and strengthen Drew's mission to advance peace, justice, love of God, neighbor, and the earth.

Saint Paul School of Theology

Neil Blair, president

Saint Paul School of Theology, a seminary of the United Methodist Church, is committed to the formation of people for innovative, creative ministry. We are one institution with campuses in Kansas and Oklahoma. During the 2018-2019 academic year, the seminary enrolled 99 students in master and doctoral degree programs.

Saint Paul School of Theology began the 2018-2019 academic year moving its Kansas staff and faculty offices to the Kansas Campus where classes are held. This move was the final step in the process of renovating classrooms with larger spaces as well as bringing Kansas faculty, staff, and students together. A new Common Room equipped with refrigerator, microwave and snacks was added to give students a place to gather for community meals, student forums and study. Enhanced technology upgrades were made on both campuses with the launch of the new FLEX schedule and FOCUS week. We received a \$5,000 grant from the Missouri United Methodist Foundation to support our technology program for students. In an ever-increasing digital world, Saint Paul is constantly working to reach beyond its walls.

A new Doctor of Ministry (DMin) focus, Spiritual Leadership in Unsettled Times, was announced with courses beginning Fall 2019. The new DMin focus is offered in partnership with Church of the Resurrection, Gamaliel Network, and the Metro Organization for Racial and Economic Equity. Students can take a mixture of online and hybrid (blended online and

on-campus) courses to complete the required curriculum. This year marks the celebration of over 10 years in Oklahoma. Since 2008, Saint Paul has prepared Oklahoma-area leaders for ministries that meet the needs of today's churches and society. In collaboration with Oklahoma City University, students enjoy access to all the resources of a vibrant university, as well as the hospitality and support of a close-knit seminary community.

For Fall 2019, The Oklahoma Foundation, in partnership with Saint Paul School of Theology, is offering a three-year scholarship to educate future church leaders. An Oklahoma Foundation Fellow will receive three years of full-tuition and fees (covering 79 credit hours toward the Master of Divinity degree). Foundation Fellows will learn multiple ministry skills in areas such as worship, pastoral care, evangelism, and discipleship.

Saint Paul's faculty continue to contribute to the academy, church, and society. Dr. Elaine Robinson, Professor of Methodist Studies and Christian Theology, worked along with co-editor Amos Nascimento to solicit chapters from United Methodist scholars around the globe who could present an indigenous account of the history of Methodism in their own context. These authors include: Fulgence Nyengele (Congo), Julio Vilanculos (Mozambique), Ulrike Schuler (Western Europe), Sergei Nikolaev (Russia), and Luther Oconer (Philippines). The manuscript is now finished and in the process of being published by GBHEM's Foundry Books under the title, *Global United Methodism: Telling the Stories, Living the Realities*.

Dr. Jim Brandt, Professor of Historical Theology and Director of Contextual Education, wrote the lead article in the recently published book, *Schleiermacher and Sustainability: A Theology for Ecological Living*. As part of the Columbia Series in Reformed Theology, each chapter deals with a particular locus in Schleiermacher's systematic theology, focusing on its implications for sustainable living.

Saint Paul's 2018-2019 Lecture Series boasted several exciting key note speakers from across the United States to speak on a myriad of topics such as "10 Steps on the Path of Moral Leadership" and

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“Speaking of Jesus: Early Methodist Principles for Bearing Witness to the Christian Story in a Multi-Religious World”. In October, Dr. Luke Bretherton of Duke University was the speaker for the Wayne E. Drake Peace Lecture. In February, the Foundation for Evangelism sponsored Rev. Dr. Jack Jackson of Claremont School of Theology to present this year’s Wallace Chappell Lecture. In March, Rev. Dr. David Gushee of Mercer University was the keynote speaker for the Slater-Wilson Lectureship on Spiritual and Intellectual Life.

For 2018, Saint Paul received a grant from Kansas Leadership Center (KLC) in Wichita that allowed 20 people to experience KLC programs. Several faculty, staff and alumni were able to practice KLC’s approach to leadership. Those participants have reported being enriched and inspired by the program. For 2019, Saint Paul received 40 slots for community leaders to attend KLC programs.

Saint Paul Course of Study (COS) School educated 299 students in Leawood and Hays, Kansas; Oklahoma City, ; Columbia, and Springfield, Missouri. Saint Paul launched a part-time, accelerated COS satellite program in Columbia, Missouri this year. Comprised of nine courses in practical theology, this COS option is designed specifically for part-time local pastors or certified lay ministers entering ministry following completion of the Missouri Conference Licensing School. Like any other COS Satellite, the Columbia satellite is a pilot and collaborative program of Saint Paul Course of Study Regional School in collaboration with the Missouri Conference. Since September 2018, COS has offered two courses and enrolled and registered 23 students in the satellite program.

Saint Paul School of Theology is pleased to report that the Higher Learning Commission has changed the seminary’s status from “Accredited - Probation” to “Accredited.” For 60 years, Saint Paul has supplied excellence in theological education and our previous challenges have inspired us to strive beyond excellence. We are excited about our future and furthering the mission of Saint Paul.

President Neil Blair, Saint Paul trustees, faculty, staff, alumni, and students thank you for your interest, prayers and support.

GREAT PLAINS CONFERENCE

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Kansas Campus

13720 Roe Avenue, Building C

Leawood, KS 66224

Oklahoma Campus

2501 North Blackwelder

Oklahoma City, OK 73106

www.spst.edu

Facebook: www.facebook.com/spst.edu

Twitter: www.twitter.com/spst

Instagram: www.instagram.com/saintpaulks_ok/

LinkedIn: www.linkedin.com/school/saint-paul-school-of-theology

UNITED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Dr. Kent Millard, President

- 459 men and women are being equipped as faithful, fruitful
- pastors and Christian leaders for the Church:
- 292 Masters Students
- 167 Doctoral Students
- Third largest United Methodist seminary in the United States

- Founded nearly 150 years ago by Bishop Milton Wright, father of famed aviators Wilbur and Orville Wright, United has continued that spirit of innovation through:
- Online degrees:
- 98% of master's students have taken one or more course online while studying at United.
- United students live in 39 different states.
- Week-long intensives fulfill UMC residency requirements.
- Live Interactive Virtual Education (LIVE):
- New grant brings the latest technology in virtual education.
- Participate in on-campus courses via webcam and enjoy live lectures and real-time discussion with faculty and peers.
- Doctor of Ministry Degree:
- Become a doctor for the Church, addressing a real problem or challenge in your church or community.
- Study under a mentor who is an expert in their field and learn alongside a small group of dedicated peers.
- 3-year program that allows you to complete project as you go, leading to a 78% program graduation rate in 2017 (vs. 54% average among other seminaries)
- Practical education designed to resource the Church:

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- The majority of United faculty have pastored churches.
- 91% of entering United students are already serving in ministry, bringing that context to the classroom.
- A focus on Church Renewal:
- 165 Course of Study students
- 42 students in the Hispanic Christian Academy (3-year Spanish online course of ministry program for Hispanic lay pastors and leaders)iv
- Certificates in Church Planting, Disability Ministry, and Supervision
- Academic AND Spiritual Growth:
- 95% of students say the United community supports both their academic and spiritual growth.
- Diverse Christian Views:
- Over 30 different denominations
- 19 international students from 15 different countries
- 96% of students feel their views are respected in the classroom/seminary community and say they have been taught to respect the views of others.
- 47% of students who reported are African-American, 43% Caucasian and 10% represent other ethnicities

We thank God for the men and women coming to United because God has called them to serve the least and the lost. We pray as the Lord Jesus instructed his disciples saying, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest” (Luke 10:2).

WESLEY THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY**Fostering wisdom and courage**

Wesley Theological Seminary, celebrating our 60th year in Washington, D.C., has equipped Christian leadership for nearly 150 years. We prepare students to lead innovative ministries while remaining grounded in our biblical and theological traditions. President David McAllister-Wilson writes in his new book, “A New Church and a New Seminary,” “Leadership requires a seminary to foster both wisdom and courage.”

Our faculty is chosen to prepare these kinds of leaders. In the past year, we welcomed Academic Dean Phil Wingeier-Rayo, Ph.D. plus

two new faculty, the Rev. Lorena Parrish, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Urban Ministries and Director of the Community Engagement Institute, and the Rev. Anna Petrin, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Worship and Chapel Elder. Learn more about all the remarkable scholars on Wesley's faculty at <https://www.wesleyseminary.edu/faculty-2/>

Whether you are clergy or laity, an alumnus or a prospective student, looking for master's or doctoral work, or continuing education or simply deeper knowledge, Wesley stands ready to support you in your current and future call to ministry. Here are a few ways Wesley can help you grow in the wisdom of the faith and the courage to lead.

Discover exciting pathways to seminary studies

Wesley offers a 81-hour master of divinity, a 36-hour master of arts and a 60-hour master of theological studies. Wesley equips all those called to serve for ordained elder and deacon ministries or to other ministries beyond the pulpit.

Some are able to take advantage of our modern and affordable on-campus housing and food service to be full-time residential students, living in an exciting international capital. But we understand the struggle to balance life, family, ministry, and finances. So, Wesley's master of divinity degree can now be completed via online, weekend, short-term intensive, and weeknight courses in 5 years, designed for those with busy ministry, work, and family lives. Check out upcoming flexible course offerings for Summer and Fall 2019 at <http://www.wesleyseminary.edu/admissions/try-a-class-3/>

In our 3+3 Fast Track B.A./M. Div. program, in partnership with Shenandoah University, students enter ministry with less debt after earning their degrees in six years. Learn more at www.wesleyseminary.edu/3+3degrees.

Wesley provides more than \$2 million dollars annually in scholarships thanks to the consistent support of graduates, congregations and friends. Our new Generación Latinx Scholarship joins our many merit-based scholarships that enable students to afford seminary education. The Community Engagement Institute at Wesley embraces a vibrant vision to be the premier center for churches and faith-based organization

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engage their communities. Our Community Engagement Fellows program prepares students to engage in entrepreneurial ministry. Generous stipends are available for each Fellow while they complete their M.Div. degree. Students can focus their fellowship on Public Theology, Urban Ministry or Missional Church. Meet our current Fellows at <https://www.wesley-seminary.edu/admissions/community-engagement-fellows/>

Take your ministry to the next level

Wesley is a leader in Doctor of Ministry programs in specialized tracks that can include INTERnational study. Our 2020 tracks will include Church Leadership Excellence, offered in conjunction with Wesley's internationally respected Lewis Center for Church Leadership and Life Together: Spirituality for Transforming Community, and a track designed for military chaplains. Find out more or apply at www.wesleyseminary.edu/doctorofministry/.

Wesley also offers opportunities for individual study without pursuing a degree. The Certificate in Faith and Public Life explores the foundations of public theology, religious freedom, and civil discourse through graduate courses. For more information, visit www.wesleyseminary.edu/ice/programs/public-theology/public-life/

A Certificate in Wesleyan Studies is available online via the Wesley Theological Seminary Lay Academy. Topics include United Methodist identity, early church history, Christian ethics, interfaith relations, and the intersection of faith and science. The courses can also be taken for personal education and enrichment. More information can be found at www.beadisciple.com/wesley/.

Enrich your congregational outreach and explore new dimensions of ministry

The Lewis Center continues to be on the leading edge of research for the local church. The Lewis Center's Leading Ideas e newsletter is now the go-to source for over 20,000 people in ministry each week. From this we've launched a new podcast

– Leading Ideas Talk. Sign up or listen at www.churchleadership.com/. And look for new practical online courses at lewisonlinelearning.org.

From their new location at The Methodist Building on Capitol Hill, the Center for Public Theology, under the leadership of Distinguished Professor of Public Theology Mike McCurry, equips pastors, seminarians, people of faith, and the media to create spaces for civil dialogue at the intersection of religion and politics. In its second year, the Center's Faith and Public Life Immersion for undergraduates offers a week-long experience of study and encounters with public theologians and those advocating for justice in Washington. For more information, visit <http://www.wesleyseminary.edu/ice/programs/public-theology/>.

The Luce Center for Arts and Religion is the only seminary-based program uniting arts and theology. The Luce Center offers regular classes and workshops with visiting artists. For information on past and upcoming opportunities visit www.luceartsandreligion.org.

The innovative online Health Minister Certificate Program prepares congregations for public health work in their parishes. Contact Tom Pruski at tpruski@wesleyseminary.edu for more information or to register for future certificate classes.

The African American Church Studies Master of Divinity specialization gives contextual preparation for the opportunities and challenges our future leaders may encounter in African American churches, while the Public Theology specialization allows master's degree students to gain community leadership and advocacy skills. Learn more at <https://www.wesleyseminary.edu/admissions/african-american-church-studies/> or <https://www.wesleyseminary.edu/ice/programs/public-theology/>

Through the Wesley Innovation Hub, a research project funded by the Lilly Endowment, we are working with 20 local congregations to design innovative ministries as models for ministry by and for young adults. Follow the work and connect with resources at www.wesleyseminary.edu/wesley-inno-

[vation-hub/](#).

Stay connected

Contact us at 202- 885-8659 or admissions@wesleyseminary.edu about how Wesley's degree programs can equip you for your next step in ministry.

Ready to join in our mission? Find out more about how you can be part of the future of Wesley at www.wesleyseminary.edu/support/. Join the Wesley Community online via Wesley's social media, www.facebook.com/wesleyseminary, on Instagram at wesleyseminary, and on Twitter at WesleyTheoSem or sign up for our electronic newsletter, eCalling, at www.wesleyseminary.edu/ecalling.

Miscellaneous

United Methodist Health Ministry Fund

David Jordan, President/CEO

The United Methodist Health Ministry Fund, established in 1986 with proceeds from the sale of Wesley Medical Center, Wichita, continues to support the Annual Conference and churches throughout Kansas and Nebraska to be healthy and to positively affect personal health and the health of their communities. The Health Fund provided resources for the keynote speaker, Rae Jean Proeschold-Bell, Associate Professor of Global Health at Duke University, at the January Orders and Fellowship Conference and for Jean Ehrman, a Mind/Body Coach who presented at the April conference Education for all Clergy Life Stages.

Over the last year, the Health Fund completed a strategic planning process. As part of the process we re-affirmed commitment to our mission to support Healthy Kansans through cooperative and strategic philanthropy guided by Christian principles. To achieve our mission, we committed to focusing our time and resources on three strategic areas: access to care, early childhood development

and Healthy Congregations. As part of our work, we also updated our logo and website. We encourage you to visit healthfund.org to see our strategic plan and our updated communications tools. It is important to note that as part of our planning process, the Fund's Board of Directors approved expansion of the Healthy Congregations program which supports churches to inspire intentional health ministry. In addition to community gardens and summer food programs, Healthy Congregation teams can now access grant funds to support mental health training, community bikes and trail construction, intentional neighboring to reduce isolation, and other programs and interventions to positively affect the health of the congregation and community. At the close of 2018, a record 77 churches were in partnership with the Health Fund.

The Health Fund continued to provide resources to hospitals and communities to increase the initiation and duration of breastfeeding across Kansas. Two excellent programs were recognized. Stormont-Vail HealthCare, Topeka, was honored May 7 with the Janet Sevier Gilbreath Award for their work in establishing and maintaining an Obstetric Care Nurse Navigator position to support expectant and delivering mothers in breastfeeding choices. This award, presented annually since 1988, honors the fund's first board chair by recognizing a grant project from the prior year that succeeds in improving the health of Kansans.

In October, Michelle Finn, Lactation Program Coordinator for Shawnee Mission Medical Center, was awarded the Kim Moore Visionary Leadership Award which honors the Health Fund's founding president by recognizing an individual who had a positive health effect on a specific group of persons. Finn lead her hospital in creating policy and practice changes to support breastfeeding for the 5,000 mothers who deliver annually at the Medical Center.

In other early childhood development work, we have concluded the second year of three-year pilot to reduce toxic stress in children six to twenty-four months of age by supporting the delivery of a ten-week parent coaching program Attachment bio-behavior catch-up. This home visiting program was developed at the University of Delaware and is proven to positively affect

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children's ability to exercise executive function and self-control through their early years of school. Pilot sites are in northwest and southwest Kansas and Sedgwick, Reno and Wyandotte counties.

Access to care is the Fund's third strategic area of funding. We focus on opportunities to increase sustainable delivery of health care in rural Kansas. Recently we have funded insurance navigators in all parts of the state to assist persons in obtaining health insurance through the Cover Kansas marketplace and Care Coordination services in southeast Kansas following the closure of hospitals there.

Please stop by the fund's booth in the exhibition area of Annual Conference to visit with staff and learn more about Healthy Congregations and other programs designed to support health and wholeness or visit our recently updated website: www.healthfund.org.

General Board of Higher Education & Ministry (GBHEM)

As the leadership development agency of The United Methodist Church, the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM) builds capacity for United Methodist lay and clergy leaders to discover, claim and flourish in Christ's calling in their lives. The agency creates connections and provides resources to aid in recruitment, education, professional development and spiritual formation. Every elder, deacon and licensed local pastor benefits from our training and candidacy programs. Many young adults find help in clarifying God's call in their lives through our discernment opportunities.

Through its Office of Strategic Leadership, GBHEM refined plans for a center for leadership development and spiritual formation. It is drawing on research to plan the expansion of leadership training offerings to churches and communities through a range of means such as face-to-face training, online conferencing, consulting, and recommending resources and experts.

The Division of Ordained Ministry (DOM), using extensive research on the components of effective ministry, introduced a new forma-

tion process, Effective Ministry 360 (EM360), which guides pastors and congregations to plan and execute mission and ministry objectives. EM360 also offers assessment modules for candidacy, district superintendents, eight-year clergy assessment and Course of Study. DOM provides introduction and orientation sessions about the process.

The Division of Higher Education (DHE) has initiated research to inform a “leadership pipeline” process for university leaders on United Methodist campuses. Among the books GBHEM published this year, “Missio Dei and the United States: Toward a Faithful United Methodist Witness” (book and study guide) exhibits the best of church and academy collaboration. Contributors explore how the church can reengage its Wesleyan heritage as it participates in God’s mission.

The Office of Loans and Scholarships announced an increase in the maximum amount of money United Methodist students can borrow to pursue their education. The annual maximum is \$10,000, with a lifetime maximum of \$40,000. On average, the agency distributes \$5.5 million in scholarships annually.

Partnering with churches and institutions, GBHEM has promoted projects, programs, initiatives, education and leadership development in various cultural contexts within United Methodism and in pan-Methodist relationships. The agency expanded the Methodist Global Education Fund for Leadership Development, supported the work of regional networks with the International Association of Methodist Schools, Colleges, and Universities, and established Regional Hubs for Leadership, Education and Development. In 2018, hubs were active in nations in Af, Asia, Europe and England, North America and South America.

Kansas Area United Methodist Foundation

The mission of the Kansas Area United Methodist Foundation, Inc. is to serve as a catalyst that strengthens and preserves the ministries of our churches and individuals through education, planning, resourcing, and financial management. We seek to Cultivate Generosity to Change Lives!

Thank you to the churches and individuals who have partnered

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with us. We are excited by the ways God is moving across our connection. A key value for us, is to live out hospitality as we follow our calling to grow in our connections with our partner churches, affiliated organizations, and generous families throughout our conference. If there is a way we can serve you more fully, so that you can give generously to support the causes you are passionate about, please let us know.

SCHOLARSHIPS

The Great Plains Association of Retired Clergy and Spouses (GPARCS) use their funds with the Kansas Area United Methodist Foundation to award scholarships for seminary and course of study students for the 2018-2019 academic year. The "Pass the Torch" Scholarship has made a difference in the following students' lives:

Victor Peterson (Asbury Theological Seminary)
 Brenda Hogan (Saint Paul School of Theology)
 Marcee Binder (Iliff School of Theology)
 Yolanda White (United Theological Seminary)

The Board of Ordained Ministry awarded the following students the 2018-2019 Great Plains Seminary Scholarship:

Ronald Bell (Saint Paul) Allison Marcus (Saint Paul)
 Caitlin Bentzinger (Duke) Michael Marcus (Saint Paul)
 Marcee Binder (Iliff) Elizabeth Menhusen (Iliff)
 Shane Britt (Asbury) Helen Paus (Seattle Pacific)
 Seulki Choi (Drew) Maria Penrod (Garrett-Evangelical)
 Julie Freeman (Saint Paul) Miriam Peralta De Garcia (Asbury)
 Jee Gil (Saint Paul) Victor Peterson (Asbury)
 Karissa Heckens (Saint Paul) Gregory Reffner (Seattle Pacific)
 Brenda Hogan (Saint Paul) Carter Schram (Garrett-Evangelical)
 Joshua Johnson (Asbury) Tony Serbousek (Iliff)
 Spencer Johnson (Garrett-Evangelical) Stephanie Seth (Iliff)
 Shayla Jordan (Perkins) William Stone (Garrett-Evangelical)
 Nicholas Kaufman (Saint Paul) Lacey Wheeler (Saint Paul)
 Hyunsook Kim (Saint Paul) Yolanda White (United)
 Julie King (Iliff) John Young (Asbury)
 Jeanne Koontz (Garrett-Evangelical)

The Kansas Area United Methodist Foundation is proud to partner with the Great Plains Conference Board of Ordained Ministry to

make a difference in the future clergy leadership for our Conference.

The Rev. Paul Holmes Memorial Scholarship Fund offers Great Plains clergy the opportunity to strengthen their commitment to being life-long learners through continuing education experiences.

The following 2018 Rev. Paul Holmes memorial Scholarship for continuing education recipients were:

Rev. Ashley Crawford, to attend the CLI 1.0 Launch Program

Rev. Andrew Conard, to attend the CLI 1.0 Launch Program

Rev. Amy Lippoldt, to attend the CLI 1.0 Launch Program

Rev. Wendy Crostek, to attend the Catalysts West 2018 Conference

Rev. Marta K. Wheeler, supporting her in pursuing the Spiritual Direction Ministry Formation Tutorial Program

MANAGED FUND ACCOUNTS

Individuals can establish a Donor Advised Fund with the Kansas Area United Methodist Foundation which allows them to give charitably to the causes which they care about. Individuals who desire to give charitably, but are also need income, can create a Charitable Gift Annuity or Charitable Remainder Unitrust. Gene and Lynette Saltzman sold their farm and through the sale created a Charitable Remainder Unitrust. The couple is now on the mission field full-time.

This past 2018 the total distributions of \$2,853,372.64 made an impact through individual and church scholarships, grants, distributions supporting church mission trips, distributions supporting children, youth and young adult ministries, feeding the hungry, clothing the poor, and ministering to those in their communities so that the United Methodist witness may continue to share God's love.

These various distributions were possible by the Kansas Area United Methodist Foundation's total assets under management for 2018 of \$48,530,116.71. Thank you to the leadership of United Methodist individuals and churches that understand the importance of sustaining the churches witness within our Kansas communities.

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Thank you to the following churches who partnered with the Kansas Area United Methodist Foundation to create a new managed fund account in 2018:

Argonia UMC

Larned UMC

Cawker City UMC

Meriden UMC

Hoisington First UMC

Winfield Grace UMC

Independence First UMC

CHURCH DEVELOPMENT LOAN MINISTRY

The Certificate of Participation Program is an investment in which Kansas and Nebraska United Methodist individuals and churches deposit funds that will grow and at the same time participate in the Kansas Area United Methodist Foundation's Church Development Loan Fund that provides competitive loans to our churches.

"It is a way for United Methodists to invest their money in a way that helps other United Methodists Fulfill their mission." – Bruce Schwyhart, Chairperson Board of Trustees, Winfield, KS.

In 2018, the Kansas Area United Methodist Foundation offered Berryton United Methodist Church in Topeka a church loan.

Through the loan, the church repaved and installed new lighting in the parking lot and replaced ceiling tiles in the Children's Ministry.

The Foundation offers guidance to many churches about annual commitment programs, generosity seminars and year-round stewardship education for clergy and laity. Information on The Certificate of Participations "SPECIAL" monthly rates and on the Church Development Loan Fund may be found online or call the Foundation office. We would be happy to partner with your church!

PATHWAYS FOR DISCIPLESHIP

What if you could leave a legacy gift that would serve the needs of ministries all across Kansas?

The Pathways for Discipleship provide such endowed, legacy funds that will go to provide grants to churches and organizations to support ministries in the broader connections of our church. They are gifts that will continue to make disciples

of Jesus Christ and transform the world around us. Your gift can make a lasting difference!

The Pathways for Discipleship Funds are:

Leadership Education Fund

Supports leadership development for clergy and laity.

Children/Youth Program Fund

Supports all aspects of programming for children, youth, and youth adult ministries.

Ministry and Outreach Grant Fund

Supports local churches to expand the missional outreach of the church through programming, outreach ministry and mission trips.

Foundation Sustaining the Witness Fund

Supports the vital work of the Foundation to grow and expand its financial and legacy ministries for more families and churches in our connection.

More information about all four of these funds can be found online at www.kaumf.org.

Through the dedicated leadership of the Foundation's Board of Trustees and staff; the Foundation is committed to cultivate generosity that will change lives!

How will you cultivate generosity that will change lives for future generations?

The Kansas Area United Methodist Foundation will have a resolution presented at Annual Conference to allow the Foundation to have an inclusive scope of ministry to continue serving all of the current United Methodist churches, affiliate organizations, and members in the connection, and to make the Foundation self-sustaining and autonomous, like the Nebraska United Methodist Foundation, to ensure its stability and fiduciary commitments.

Nebraska Area United Methodist Foundation

Jackie Urkoski, Director of Operations

The Nebraska United Methodist Foundation helps churches, ministries, and individuals be good stewards of the resources to which they have been blessed. The mission of the Foundation is to support the ministries of the local church and the Great Plains United Methodist Conference through the development of gifts and the stewardship of resources entrusted to the Foundation in support of God's work. From church grant opportunities and seminary scholarships to free estate planning seminars, we work to help the United Methodist people and churches of Nebraska on many different levels. The Foundation is happy to highlight a few of the services we provide to United Methodist churches, ministries and individuals, all at no cost. For detailed information on each of these services, plus our annual report of financial information, please visit our booth.

Church Resources

Take a look at your church's mission statement. Like every other church mission statement, there is something it does not include: an expiration date. The church is of God and of eternity. In other words, we expect our church to be here forever. However, our approach to giving too often focuses on the here and now, and not on the tomorrow. Many times, the Foundation is asked how a church can even begin considering funds for future use while it is struggling to make ends meet now. Our answer is through careful planning, praying and implementation. We have many resources to help you maintain and then to sustain your church. Please contact us so we can help ensure the future of your church.

Pastor Resources

As a pastor, we understand the enormous responsibility you have and the extremes to which it goes, one moment you are trying to save a soul and the next moment you are trying to maintain a building. The Foundation is here to provide you with necessary tools and resources to assist you in easing the financial worry that can come with maintaining a church and its ministries. Let us help in ensuring the financial growth and sustainability of your church

so you can get back to what you love about being a pastor: your people.

Empowering United Methodists

“Today is a critical time for stewardship in the church.” True today and true at nearly any time in the church’s history. The word ‘stewardship’ typically leads the average parishioner to think of the offering plate passing by on a Sunday morning. But comprehensive Christian stewardship is about much more than that. The Foundation is here to help you get creative in your giving. We hope to challenge you to think about stewardship as something that goes beyond our usual understanding of the term. We hope to challenge you to think about stewardship as a lifestyle rather than a check in the offering plate.

Seminary Scholarships and Church Grants

The Foundation hopes to serve as a catalyst that strengthens churches and ministries. We strive to do this through our seminary scholarships, ministry grant program, and our new church start grants. In 2018, we awarded \$28,000 in seminary scholarships, \$69,000 in ministry grants and \$50,000 in new church start grants. The Foundation is able to provide these opportunities through the gracious gifts of fellow United Methodists.

Thank you for allowing us to be Your Partner in Ministry

Fellowship and Faith Ministry, Inc.

Fellowship & Faith Ministry provides ministries and services for the community as an expression of Jesus’ love. We help to enrich the lives of the community through the social actions and Christian testimony as a visible expression of our faith. This year our ministry provided food assistance for an average of 14,400 individuals. We provided 42 families with food and toys for Christmas, including 742 individually wrapped gifts. For the Thanks Giving holiday, we provided the fixing for dinner to our families. We gave away over

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400 hygiene kits, 300 sets of hats and gloves, 200 containers of our own laundry powder, 25 sets of sheets and blankets, 150 coats, 200 paper product (toilet paper or paper towels), and 200 baby items (Diapers, Layette sets, or Formula).

We had our annual Trunk or Treat where we grilled 200 hotdogs and handed out chips with juice along with plenty of candy to our neighborhood children. In August, the Lord blessed us with over 600 individuals at our annual neighborhood get-together; we had a barbeque, games, music, and gave away school supplies to over 400 of the neighborhood children. We dyed over 550 eggs for the neighborhood Easter egg hunt, along with juice and cookie. With our tutoring program, we were able to help 10 individuals advance in their studies, and further their education. We provided forms and the time to fill them out for over 200 individuals so they can get assistance with utilities, medical, phone, and disability. We provided free bilingual tax assistance for over 120 individuals. We also provided immigration assistance; we helped many of our households renew their Individual Tax Identification Numbers so they can fill out their tax forms.

We had a lot of individual achievement last year; to mention a few there is Enrique Garcia, now a US citizen, he has a good job so he is able to provide for his family and he comes in to volunteer instead of needing help. Maria Bocardo is also a new US citizen and brings us food from her restaurant when we are working so hard we do not have time to eat. We believe our greatest Joy is Tricia Whitehead, a single mom from the neighborhood who lost her job and was overwhelmed with bills and taking care of her children. She started coming in for help, we helped her fill out job applications, helped her with her education, and she was so appreciative she decided to come in and volunteer while she waited for the Lord to give the right job for her and her family. Today, besides the blessing of a wonderful job, she speaks and request for food donations on behalf of Fellowship & Faith Ministry.

This year we intend to try to get the community more involved with our ministry so we can thrive into the future.

Rural Response Hotline

Rev. Jerry D. Albright, Executive Director

OVERVIEW

1. Project Background and Description

The Rural Response Hotline is the only continuing hotline for farmers and ranchers of its kind. It has been in operation since 1982.

2. Project Scope

The rural response hotline provides legal assistance for farmers and ranchers who are distressed. This assistance takes the form of legal counsel, estate planning, leases, mediation, bankruptcy, transfer of property, among other legal matters. The hotline staff also presents clinics for farmers that deal with best practices in farm and ranch operation.

Perhaps the most important facet of counseling is provided through the Counseling Outreach and Mental Health Treatment program (COMHT). The COMHT program provides up to five counseling/therapy visits for each member of a farm or ranch family. These sessions are completely free to the farmer or rancher if they are not otherwise insured for mental health counseling. Treatment is paid for by a contract between Interchurch Ministries of Nebraska and the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services: Behavioral Health Division. The rural response hotline provides the referral point and issues vouchers which are paid by Interchurch Ministries of Nebraska and reimbursed by DHHS.

3. Challenges

The Rural Response Hotline has faced a number of challenges in the last three years. The first of these challenges came in a 25% reduction in the budget of the hotline imposed by the Nebraska Legislature and governor.

The second challenge has been the increased number of calls to the hotline by economically distressed farmers in the wake of new tariffs, low market prices, high land prices, and high production

costs together with high real estate taxes.

Finally, the hotline is experiencing an increased number of calls from farmers and ranchers who are experiencing family complications from addiction and substance dependency, divorce, PTSD, and potential for suicide and completed suicides. This has resulted in a higher demand for counseling vouchers while the number of vouchers available have been restricted by budget and contractual provisions.

4. Support

From its initial organization in the early 1980s until today, The Great Plains Conference of the United Methodist Church has been a loyal and generous partner for the Rural Response Hotline. Your generous support has helped the hotline continue in its mission.

I am pleased to report that Interchurch Ministries of Nebraska was awarded a 30-month contract from the Nebraska DHHS helping to ensure that this vital ministry to farmer and ranchers will continue through 2021. But we cannot continue this important mission without the support we receive from the Methodist Church and other partners noted below in the budget review.

5. Budget 2019

Income 2018 FY

Budget 2019

\$9,000.00

Income 2018 FY

Great Plains UMC

Farm Aid \$4,500.00

Nebraska DHHS Behavioral Health Division \$6,492.00

Nebraska State Grange \$ 500.00

Nebraska Farmers Union \$1,000.00

Interchurch Ministries of Nebraska (Base Budget) \$25,063.00

Total Income \$51,055.80

Expenses 2018

Hotline Staff (Nebraska Legal Aid) \$33,460.80
Staff Attorney (Nebraska Legal Aid) \$ 6,240.00
Phone Charges (BOO Number) \$5,980.00
Travel to clinics (Hotline staff) \$ 625.00
Total Holine Expenses \$51,055.80

6. Contracts

The hotline is supported by Nebraska Legal Aid. This contract (\$50,000.00 annually) is negotiated between Interchurch Ministries of Nebraska on behalf of the Nebraska Rural Crisis Council.

A separate contract is negotiated between Interchurch Ministries of Nebraska and the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services: Behavioral Health Division. This contract is reviewed and negotiated annually. The funding for this contract comes from a Federal Grant/Contract with NE DHHS.

Thank you for your generous support for the Nebraska Rural Response Hotline and the opportunity to report to your conference.