

ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

Board of Trustees

Loyd Hamrick, President

The Great Plains Conference Board of Trustees, since the last Annual Conference in Topeka, has continued to evaluate, maintain and protect conference-owned properties, equipment and vehicles over the two-state areas of Kansas and Nebraska. The Board has also continued to have regular meetings, along with several teleconferences to accomplish the tasks assigned.

Since the last Annual Conference – here are the following property transactions the Board acted on:

- Sold the Lincoln Conference Office
- Sold the Wichita East District parsonage
- Sold the Beemer, NE UMC – closed church (Elkhorn Valley District)
- Sold the Kansas City, KS Trinity UMC – closed church (Kansas City District)
- Sold the Kilgore, NE UMC – closed church (Great West District)
- Sold the Portis, KS UMC – closed church (Hays District)
- Sold the Robinson, KS UMC – closed church (Topeka District)
- Transferred the Wichita, KS Brookside UMC, closed church, to Chapel Hill UMC (Wichita East District)
- Donated the McGraw, KS UMC – closed church, to the Sheridan Count Historical Society (Hays District)
- Sold the Greeley, KS UMC – closed church, sale finalized (Five Rivers District)
- Sold the Topeka, KS St. Peter's UMC – closed church, sale finalized (Topeka District)
- Sold the Garden City, KS Evangelica UMC – closed mission church and parsonage (Dodge City District)
- Cedar Vale, KS UMC parsonage installment sale is active and current.

The following closed church properties are being held for disposition:

- Ada, Ks UMC (Salina District)

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- Chetopa, KS, St. Paul UMC (Parsons District)
- Glade, KS UMC (Hays District)
- Iola, KS Calvary UMC (Five Rivers District)
- Long Pine, NE UMC (Elkhorn Valley District)
- Walnut, KS UMC (Parsons District)

The following churches are in the closing process:

- Amelia, NE UMC (Elkhorn Valley District – have not held charge conference)
- Auburn, KS UMC (Topeka District – have not held charge conference)
- Inland, NE UMC (Prairie Rivers District – have not held charge conference)
- Ozawkie, KS UMC (Topeka District – have not held charge conference)
- Wichita, KS Dawson UMC (Wichita West District – have not transferred property to the conference)

The following churches are disaffiliating – these are congregations seeking to leave the UMC:

- Abilene, KS Emmanuel UMC (Salina District)
- Aulne, KS UMC (Hutchinson District)
- Bartlett, KS UMC (Parsons District)
- Benton, KS UMC (Wichita East District)
- Esbon, KS UMC (Salina District)

The Conference has made the following vehicle transactions:

- Traded a 2012 Toyota Camry for a 2019 Toyota RAV4 (Kansas City District)
- Traded a 2006 Haulmark Trailer for a 2020 Sharp Trailer (Disaster Response)
- Sold a 2000 Dodge 15 passenger van (Garden City, KS Evangelica)

In closing, this will be my final trustees report to you, the members of the Great Plains Conference. These have been unusually busy years and, yes at times trying, but through it all there have been many prayers of support and encouragement. There has been and will continue to be times of anxiety among laity, clergy, as we move forward in these trying days ahead.

I do not want leave without expressing my thanks to the Board Members, Conference Staff and Conference Chancellors, for their support and energy throughout all the business and teleconferencing that was conducted over the past several years. It has been a humbling experience to serve the church. I am praying for a gracious way forward that will enable the church to move forward in peace.

Blessing to all.

Personnel Committee

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.

In light of the unprecedented disruption that has resulted from the COVID-19 pandemic, the Personnel Committee's recommendation is that minimum compensation amounts for clergy in full-time appointments effective January 1, 2021 remain unchanged from their 2020 levels.

A comparison chart is provided below:

| Clergy Status | 2020 | 2021 |
|------------------------|-------------|-------------|
| Full Time Local Pastor | 37,617 | 37,617 |
| Associate Member | 40,051 | 40,051 |
| Provisional Member | 42,486 | 42,486 |
| Full Member | 44,921 | 44,921 |

Pension and Benefits

Peggy Mihoover, Staff Liason

Pension & Health Benefits Items for Action

- Past Service Rate (PSR)

The past service rate is received by those that have vested years of

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service in the Pre-82 Pension Plan. The board voted to use the 2% or COLA reflected in the Comprehensive Funding Plan for 2021. The 2020 PSR is \$807 and set for \$823 for 2021.

- **Contingent Annuitant Percentage (CAP)**

The board reviewed funding the CAP (amount the surviving spouse receives from Pre-82) to 100% and determined at this time current funding level in Pre-82 Plan will not allow for the increase for 2021. The board will continue to review yearly.

- **Retirement Benefits/Funding Percentage/Use of Reserves**

The board's minimum target funding level for the Pre-82 Pension Plan remains at 120%. The board will continue to bill the church for CPP benefits at 3%, CRSP DB at 3%, and CRSP DC at 3% for 2021 with the board covering the additional cost of 6.2% with any Pre-82 Pension funding or board reserves. Church with (1/4) 25% appointments will be billed 10% UMPIP with the remaining 2% funded with Pre-82 Pension funding or board reserves. reserves.

- **Health Allowance**

At this time, the health allowance will continue to be \$15,850 annually for 2021 with the clergy maintaining at least an ACA Bronze Plan. Emergency Health Grant will continue. The board is looking into HRA Plans that can provide tax free Health Funds.

- **2021 Comprehensive Funding Plan**

The board is required to submit a comprehensive funding plan each year to Wespath and Investments. The funding plan must meet the standards for a Pre-82 funding plan as established by Wespath Benefits & Investments and the favorable opinion requirements for a funding plan. We have submitted our funding plan for review and are awaiting formal approval by Wespath Benefits and Investments.

- **Incapacity Leave Health Grants**

Those receiving CPP medical leave benefits receive a health grant with the following schedule:

First 24 months the health grant is \$14,232 annually.

After the first 24 months \$300 per month for the clergy, spouse, and dependents for 3 years.

After the completion of 3 years the health grant continues at

\$300 per month for clergy.

The board has reviewed and recommends changing the benefit since healthcare plans are no longer managed by the board. Below

is the new schedule:

First 24 months the health grant is \$14,232 annually.

After the first 24 months and each year thereafter (up to 3 years of assistance) an application must be submitted for the need and to validate spouse and dependent coverage. The maximum per month should not exceed \$1186.

- Housing Resolution

In order to meet federal guidelines, an annual housing resolution must be approved at Annual Conference and printed in the journal. (See attached resolution).

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 Clergy Persons 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, 2021 through December 31, 2021 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.

Review of Benefits (No Action Required) – Information Only

- CPP eligibility as follows:

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

- Special Pension Grants

Currently there are two dependent children receiving a grant.

- Virgin Pulse Health Miles

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

- Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

Program is available to active clergypersons/spouse/dependents serving three-quarter time or more for local churches or conference and lay conference staff working 30 hours or more and their dependents.

- WW (Weight Watchers)

Program is available to active clergypersons/spouses serving one-half time or more for local churches of conference and lay conference staff working 30 hours or more and their spouses. The program is also available to clergypersons/spouses on CPP.

- Optional Benefits

The conference provides group plans for dental, vision, accidental, critical illness, and life insurance that active clergypersons serving three-quarter time or more may participate along with conference lay staff. Cost for the plans are 100% paid by the participant.

- Short-term Disability

Short-term disability funding is available to assist member

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churches in the event a fulltime or part-time (1/2 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.

- Retiree Health Insurance

Nebraska retirees that retired before December 31, 2019, will continue to receive their allotted HRA if they continue to utilize Via Benefits for the private Medicare plans. Securing coverage outside Via Benefits will cancel their HRA and it cannot be re-instated.

- Farmer Fund Emergency Grants

Assistance from the Farmer Fund Grant (Program) is made through the Board on an application form provided by Wespath Benefits and Investment. 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 and submitting coverage of an ACA Healthcare Plan. Maximum available grant is \$4,000 and the clergy member can only receive one grant per calendar year.

Written guidelines and application are available from the Benefits Department.

- Crouse Fund Grants

Crouse Fund Grants are for critical/emergency needs for which the Farmer Fund is unable to provide a grant. Request will be submitted to the District Superintendent (DS) by the Conference Benefits Officer if a Farmer Fund Grant cannot be approved. The DS will take the request to the Cabinet for approval. Maximum grant is \$3,000.

Written guidelines are available from the Benefits Department.

- Use of Reserves

Upon a request from the Mission Alignment team, the Board continues to draw 5% of pension-designated reserves to help pay for Conference Staff benefits. The Board 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. The Board approved to support cost for a benefits assistant for the Benefits Department.

Episcopacy Committee

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.

At the request of the South Central Jurisdiction (SCJ) Episcopacy Committee, a 360 assessment of the bishop was conducted. Lay and clergy members from across both states and representing our conference as carefully as possible were asked to participate in the completing the assessment. GPC had the largest number of participants in the denomination. We are grateful to those who completed the survey. The results were then shared with the bishop and sent to the SCJ Episcopacy Committee. We are blessed to have a bishop who strives for excellence and focuses on the missional effectiveness of our churches.

2019 was a year of turbulence in the UMC and required much attention from our episcopal leader. After the 2019 GC, Bishop Saenz focused his attention on keeping our conference steady in its focus on justice and missional outreach. This was demonstrated in the emphasis upon network development at AC 2019, the continued emphasis of our district superintendents as missional strategists and growing attention on the support of our clergy through educational opportunities that are accessible, engaging

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and equipping them for the mission field. To additionally assist the local churches, a 360 evaluation of churches begun to provide insight to a church's effectiveness and potential growing areas.

The Episcopacy Committee supports the bishop in his earnest desire to be faithful in all times. As members of the Great Plains Conference, we pray for our local churches, our conference and our bishop. We trust that God will guide us into a future filled with hope.

Commission on Archives and History

Melinda Rittgers, Chairperson

The Great Plains Annual Conference owns and maintains archival collections at two facilities and provides funding for two half-time archivists and one part-time assistant archivist, who will replace the two Kansas intern positions. Karrie Dvorak is the director of the Nebraska United Methodist Historical Center and Archives at Nebraska Wesleyan University. Sara DeCaro is archivist of the Kansas United Methodist Archives at Baker University.

The Nebraska United Methodist Historical Center and Archives has undergone personnel changes this year. Christy Hyman resigned as the archivist in June, and Lona Dearmont stepped in as the volunteer director to keep the center open. As director, she assisted John Irwin by providing several photographs for his scholarly article on the founding of Nebraska Wesleyan University published in the Winter 2020 edition of Great Plains Quarterly. Karrie Dvorak was hired in January of 2020 as the director on a contract basis.

The Kansas United Methodist Archives received 95 research requests in 2019. 225 linear feet of Kansas United Methodist Archives books were catalogued, and 9 cubic feet of files were added to Archon, the collection management system for the archives. More than 35 cubic feet of unprocessed acquisitions were received by the archives. Sara DeCaro was assisted by intern Sarah St. John and student workers from Baker University.

Treasurer's Report

Scott Brewer,
Conference Treasurer/
Director of Administrative Services

It goes almost without saying that 2020 has been unprecedented. All of us have been challenged to find new ways to doing. I am pleased and proud to say that along with our other colleagues on the conference staff, your Administrative Services team has risen to many challenges faced in 2020. I'd like to highlight a few:

- We maintained business continuity throughout the lockdown and continue to find new ways of achieving greater efficiency and flexibility to better ensure we are prepared for the surprises that may still lie ahead
- Following the Bishop's lead, the Great Plains Conference Council on Finance and Administration issued a two-month Mission Shares moratorium, effectively reducing every church's mission shares by 16.67% for 2020
- The conference offered all Great Plains churches a free system to receive online donations throughout the spring and summer
- Our staff produced financial and administrative training and materials for churches working through administrative dilemmas and ever-changing government programs and regulation that resulted from the pandemic
- Working with conference Communications staff, we continue to make Zoom licenses available to every Great Plains pastor in active ministry
- We offered new interpretive resources for Mission Shares including a narrative budget

Amidst all the struggle and pain experienced by so many this year, I have been deeply moved by the continued faithfulness and generosity of our people as well as the innovation and courage of our churches as they have sought to reach out to the ignored, forgotten and oppressed in their communities. There is tremendous work ahead of us, but I remain confident that by God's grace, our common efforts will continue to transform the world for the better.

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| | 2019 | | 2020 | | 2021 | | 2020 vs 2021 | |
|--|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|-----------------|-------------------------|--------------------|--|
| | Approved Budget | Actual | Approved Budget | Approved Budget | Approved Budget | \$\$\$ Chg 2020 to 2021 | % Chg 2020 to 2021 | |
| INCOME: | | | | | | | | |
| Mission Shares | \$14,367,202 | \$14,485,531 | \$14,285,185 | \$14,041,222 | | (\$243,963) | -1.7% | |
| Less: Allowance for Unpaid Mission Shares | (\$838,957) | (\$2,181,165) | (\$856,664) | (\$1,857,854) | | (\$1,001,190) | 116.9% | |
| Net Mission Share Income | \$13,508,245 | \$12,304,366 | \$13,428,521 | \$12,183,368 | | (\$1,245,153) | -9.3% | |
| % of Mission Share Asking | 94.02% | 84.94% | 94.00% | 86.77% | | | | |
| Other Income: | | | | | | | | |
| Restricted Reserve-Budget Support (5%) | \$1,843,669 | \$1,257,242 | \$1,901,525 | \$2,004,822 | | \$103,297 | 5.4% | |
| Restr. Reserve-Budget Support Special Distribution | \$138,350 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | | \$0 | | |
| Total Income | \$15,490,264 | \$13,561,608 | \$15,330,046 | \$14,188,190 | | (\$1,141,856) | -7.4% | |
| EXPENSES: | | | | | | | | |
| Personnel | | | | | | | | |
| Wages and Housing | \$3,604,584 | \$3,362,827 | \$3,544,400 | \$3,305,064 | | (\$239,336) | -6.8% | |
| Other benefits & Payroll taxes | \$704,224 | \$705,173 | \$824,986 | \$652,369 | | (\$172,617) | -20.9% | |
| Total Personnel | \$4,308,808 | \$4,068,000 | \$4,369,386 | \$3,957,433 | | (\$411,953) | -9.4% | |
| Episcopal Office | | | | | | | | |
| General Church Ministries for Episcopacy | \$710,738 | \$602,027 | \$702,039 | \$699,878 | | (\$2,161) | -0.3% | |
| Episcopal Office Expenses | \$51,995 | \$21,270 | \$70,628 | \$26,196 | | (\$44,432) | -62.9% | |
| Episcopal Residence Maintenance | \$15,000 | \$14,164 | \$15,000 | \$19,500 | | \$4,500 | 30.0% | |
| District Office Expenses | \$308,445 | \$231,076 | \$316,215 | \$261,149 | | (\$55,066) | -17.4% | |
| Cabinet Operations | \$785,700 | \$543,495 | \$693,900 | \$623,925 | | (\$69,975) | -10.1% | |
| Total Episcopal Office Budget | \$1,871,878 | \$1,412,032 | \$1,797,782 | \$1,630,648 | | (\$167,134) | -9.3% | |
| Clergy Excellence | | | | | | | | |
| General Church Ministries for Clergy Excellence | \$810,609 | \$688,926 | \$800,688 | \$798,223 | | (\$2,465) | -0.3% | |
| Board of Ordained Ministry | \$176,000 | \$154,615 | \$176,000 | \$177,000 | | \$1,000 | 0.6% | |
| Transition Into Ministry | \$229,270 | \$141,369 | \$227,200 | \$216,700 | | (\$10,500) | -4.6% | |
| Clergy Excellence Programming Expense | \$197,000 | \$86,434 | \$211,000 | \$179,600 | | (\$31,400) | -14.9% | |
| Clergy Excellence Office expense | \$32,650 | \$33,771 | \$32,600 | \$35,300 | | \$2,700 | 8.3% | |
| Total Clergy Excellence Budget | \$1,445,529 | \$1,105,115 | \$1,447,488 | \$1,406,823 | | (\$40,665) | -2.8% | |
| Congregational Excellence | | | | | | | | |
| General Church Ministries for Leadership Development | \$395,707 | \$336,301 | \$390,865 | \$389,661 | | (\$1,204) | -0.3% | |
| SCI (Lydia Patterson) Leadership Development | \$97,643 | \$82,987 | \$97,643 | \$97,643 | | \$0 | 0.0% | |
| Congregational Leadership/Training | \$140,800 | \$143,975 | \$228,600 | \$103,000 | | (\$125,600) | -54.9% | |
| Campus Ministry | \$625,000 | \$625,000 | \$640,000 | \$615,000 | | (\$25,000) | -3.9% | |
| Camping Ministry | \$712,500 | \$712,500 | \$712,500 | \$651,300 | | (\$61,200) | -8.6% | |
| Resource Center | \$4,000 | \$3,779 | \$2,000 | \$0 | | (\$2,000) | -100.0% | |
| Intergenerational Discipleship Ministry | \$112,400 | \$95,891 | \$120,000 | \$76,800 | | (\$43,200) | -36.0% | |
| Ethnic Ministry | \$468,500 | \$333,808 | \$438,500 | \$272,000 | | (\$166,500) | -38.0% | |
| New Church Starts Ministry | \$550,708 | \$550,708 | \$525,000 | \$353,500 | | (\$171,500) | -32.7% | |
| Congregational Excellence Office Expense | \$72,100 | \$59,089 | \$61,900 | \$74,160 | | \$12,260 | 19.8% | |
| Total Congregational Excellence Budget | \$3,179,358 | \$2,944,038 | \$3,217,008 | \$2,633,064 | | (\$583,944) | -18.2% | |
| Mercy and Justice | | | | | | | | |
| General Church Ministries for Mercy and Justice | \$2,400,000 | \$2,039,750 | \$2,370,626 | \$2,363,328 | | (\$7,298) | -0.3% | |
| Disaster Response | \$23,600 | \$23,879 | \$28,250 | \$19,570 | | (\$8,680) | -30.7% | |
| Mercy and Justice Ministries | \$169,000 | \$135,748 | \$167,100 | \$142,875 | | (\$24,225) | -14.5% | |
| Mercy & Justice Office expense | \$20,195 | \$24,768 | \$24,450 | \$16,950 | | (\$7,500) | -30.7% | |
| Total Mercy and Justice Budget | \$2,612,795 | \$2,224,145 | \$2,590,426 | \$2,542,723 | | (\$47,703) | -1.8% | |
| Administrative Services | | | | | | | | |
| General and SCJ Ministries for Admin Services | \$408,541 | \$346,390 | \$404,278 | \$403,219 | | (\$1,059) | -0.3% | |
| Administrative Committee Expenses | \$94,200 | \$81,935 | \$97,295 | \$117,970 | | \$20,675 | 21.2% | |
| Administrative Services Office Expense | \$155,550 | \$133,950 | \$147,552 | \$148,000 | | \$448 | 0.3% | |
| Information Technology | \$174,400 | \$147,595 | \$204,000 | \$168,500 | | (\$35,500) | -22.3% | |
| Annual Conference Expense | \$152,750 | \$121,789 | \$143,032 | \$134,100 | | (\$8,932) | -6.2% | |
| Safe Gatherings | \$166,950 | \$116,665 | \$142,500 | \$115,500 | | (\$27,000) | -18.9% | |
| Conf Office Building Maintenance expense | \$211,705 | \$225,359 | \$232,000 | \$208,330 | | (\$23,670) | -10.2% | |
| Trustees: Insurance, Auto, Dist Office & Parsonage | \$412,450 | \$347,835 | \$391,300 | \$377,300 | | (\$14,000) | -3.6% | |
| Communications Program Expense | \$145,350 | \$136,759 | \$146,000 | \$121,150 | | (\$24,850) | -17.0% | |
| Total Administrative Services budget | \$1,821,896 | \$1,658,277 | \$1,907,957 | \$1,784,069 | | (\$123,888) | -6.5% | |
| Missional Opportunity fund request | \$150,000 | \$150,000 | \$0 | \$233,431 | | \$233,431 | | |
| Total Great Plains Conference Expenses | \$15,490,264 | \$13,561,608 | \$15,330,047 | \$14,188,190 | | (\$1,141,857) | -7.4% | |
| Net Income (Loss) | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | | | | |

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Great Plains Budget Summary

| | 2019 | | 2020 | | 2021 | | 2020 vs 2021 | |
|---|--------------------|---------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-------------------------|--------------------|
| | Approved Budget | Actual | Approved Budget | Approved Budget | Approved Budget | Approved Budget | \$\$\$ Chg 2020 to 2021 | % Chg 2020 to 2021 |
| Mission Agency Support*: | | | | | | | | |
| 1% of church operating income (52t) for Agencies | \$1,436,720 | \$992,001 69.05% | \$1,428,519 | \$1,404,122 | | | (\$24,396) | -1.7% |
| Colleges/Universities | | | | | | | | |
| Nebraska Wesleyan Univ - Lincoln, NE | 8.10% | \$80,353 | 8.22% | 8.04% | | | | -0.18% |
| Baker University - Baldwin City, KS | 8.10% | \$80,353 | 8.22% | 8.04% | | | | -0.18% |
| Saint Paul School of Theology - KS/OK | 8.10% | \$80,353 | 8.22% | 8.04% | | | | -0.18% |
| Kansas Wesleyan University - Salina, KS | 8.10% | \$80,353 | 8.22% | 8.04% | | | | -0.18% |
| Southwestern College - Winfield, KS | 8.10% | \$80,353 | 8.22% | 8.04% | | | | -0.18% |
| Health & Welfare Institutions | | | | | | | | |
| UM Homes/Aldersgate Village (Good Sam. Fnd) - Topeka, KS | 4.53% | \$44,985 | 4.68% | 5.27% | | | | 0.58% |
| Asbury Park, (Good Sam. Fnd) - Newton, KS | 2.11% | \$20,941 | 2.22% | 0.00% | | | | -2.22% |
| GraceMed Health Clinic - Wichita and Topeka, KS | 3.05% | \$30,249 | 3.17% | 3.12% | | | | -0.05% |
| Released & Restored - NE | 1.88% | \$18,615 | 2.22% | 2.50% | | | | 0.28% |
| EmberHope (Youthville) - KS | 2.42% | \$24,044 | 2.78% | 3.12% | | | | 0.35% |
| Epworth Village - York, NE | 2.27% | \$22,493 | 2.46% | 2.77% | | | | 0.31% |
| Tyree Health and Dental Clinic - Wichita, KS | 1.88% | \$18,615 | 1.98% | 0.00% | | | | -1.98% |
| Wesley Towers - Hutchinson, KS | 0.00% | \$0 | 0.00% | 2.22% | | | | 2.22% |
| Ministries with the Poor | | | | | | | | |
| United Methodist Ministries - Omaha, NE | 13.06% | \$129,526 | 13.25% | 14.01% | | | | 0.76% |
| Immigrant Legal Center(JFON) - NE | 10.32% | \$102,380 | 10.95% | 11.07% | | | | 0.11% |
| Friendship House of Hope - Ogdan, KS | 1.13% | \$11,246 | 0.79% | 0.54% | | | | -0.26% |
| Wesley House - Pittsburg, KS | 4.53% | \$44,985 | 4.68% | 5.00% | | | | 0.31% |
| Fellowship and Faith - Topeka, KS | 0.59% | \$5,817 | 0.32% | 0.36% | | | | 0.04% |
| UM Open Door - Wichita, KS | 4.53% | \$44,985 | 4.68% | 4.91% | | | | 0.23% |
| Genesis Family Health (UM Mex-Amer Minist), KS | 3.05% | \$30,249 | 3.17% | 3.57% | | | | 0.40% |
| Living Hope-Omaha, NE | 2.66% | \$26,370 | 0.00% | 0.00% | | | | |
| Ecumenical/Interchurch organizations | | | | | | | | |
| Rural Response Hotline, NE | 1.49% | \$14,736 | 1.51% | 1.34% | | | | -0.17% |
| Total Mission Agency Support Budget | 100.00% | \$992,001 | 100.00% | 100.00% | | | | |
| Directed Conf Advnc MAS not included above | | \$66,907 | | | | | | |
| <i>*All Mission Agency Support funds are distributed based on the above percentage ratio.</i> | | | | | | | | |
| For Information Only - included in the above budget | | | | | | | | |
| General Church Apportionments | | | | | | | | |
| Episcopal Office | \$710,738 | \$602,027 | \$702,039 | \$699,878 | | | (\$2,161) | -0.3% |
| Africa University | \$72,363 | \$61,499 | \$71,478 | \$71,257 | | | (\$221) | -0.3% |
| Black College | \$323,344 | \$274,802 | \$319,387 | \$318,404 | | | (\$983) | -0.3% |
| Ministerial Education | \$810,609 | \$688,926 | \$800,688 | \$798,223 | | | (\$2,465) | -0.3% |
| World Service | \$2,400,000 | \$2,039,750 | \$2,370,626 | \$2,363,328 | | | (\$7,298) | -0.3% |
| General Administration | \$284,980 | \$241,388 | \$281,492 | \$280,626 | | | (\$866) | -0.3% |
| Interdenominational Cooperation | \$63,395 | \$53,882 | \$62,620 | \$62,427 | | | (\$193) | -0.3% |
| Total General Apportionments | \$4,665,429 | \$3,962,274 | \$4,608,330 | \$4,594,143 | | | (\$14,187) | -0.3% |
| South Central Jurisdiction Apportionments | | | | | | | | |
| Lydia Patterson Institute | \$97,643 | \$82,987 | \$97,643 | \$97,643 | | | \$0 | 0.0% |
| SCJ Reserve restoration | \$7,536 | \$6,374 | \$7,536 | \$7,536 | | | \$0 | 0.0% |
| SCJ Mission And Administration Fund | \$52,630 | \$44,745 | \$52,630 | \$52,630 | | | \$0 | 0.0% |
| Total SCJ Apportionments | \$157,809 | \$134,106 | \$157,809 | \$157,809 | | | \$0 | 0.0% |

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2021 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 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 | |
| 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 | |
| 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 | |

GREAT PLAINS CONFERENCE

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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 | |
| 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 | |
| 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 | |
| Wesley Towers, Hutchinson, Kan. | 717 | |

| 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 | |

| Ecumenical/Interchurch organizations | Activity | Project |
|--|----------|---------|
| Rural Response Hotline (NE Farmers Union Foundation) | 731 | |

Connecting Council

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

The Connecting Council continues to focus on managing the resources of the conference in ways that affirm our vision statement of “Great Churches, Great Leaders, Great Disciples, Transformed World.”

Among the items presented and/or acted on in October 2019 and April 2020 were the following:

- Conference staff began identifying qualities that are found in healthy churches and then held focus groups in the summer and fall which helped sharpen the distinctions between various size categories of churches. The result is “Greatness Profiles” of traits and descriptions that can help congregations determine if they are living into the vision of the conference and provide indicators of what they can do to become vibrant and healthy.
- Budget reductions for 2020 were approved in order to more closely reflect the anticipated income for the year. Programmatic and administrative spending was cut, and unfilled positions have been left vacant.
- Disaffiliation process established by the Trustees was affirmed. This identifies the process by which church that want to disaffiliate from the denomination may do so.
- Doing Justice Initiative was presented, discussed, and approved. This initiative commits up to \$2.1 million from conference reserves over a five-year period for community organizing and teaching churches how to get more deeply involved in justice ministries in their local areas. This initiative includes partnerships with Direct Action and Research Training (DART) and the Western Organization of Resource Councils (WORC). Conference funding provides seed money to launch community-organizing groups in targeted areas of the conference.
- Approved the proposed revision to the Standing rules and affirmed the distribution of an email and mail ballot to annual conference members so that the 2020 Annual Conference session can be held by teleconference instead of meeting face to face.
- Heard from Rev. Zach Anderson, CFA chair, that the bishop’s

two-month moratorium on mission shares was endorsed by CFA.

- Bishop Ruben Saenz Jr. reported on the conference's response to the coronavirus.
- Scott Brewer shared results from the survey distributed to clergy in March which, among other information, showed that 90% of the respondent's churches were worshipping online during the pandemic

CLERGY EXCELLENCE

Clergy Excellence

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 Clergy Excellence team is engaged in multiple ways to develop clergy as we grow into this vision and mission:

- Continuing education for skill development in preaching, worship, administration, and leadership
- Retreats for renewal, skill development and spiritual growth
- Transition into Ministry program for young clergy
- Pastoral Internships for college students
- Grants to churches and clergy for developing a culture of call
- Board of Ordained Ministry
- Candidacy Summit, Licensing School, Mentors
- Recruitment of pastors
- Boundary Training for clergy
- Support Team for Congregations experiencing trauma or crisis
- Trained coaches to encourage and develop clergy

We continue to strive to develop clergy through low cost opportunities within our two states to develop leadership skills, ministry skills, and to grow spiritual depth of all clergy. The role of clergy is demanding, diverse, emotionally draining at times, and yet the best job in the world for those called to pastoral ministry.

Great Plains Board of Ordained Ministry

Rev. Galen Wray, Chair

From the perspective of a first-year chairperson of the Board of Ordained Ministry, this has been quite an interesting year. For roughly the first third of the year, the work of the Board was dominated by working our way through the fallout of General Conference 2019 to make a statement to the candidates and all those in the process of credentialing, as to where the Board stood with respect to the Discipline in which we serve under. We approved a statement saying that our evaluation of each individual involved in the process would be based on the merits of their work, and not on personal lives.

The second third of the year for myself was dominated by the discernment process I went through to come to the decision to retire from active ministry, including retiring from participation on the Board. All of my discernment can be summed up in one word: grandchildren.

The final third of the year in which we are living right now is dominated by a pandemic whose impact none of us foresaw as we did our work as recently as early February at our interview session with candidates. Though pastors and churches struggle to cope with social distancing, human loss and financial loss, it is faithful leadership and encouragement that is sorely needed now in our Conference and across the world. I find great hope in the work of the Board as in our February interviews we approved the commissioning of 17 Provisional Elders, and approved another 13 Full Elders. In addition, 11 Provisional Elders are continued in their second year of Residency. I am humbled and awed by these servants who step into the role Servant Leader in a time where the denomination struggles to know its identity and the Pastoral Leader must redefine worship to meets the needs of our parishes in a major health crisis.

I am blessed to have been a part of this body for the last six years and I can step away knowing that God is at work in the Great Plains Board of Ordained Ministry and Conference.

Transition into Ministry (TiM)

Rev. Ashlee Alley Crawford

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 2019, we welcomed one new clergy to join 15 others. She graduated from seminary just prior to joining the program and serves as an associate pastor.
- 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 had 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 Dinner Church Immersion in Seattle, the New Room Conference near Nashville, the Reconcile and Reform Conference in Seattle, and Disney Institute in Orlando. All four continuing education experiences are recommended to others.
- The Phase 2 pastors (those in the last three years of the program) met with Rev. Nancy Lambert periodically for a Clergy Community of Practice. Additionally, one of the pastors, Rev. Isaac Chua and Laurel (NE) UMC started a Fruitfulness Grant to help the congregation focus on growing 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. Four new pastors will join the TiM Program starting in July 2020. One pastor, Rev. Kyle Reynolds, will graduate from the TiM Program in 2020.

General Board of Higher Education & Ministry (GBHEM)

Submitted by Rev. Greg Bergquist,
General Secretary

In the history of The United Methodist Church, we have never been more in need of leadership, collaboration and connection. Now is the time for those who have been called into the mission and ministry of Jesus Christ to step out and step forward.

The General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM) has been charged by the Church for just this moment. We are equipped and ready to engage in the journey with those called to be principled, Christian leaders.

This is the call of GBHEM – to embrace the ministry of learning and leadership formation in The United Methodist Church and the Wesleyan tradition. We serve Christian leaders around the world who are defined, formed and shaped by a process of intellectual engagement, spiritual and character formation, and leadership development.

GBHEM will continue our mission and ministry through 2020 and beyond. But we are going to be more innovative and adaptive in our approach. GBHEM has begun a deliberative process to reimagine and reshape its ministry. We're doing this in the following ways:

- We will continue cultivating a dynamic culture of call and vocational discernment that encourages lay and clergy leaders

to Discover, Claim and Flourish in God's ministry and mission for the Church, the academy and the world.

- We are enhancing and expanding GBHEM's innovative platform of experiential learning and formation that provides connective, contextual and collaborative solutions to the challenges facing the Church, the academy and the world.
- And, we are in the process of establishing a stewardship and economic model for GBHEM that maintains a commitment to the mission of the Church and the agency while increasing the agency's financial self-sufficiency and sustainability.

"And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."
(Matthew 28:20)

The same spirit of service and leadership that first inspired John Wesley lives on in you. You've been called. So lead on, knowing GBHEM is with you every step of the way.

CONGREGATIONAL EXCELLENCE

a. Congregational Excellence

Rev. Nathan D. Stanton, Director

Congregational Excellence Ministries have been blessed with the challenging work of living into a mission field where ministry takes the quiet courage of leadership by laity, pastors leading their congregations toward meaningful and impacting ministries. Transformation of the world begins with the passion and influence of every congregation in every community where they reside.

Every life and every community institution influenced and impacted by the witness of Great Plains disciples is the transformation of the world and it is the fulfillment of the mission of our Wesleyan heritage. Every day and every week, we can make a difference as Great Plains disciples by offering Christ right where God has us planted. That is our identity as a conference. That is the core of our purpose and that is how we impact the context where we live. Congregational Excellence's vision is to join the network of

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congregations in the Great Plains, “On the adventure to resource the Great Plains mission field.”

Our Mission is: To identify, steward, and deploy multiple resources to help the church make disciples for Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

Priorities across the whole Congregational Excellence Department this year have included:

- Enrolling, activating and coaching 250 congregations in the Readiness 360 process. Congregations have the opportunity to engage for key areas: 1) Spiritual Intensity 2) Dynamic Relationships 3) Missional Alignment 4) Cultural Openness. Fifty coaches have been trained and deployed to support churches in this transformative process.
- Resourcing and training congregations to launch up to 100 Fresh Expressions. Coaching groups for both lay and clergy have been convened and we look forward to continuing our partnership with Fresh Expressions.
- Asset Based Community Development resources and tools for every network in the Great Plains
- Class Leader and Class Meeting elevation and development for the future

The Congregational Excellence Team is: Donna Ernest, Administrative Assistan; Sara Shaw, Camping Ministry Coordinator (Dodge City and Great West); Shane Warta, Lay Leadership Development Coordinator (Hutchinson, Five Rivers and Parsons); Rev. Melissa Gepford, Intergenerational Ministry Coordinator (Blue River-Missouri River and Elkhorn Valley); Rev. Hollie Tapley, Disaster Response Coordinator (Topeka and Salina), Rev. Kalaba Chali, Mercy and Justice Coordinator (Wichita East/West-Gateway); Rev. Nicole Conard, Young Adult and Campus Ministry Coordinator (Flint Hills-Prairie Rivers-Kansas City) and Rev. Nathan Stanton, Congregational Excellence Director. This team has brought depth of faith, courageous creativity and a spirit of Christ-following adventure to all they do to coach and resource conference and district strategies for the development of great congregations.

This summer, the team met with Kansas Leadership Center coach and consultant, Tim Link, to develop and team covenant to guide our challenging work in and to the mission field.

Congregational Excellence Team Guiding Covenant
WE WILL be a united front by first sharing resources and information to support one another.
WE WILL hold each other accountable for open, honest and potentially conflictual conversation.
WE WILL unplug and be fully present with each other in team meetings.
WE WILL intentionally spend time learning about each other's ministries through openness, honesty and direct communication.
WE WILL spend time intentionally with God and each other in spiritual formation.
WE WILL engage in conversation with curiosity and no assumptions.
WE WILL commit to making decisions for the sake of progress and creating healthy ministry systems.
WE WILL be clear on decisions and actions following each meeting. When a team member is absent, their coaching partner will be responsible for updating them.

2019-20 Congregational Excellence Emphasis:

- Resourcing the launch of Fresh Expressions in the Great Plains through lay and clergy leadership
 - 25% of Great Plains churches engaged in the Readiness 360 survey and coaching process
 - Resource 100% of Networks with Asset Based Community Development
 - Excellent relationships with key conference stakeholders
 - 100% of the District Ministry Strategies implemented
 - Zero negative impact to conference resources
- COVID19 Goals:
- Transitioning the Great Plains to a virtual church
 - Resource a virtual Holy Week
 - Resource a virtual 50 Days of Easter
 - Research, Plan and Resource Re-opening from the virtual church

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 2021 priorities:

Lay Ministries: We oversee financial support for the development of Lay Servant Ministry training opportunities, congregational and coaching support for Readiness 360, and intergenerational discipleship.

Ethnic Ministries: We oversee financial support to ethnically diverse communities throughout our conference. In 2019, \$71,000 was given in support to three 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: We oversee financial support for churches creating innovative ministries as Fresh Expressions; \$10,000 has been set aside to assist churches with \$500 grants through 2020.

Urban Ministry Grants: We provide financial support to mission fields with 50,000+ populations. Urban churches with innovative ministries may seek up to \$120,000 over the course of four years. In 2019, \$200,170 was given in support to seven mission fields.

New Church Development

Rev. Nathan Stanton

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 to support the accountability and the living out of the competencies.

Participants can 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 GP Shark Tank. In 2019-20, 15 pastors and laity participated in the Planter Incubator

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 walk-alongside 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. In 2019-20, five pastors have been part of the Core Crucible.

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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. We currently have 3 churches continuing on the church quest to become self-sufficient and self-supporting.

Beginning in 2020, NCD will support a new process to empower a few leaders a year to be part of a cohort of planting apprentices.

Great Plains Churches Launched in 2020:

Agua de la Roca – Kansas City, KS – Elmer Fugon Armijo, Planting Pastor

Church of the Resurrection, Overland Park – Joshua Clough, Campus Pastor

Heart of Christ, Wichita, KS – Ronda Kingwood, Planting Pastor

Iglesia Comunitaria, Omaha, NE – Juan Carlos Veloso, Planting Pastor

Existing Great Plains New Churches:

Neighbors UMC – Lincoln, NE, Launched, January 2017

Connection Point – Lincoln, NE, Launched, July 2017

Olathe Common Grace – Olathe, KS, Launched, July 2017

Expenses for this past year:

2019 NCD Funding:

- \$27,509 new pastor training dollars
- No grants to existing churches
- \$581,505 in 20 by 2020 granted – 4 new church starts in 2019

Great Plains United Methodist Camps Inc.

Rev. Bill Ritter, chair

The six camps of Great Plains Camping, Inc. are honored to be in partnership with the churches of the Great Plains Conference in making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the

world. The six camps, Hori-zon, Fontanelle, Chippewa, Lakeside, Norwesca and Comeca had a very busy camping and retreat season in 2019. They faced the challenges such as weather, but were not deterred as they changed lives for the better.

The camps report 3,527 people experienced the Christian community of their facilities during 2019. But, what is more important than the sheer numbers who stepped on the premises of our camps, the number of lives that were forever changed as they encountered God in the camp setting. In surveys conducted at the conclusion of camp, 913 self-reported they rededicated their life to Christ; 290 reported they accepted Christ into their lives for the first time; 734 said their experience at camp has encouraged them be more active in their local congregation; and 208 reported that during camp they felt a call to Christian Ministry. Our camps are making a difference that is felt now and will shape the future of our church for years to come. But more importantly, our camping ministry is changing lives. We are thankful for the support of the folks of the Great Plains Annual Conference in this ministry.

We cannot begin to record all the exciting ministries that happened in 2019. Here are just three exciting highlights from each of our six camps in 2019:

Horizons—

- Opened new swimming pool and recreation space \$850,000 campaign!
- Launched a new two-week Junior Counselor program – 16 participants!
- 177 attended Middle School Camp – max capacity!

Fontanelle—

- Added new sessions of camps,
- Celebrated 60 years of camping at Fontanelle
- Met major fundraising milestones in Branching Out campaign with new retreat center in the works

Chippewa—

- Fifth Year of Consecutive Camper Attendance Increases.
- Addition of Riding Lesson Program and Expansion of Summer Equine Program.
- 4th Annual Fall Festival and 1st year of the Annual Brian Morton

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Memorial Work Day

Norwesca—

- Amazing group of staff, many from our Counselor in Training program
- Transformed lives of campers
- New camp that was comic/fantasy related was very successful

Lakeside—

- New site director, Ross Janovec, started in December after numerous summer and fall seasons at Camp Fontanelle
- Past camper who had a Traumatic Brain Injury: first memory that returned was her week at camp when she developed a relationship with Christ.
- Volunteers and staff came together from across the conference came together last summer to make sure summer camp still happened.

Comeca—

- In a very difficult decision, the Great Plains Camping, Inc. voted to allow the Site Board of Camp Comeca to try a new direction and relationship with GP Camps. Camp Comeca has been faced with financial challenges for several years. The deficit created at Camp Comeca was covered by funds from the other five camps. The feeling of Great Plains Camping, Inc. was to reach as many as possible for the Gospel. The camps willingly supported each other to help them over the rough times so that they could continue to touch lives for Jesus Christ. After several years of diligent work by all parties involved, it was decided to allow the local site board to de-sign a new ecumenical ministry that would not be a part of Great Plains Camping, Inc. The desire of GP Camps was to help this new ministry reach as many children as possible even if the new camping ministry would not be a part of Great Plains Camping, Inc. With this goal in mind, Great Plains Camping, Inc. and the leadership of the former Camp Comeca Site Board, agreed on a plan to lease the camp to the new ministry, until this new ministry could purchase the upper area of Camp Comeca. This plan was done in consultation of GP Administrative Services and Conference Finance and Administration. This plan will allow Camp Comeca to continue the ministry to this area of Nebraska that they have

done for many years. We pray for the future of this ecumenical venture at Camp Comeca.

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed our world. Almost daily we are seeing new developments and projections. At this point in time we do not know what the 2020 camping season will look like. Shelter in place and stay at home orders from the governors of Kansas and Nebraska have already affected the first scheduled camps of the summer. We live in faith for our future and constantly seek ways to be in ministry in the changing times in which we live.

Great Plains United Methodist Campus Ministry, Inc.

Rev. April Wegehaupt, Chair

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 with opportunities to invite students to gather in worship, service, study and fellowship.

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 this 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, from volunteer hours, building needs and ministerial funds come from generous partners who understand the importance of campus ministry to college students.

The GPUMCM Board has worked to address concerns of adequate funding for ministry sites, we continue to look into building

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evaluative measures flexible enough to be applied to each unique campus, determine where support is needed for not only each ministry, but each minister, and the local boards that support those ministries Our adopted philosophy for ministry is, “Campus Ministry is a movement of grace empowering students to live transformed lives to transform the world.”

Our adopted philosophy for ministry is, “Campus Ministry is a movement of grace empowering students to live transformed lives to transform the world.”

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

- We conducted site visits in the fall and spring semesters with district superintendents, UCMCM board representative, conference staff, local board representative, campus minister and students.
- We have been asking our Great Plains churches who knows students who may be attending college to share their information and the information about our United Methodist campus ministries.

*We meet in-person once a year for UCMCM retreat as campus ministers and Campus Ministry Board to work towards being the most effective we can be with our time and resources. We created peer-learning modules and ways to incorporate best practices from each of the sites.

*A rubric was established for the end-of-year site visits and grant requests including vital signs, budget, vision and goals, care of students and assets, and measuring key areas of campus ministry: engaging in vital Christian discipleship, creating a culture of leadership, developing principled Christian lay and clergy leaders, source of income, facilities, reaching new people, strength of relationship with UM churches, innovation and risk taking, experiencing self-sufficiency and strength of self-government.

The Great Plains has 10 campus ministries and four United

Methodist schools:

United Methodist Schools –

- Nebraska Wesleyan University (Lincoln)
- Kansas Wesleyan University (Salina)
- 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)
- University of Nebraska – Omaha (Omaha)
- University of Nebraska – Kearney (Kearney)

- Kansas State University (Manhattan)
- University of Kansas (Lawrence)
- Emporia State University (Emporia, Kansas)
- Fort Hays State University (Hays, Kansas)
- Washburn University (Topeka, Kansas)
- Wichita State University (Wichita, Kansas)
- Pittsburg State University (Pittsburg, Kansas)

MERCY AND JUSTICE

a. Mercy and Justice Team

Rev. Sarah Marsh

The Doing Justice Initiative

This past year the Mercy & Justice Team continued to focus on the Doing Justice Initiative. In October, the Connecting Council voted to recommend to CF&A that it use \$2.1 million of its unrestricted reserves over a five-year period beginning in 2020 to fund this initiative. This project — aimed at community organizing and teaching churches how to get more deeply involved in justice ministries in their mission fields — involves partnerships with the Direct Action and Research Training (DART) Center and the Western Organization of Resource Councils (WORC). Both organizations have extensive track records in recruiting and mobilizing faith-based communities to address serious problems in their cities, towns and counties. Money from the conference will be used as seed money to launch community-organizing

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groups in targeted parts of Kansas and Nebraska. DART Lead Organizer Ben MacConnell started in January to make contacts and develop relationships in the Kansas City District. Kevin Williams, senior adviser with WORC, is meeting with a variety of people across Nebraska. The plan is to hire a lead organizer for WORC by this summer.

Resource and grants

In January, the Mercy & Justice Team offered a webinar for congregations across the conference to learn more about faith-based community organizing and how we can live out the call from Micah 6:8 to “do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly”. You can find this webinar and other resources on our webpage: www.greatplainsumc.org/mercyandjustice. In February, clergy and conference staff attended the DART Clergy Conference in Florida: Rev. Bonnie McCord (Great West), Rev. Anne Gahn (Gateway), District Superintendent Rev. Nancy Tomlinson and Pastor Beth Graverholt (Blue Rivers), District Superintendent Rev. Chad Anglemyer (Missouri River), Rev. Nicole Conard (Kansas City District Strategy Team), Rev. Sarah Marsh (Mercy & Justice Team Chair).

The theme for this year’s Annual Conference is Seeking Justice. The team had planned to share about the Justice Initiative at the Mission Lunch and through other means. With the COVID-19 pandemic all of this changed. The team continues to collect justice stories that will be shared across the conference (<https://gp-reg.brtaapp.com/SeekingJusticeStorySubmissions>).

Leadership Development and Education

In January, Maddie Johnson from Winfield Grace UMC and Tino Herrero from the Church of the Resurrection in Leawood attended the Young Clergy Conference at the General Board of Church and Society.

Micah Corps internship

This summer our Micah Corps team will be smaller because of having to adapt to the COVID-19 Pandemic. We have five young adults who are all from the Great Plains Conference: Sheka Appoline Olenga, Abigail Koech, Carly Redding, Samantha Redfern and Marquis Toney. Melissa Schmidt Ross is our coordinator. She has been an active member of her church (College Hill UMC in Wichita) for many years and attended Ecumenical Advocacy Days last spring with Peace with Justice Ministries. Our prayer is that the interns will be able to connect with many churches across our conference this summer. They will be working remotely at least at the beginning of the summer.

International mission partnerships

Through our international mission partnerships, we continue to support students, so they are able to attend university: Sarudzai Manhando from Zimbabwe; Hassan Simon, Stella Uziela Gideon, and Lami Joseph from Nigeria; David Junior, Yvener Baptistin, Louis Renelson, and Sandia Elisassaint from Haiti. We hope you enjoy reading their messages in GPconnect.

Disaster Response

Kerry Herkleman, Chair

2019 will most likely be the year your Disaster Response Ministry, team and volunteers will never forget. March 14 began eight months of disaster relief work throughout the Great Plains Conference. Flooding and tornadoes stretched us from one location to the next, time and again. Our small group of volunteers donated 40,658 hours, with 25,438 of those being in Nebraska and 15,220 in Kansas.

Volunteers traveled and worked in 14 different counties in Kansas and 20 different counties in Nebraska at a total of 186 homes, some of them multiple times due to repeat flooding and large amounts of tornado damage.

As soon as a disaster hits the Great Plains Conference, you step up to the plate and provide financial donations that reaches out to

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individuals and families who experienced a disaster. You graciously donated \$852,210.28 for the 2019 disasters in our conference. Disaster Case Management training was held in August, and those individuals began case management work in September. From the end of September to December 31, 2019, your Disaster Response Ministry Team was able to provide \$343,852.29 in grant assistance to individuals and families. Fifty-two individuals and/or families were assisted. As of this Annual Conference reporting, we continue to support those affected by the flooding and tornadoes in 2019. More grants have been awarded and more homes have been and will continue to be worked on during 2020.

The Disaster Response Ministry Team offers the following trainings for each house of worship: Basic Disaster 101, Early Response (ERT), Connecting Neighbors (Ready Congregant, Ready Church, Ready Response), Active Shooter Awareness, Until Help Arrives, Stop the Bleed, Church Site Assessment for Security, and National Food Insurance Program.

It is our desire to serve with compassion and care as we continue to transform the world for Jesus Christ.

General Board of Global Ministries – From Everywhere to Everywhere

www.umcmission.org

Jerry Feese, chair

In 2019, churches and individuals in the Great Plains Conference gave 1,096 gifts totaling \$545,880.60 to General Board of Global Ministries (GBGM) Advance projects.

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 2019 GBGM celebrated 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.

Great Plains Conference Missionaries:

- Sandra Kay Raasch, missionary serving Belize-Honduras, Advance #15075Z
- Rev. Sergio Felipe Tristan, serving National Plan for Hispanic/Latino Ministries, Advance #541002. Rev. Tristan will be ending his missionary service on 06/30/2020.
- Koni Purscell, Church and Community Worker serving Big Stone Gap District UMC, VA, Advance #982931

These missionaries are supported through the Advance and are available for covenant relationship with churches, groups or individuals. For more information on this go to: www.umcmmission.org/give-to-mission/about-the-advance

Great Plains Conference Global Mission Fellows:

- Megan Rust, serving in South Korea, Advance #3022483
- Navya Hopkins, serving in Germany, Advance #3022524
- Eithne Leahy, serving in Seattle, Advance #3022518

Global Mission Fellows are young adults, ages 20-30, who are committed to work in social justice ministries for two years. For more information about this program go to:

<https://www.umcmission.org/serve-with-us/global-mission-fellows>

Peace with Justice Ministries

Andrea Paret, peace with justice coordinator

Last year's report started with scripture from Isaiah 45:5 "God says: Don't be afraid. I am with you." How appropriate this is for our time, in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic where we struggle with the uncertainty of our lives suddenly turned upside down and our fear of losing loved ones.

But I want to add another scripture: God says, "Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke?" Isaiah 58:6

We are in the middle of a worldwide crisis that is impacting all of us regardless of who we are and where we live. But at the same time, underlying injustices in our societies, in our lives together, are showing enormous differences in the way and severity of how this pandemic is affecting us and others here in our country and around the world. "Social Distancing" is the order of the day and so important. But do we realize what a privilege it is if we can afford to work from home and spend more time with our children without having to worry where our next meal will come from or how we are going to pay the rent once the halt on rent-payments is no longer in effect? Are we asking why certain groups of people (among them Native Americans and people of color) have a much higher rate of underlying health issues and therefore are getting infected at a higher rate and have a higher percentage die from coronavirus? Are we questioning why the lives of some people, all of them beloved children of God, are considered more valuable and worthy of being protected than others?

God calls us to be awake and conscious of what is going on around us. God calls us "to loose the bonds of injustice." Our goal as peacemakers cannot be 'to return to normal,' but to use all our energy and effort to build a more peaceful and just world for all. Peace with Justice Sunday is celebrated on June 7th this year (or choose another Sunday that works for your congregation).

Resources can be found at <https://www.resourceumc.org/en/content/peace-with-justice-sunday-pastor-and-leader-kit>.

Your offerings this past year helped support individuals and groups across our conference in working for peace with justice. This included: participants at Ecumenical Advocacy Days last April continued sharing about what they learned and took action after they returned home (this year's event had to be canceled because of COVID-19). Students with UM Campus Ministry at Emporia State University and Campus Ministry at Washburn University were able to explore peace with justice issues during a spring trip. Events focusing on our care for God's creation and for our call to welcome the stranger as well as the urgent work for peace and justice in Palestine/Israel were supported. Peace with Justice Ministries also joins others in our conference in sharing resources about the revised Social Principles (<https://www.umcjustice.org/who-we-are/social-principles-and-resolutions>).

Called by God, let us work together for a world with peace and justice for all!

Holy Land Taskforce

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:

I continue to serve on the Steering Committee for United Methodists For Kairos Response.

Periodic articles regarding events and issues are submitted to GP

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

The Holy Land Task Force will continue to work on educating church members across our conference on the situation in the Holy Land and advocate for human rights for all involved. Promoted and attended presentation by Daoud Nassar at Morningside College in Sioux City, Iowa. Daoud Nassar and his family own Tent of Nations, a family farm located just outside of Bethlehem. The Nassar family has been battling for decades with the Israeli government to keep their family farm from being confiscated. The land is currently surrounded by five illegal Israeli settlements.

“This is what the Lord Almighty said: ‘Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another.’” Zechariah 7:9

Miscellaneous

Lay Servant Ministries

Mary Feit, CLSp

The Great Plains Conference Committee on Lay Servant Ministry (GPCCLSM) continues to cultivate the role of lay persons in the Great Plains Conference through education, networking, and advocacy. 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.

Last year we initiated a project with the goal of providing financial support for lay persons seeking advanced leadership development opportunities beyond lay servant and lay minister training. The Laity Leadership Development Scholarships in the amount of \$500 are made available via an application process, supported by a grant from the Nebraska United Methodist Foundation plus conference mission shares. We were able to support 16 individuals in 2019 in their endeavor to enhance leadership and discipleship skills. Applications will be made available this summer via the LSM webpage at: <https://www.greatplainsumc.org/lsmforms>

In order to perpetuate The Laity Leadership Development Scholarship program, we have established an endowment fund through the Nebraska United Methodist Foundation. In order to support the goal of financial assistance to 20 lay persons annually, our goal is \$100,000. The scholarships we award are matched by conference mission shares. Information about how you can contribute to this fund can be found at: <https://www.great-plainsumc.org/lsmforms>.

Lay Servant Ministries took part in developing the first Laity Summit. The mission of the event was to provide lay persons of the Great Plains Conference a gathering that is accessible, affordable, and relevant. Presenters were recruited to support the goals of identifying potential leaders and cultivating them into leadership roles, strengthening the clergy/laity partnership, exploring one's own personal spiritual life and practices, learning and/or strengthening leadership and discipleship making skills and reviewing resources available to laity for mission projects, fresh expressions experiences, and local congregation vitality.

The Summit was planned for March 21, 2020 at the Kearney First UMC in Nebraska. Just days before, in order to prevent the spread of a pandemic virus, the summit was moved to an online event. Many thanks to the conference staff and presenters who were able to make the change in a very short period of time. The summit reached at least 360 people. We hope to make this an annual event.

Lay Leader Report

Submitted by Lisa Maupin, Conference Lay Leader

The laity of the Great Plains have continued to step up and be present 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.

Leadership Development

In partnership with Great Plains Lay Servant Ministries, the Great Plains hosted the first Laity Summit. The summit was designed to provide laity with resources, connections and educational opportunities to grow and enhance their leadership skills in the local church, community, districts and conference. Originally planned as an in-person one day gathering, the Summit was transitioned to a virtual experience due to the rising concerns around the COVID-19 health pandemic. While the Summit was not executed as planned and there were some hiccups in the transition to virtual we were able to reach out to laity across the conference and provide some tools for developing leaders and enhancing lay driven mission and ministries.

Conversations and initially planning are underway to capitalize on the momentum of the Laity Summit. We are looking at hosting another one in Spring 2021 and exploring other opportunities to do virtual mini-learning sessions throughout the year focused on lay leadership development, identifying new leadership and cultivation of emerging lay leaders.

Unprecedented Times

The emergence of the COVID-19 health pandemic created unprecedented times for our congregations, communities and world. Things changed quickly on how we interact with each other, how we do our work as a church and how we connect and serve our communities. The laity of the Great Plains stepped up to that challenge demonstrating a nimbleness and creativity in their response. Quickly tech teams were called upon to learn new ways of broadcasting virtual worship. Music teams figured out how to adjust from being choirs to soloists. Sunday school teachers developed take-home and virtual curriculum. Committees learned video conferencing and online giving. Campus ministries figured out how to connect with each other when they were quickly sent back to their hometowns with little notice. Quilting groups became mask makers. For some of our churches and laity this was new territory. Yet it was all embraced with a true heart for service, community and a love for the church. The church lost its walls and it proved that the walls were not necessary in our drive to be present in the community and world.

Looking Forward

The Lay Leadership team will be working on developing a lay leadership coaching network within the Great Plains. This project will work on training laity coaches and deploying them across the conference in an effort to assist laity in identifying their leadership goals and what methods can be employed for accomplishing those goals. It is the goal that efforts such as coaching can not only enhance our laity personally but also congregations and communities in their mission and ministry efforts. Strong, confident lay leadership builds strong congregations and ministry efforts. 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.

United Methodist Women

Karen Dunlap, President

Do not fear, for I am with you, do not be afraid, for I am your God. I will strengthen you; I will help you; I will uphold you with my victorious right hand. Isaiah 41:10.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Great Plains United Methodist Women have canceled and/or made changes to ME-Tour, Mission U, Spring retreats and leadership meetings. Also, the organization is exploring online distance learning resources.

Even with changes, in such a time as this, United Methodist Women have continued to help as United Methodist Women do when needed. Making masks, caring for those in need, praying for those who are grieving, praying for the sick, praying for first responders. Praying, praying, praying. We also continue to educate ourselves regarding national issues of concern for women, children and youth around the world and in our own communities.

United Methodist Women Calls on Government to “Continue to Remember Those in Prison” in Midst of COVID-19 Pandemic

March 30, 2020, NEW YORK – As the novel coronavirus continues to expand its reach, United Methodist Women continues to

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express our deep concern for the plight of incarcerated people, many of whom are uniquely vulnerable. We believe that God has called us to life abundant, as a community of mutual care characterized by faith, hope and love in action. As such, we take seriously the biblical mandate: “Continue to remember those in prison as if you were together with them in prison, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering” (Hebrews 13:3, NIV).

United Methodist Women: We Must Help Dismantle the School to Prison Pipeline

NEW YORK – As the nation celebrates Black History Month, United Methodist Women today expressed support for U.S. Representative Ayanna Pressley’s (D-MA) Ending Punitive, Unfair, School-Based Harm that is Overt and Unresponsive to Trauma (PUSHOUT) Act. As the largest denominational organization for women, the group urged its members to actively support the sweeping bill that incentivizes schools and states to end policies and practices that funnel black and brown children away from educational success and into the criminal justice system.

Women’s Group Signs Brief for Ban on Indefinite Detention of Immigrant Children and Families

NEW YORK - United Methodist Women is a mission organization founded in 1869 to address the needs of women, children, and youth. Since that time, the organization has sustained ministries to assist immigrant women, children, and families. Much of this work is now conducted through our more than 90-plus community centers and residences around the country as well as through member engagement on behalf of migrating people and families. It is in the spirit of this historic and continued work for the welfare of women, children, and youth that we join this amicus brief in support of the district court decision rejecting proposed federal rules permitting the indefinite detention of immigrant children with their parents.

C. Mission Agency Reports

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 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 and the way it has shaped the values that have served us well throughout our history and guided our actions through uncertain and difficult times. And today, as the coronavirus pandemic has changed the way we deliver education and support services to our students, we again rely on these values. The series of actions taken by our BU community in response to COVID-19 has been extraordinary and reflects their professionalism and

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dedication to the university. In a matter of days in March, faculty and staff moved swiftly, tirelessly, and selflessly to pivot instruction from in-class to online, to safely move students out of residence halls, and to provide support services from home offices. Our students, despite the disappointment of an abrupt end to the semester on campus as they expected it, have been impressive in their ability to tackle their courses remotely and stay connected with their classmates, professors, teammates, and friends. Their desire for knowledge, enthusiasm, and ability to solve problems truly reflect what it means to be a Baker Wildcat. They have proven to be responsible global citizens who think critically, communicate effectively, act ethically, serve generously, and live fully.

The Rev. Kevin Hopkins is completing his sixth year serving as minister to the university. He is the third minister in Baker's long history. Spiritual life thrives at Baker, even while Osborne Chapel and the rest of campus are closed during the governor's stay-at-home order. The Rev. Hopkins sends weekly emails to the Baker community, RevKev's Comments, about timely topics and words of encouragement. Five-minute YouTube devotional videos, Chapel Chats, are distributed on social media and have been viewed between 1,600 and 650 times. RevKev counsels students through email, phone, and FaceTime and has been holding Zoom meetings with students to plan chapel services for next year. Six Baker students are exploring calls to ministry.

Historically, the Baker Ambassadors have provided a source of spiritual leadership to the university and the surrounding community. Called to Greatness offers spiritual opportunities for our students, and the Chapel Praise Band and BU Concert Choir make weekend visits to area churches. Although these groups have had to scale back and change processes, they continue to be a source of spiritual leadership and look forward to being able to resume face-to-face activities.

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

A significant part of the mission of Kansas Wesleyan University is to blend spiritual development with higher education learning and standards. Like many schools, Kansas Wesleyan experienced great change and upheaval caused by COVID-19, but it was still a year of excellence, in terms of long-range planning and immediate service.

That excellence began this year in ministry. We raised the standard of our already strong campus ministry programs by providing new groups and services, including happenings designed to foster “safe space” conversations and special worship services to help meet the needs of our student body. For example, this was KWU’s first year with peer ministers in residence halls. These individuals were trained and tasked with evangelism and listening ministries focused on their fellow students and hallmates. When COVID struck, our campus ministry team continued to serve our students by developing a new podcast and extending small group opportunities into the virtual realm.

We also fostered excellence in academics. Our nursing program was able to safely continue clinicals for junior and senior students, even in the midst of the pandemic, giving our students much needed experience. Nursing also drew a more easily visible spotlight, as construction began on the new \$4.5 million Nursing Education Center, which will be the first new educational facility on campus in 50 years.

We also drew upon the experience of our new chair of the Department of Music, Dr. Milt Allen, to reimagine what our music program could be. The new focus on mentorship of musicians, regardless of major, has led to many new ideas and initiatives, including new ensembles. One of those, Rise Up!, is a praise band that, in the accompanying class, will teach the mechanics behind leading in a church.

Athletics is a crucial part of the Kansas Wesleyan experience, and this year was no exception. We were awarded the KCAC Commissioner’s Cup for 2019-20. It was the first year Kansas Wesleyan had ever won the award, given to the top school across

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all sports in the Kansas Collegiate Athletic Conference. Our football program qualified for the NAIA National Championships for the second straight year and won a first-round playoff game at home, while the women's basketball program won its first-ever outright KCAC title and also captured a first-round win at the national tournament. We believe that, had the seasons continued, our teams were in line for further excellence.

We believe that our two new significant scholarships, available to many students within Kansas (www.kwu.edu/kansas scholarships), will help that future grow even brighter. The Ad Astra scholarship will cover up to \$15,000 per year for four years for students from Kansas (or transferring from a school in Kansas), while the Saline County scholarship is an award that can range up to \$17,500 per year for students that hail from KWU's home county. We also offer a 50 percent scholarship for UMC members!

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 prepares them to be successful citizens.

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

Nebraska Wesleyan

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. As we continue to live our vocation as an institution, we are grateful for our partnership with the Great Plains Conference of the United Methodist Church (GPUMC).

In July, we welcomed NWU's 17th president, Dr. Darrin Good. His leadership brings a mixture of humility, commitment to diversity, sound judgment and good humor to everything he does. His contagious enthusiasm is a welcomed addition to the NWU community. One of his first actions was to lead campus in a strategic planning process. This process will shepherd the university to continue forming individuals through education for

the next three to five years. The ideas gathered in this process come from a fountain of sources that includes students, faculty, staff, the Board of Governors, alumni and the greater Lincoln community.

We continue efforts begun nearly a decade ago to integrate the work of vocation in our academic community. Thanks to a grant from the GPUMC, we have been able to continue our efforts to introduce students, staff and faculty into intentional communities of vocational exploration. Through large scale events, classroom discussions, book clubs and small groups, individuals continue to explore their vocation. Additional partnerships with NetVUE and the Center for Courage and Renewal will help us strengthen these vocational efforts. Thanks to a grant from the Interfaith Youth Core, we will be integrating religious context in our curriculum as part of diversity exploration. We are excited about this movement because we understand it will prepare our students to better address diversity in their world.

In addition to the multiple ways in which we serve our community, we have looked outside of it for service opportunities. This year we sent a team of 12 students to Puerto Rico to continue assisting in Hurricane Maria relief efforts. This is our third trip to Puerto Rico in three years. We are glad to partner with the Methodist Church of Puerto Rico and to grow in that relationship. Due to political turmoil, we have not been able to return to Haiti. We are looking to go back next year. In the meantime, we are seeking ways to stay connected with the Methodist Church of Haiti and its work in La Gonave.

The work of spiritual growth continues through University Ministries on campus. In addition to worship, Bibles studies and other offerings, we have identified students who might have gifts for servant leadership within the Church. In November we took six students to Exploration 2020. Their interests ranged from local church ministry to academia to camping ministry.

NWU is fortunate to have representation in the board of directors of GBHEM as well as in the GPUMC delegation to General and Jurisdictional Conferences. Together with the National Association of Colleges and Universities of the United Methodist Church (NASCUMC), we continue to monitor the actions of the

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General Conference related to diversity in the UMC. In the meantime, we will continue to work with the United Methodist Church, as we also continue to be in conversation over the best way in which this relationship enables us to prepare inquiring minds for a diverse world.

As with all colleges and universities, the crisis brought by the COVID-19 pandemic has affected us too, particularly as we look toward the future. Thankfully Nebraska Wesleyan has been in a good position to rise to the challenges this epidemic has brought. We are making preparations for the future as we do not know when this crisis will cease. We covet your prayers.

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 is proud of its United Methodist heritage, and continues to pursue educational goals in line with the United Methodist Church and the Great Plains Annual Conference.

In the fall, Southwestern opened a new center for career and vocation. A space to house the center was constructed in Deets Library. This is one way that the college will be able to craft a deeper culture of call for all students. A new learning lab for Natural Sciences was also constructed in Beech Science Center. The premier learning space features state of the art technology and a versatile space for gathering.

Southwestern continues to offer opportunities for students across campus to strengthen their Christian values and grow as citizens. In the summer, Leadership Southwestern and Discipleship Southwestern traveled to Iceland and Belize to learn how to share in service beyond their normal settings.

In the fall, the college engaged in a reorganization and restructuring process of administrative and staff functions. During that time, the positions of Director of Discipleship and Campus Minister were combined. In January, Rev. Molly Just was appointed to serve in both roles. Though this change came with challenges, the college was and is committed to offering many

ministry experiences to students.

With the change, Rev. Just and the Church Relations Committee spent time organizing “Try Chapel” for the spring, which was representative of a larger vision that invited students on campus to try new things as it related to life and faith.

Our Philosophy and Religion major continues to be an important part of our ministries at Southwestern and continues to produce graduates for meaningful ministries in the Great Plains Conference. We have two fulltime faculty members, Jacob L. Goodson, Ph.D., on the philosophy side and Jackson Lashier, Ph.D., on the religion side. Additionally, we have a visiting scholar of religion who teaches two courses a year as she completes her dissertation. This year that post was filled by Rev. Wendy Mohler-Seib, M.Div.

Worship Outreach, led by Martin Rude, looks to welcome many new freshmen in the fall, who will serve the team in various ways – as musicians, but also as technicians of music. For more information, visit www.facebook.com/worshipoutreach.

In 2019, the Richard and Julie Wilke Institute for Discipleship provided 268 online courses to 2,351 participants. The Timothy Circle officially launched at the event with a guided online path to help young people discern their call from God. Both of the Institute’s summer youth experiences are adapting to current challenges by exploring virtual options for this summer. Amp It Up, Southwestern’s worship band camp, will combine for this summer with the Summit Youth Academy. Both programs regularly draw 35+ high schoolers each from the conference and beyond.

As always, we are very proud of, and grateful for our alumni who are doing amazing work and ministry across the connection. We are preparing to send three current graduates to seminary this fall, and have various alums currently enrolled in graduate theological education. We are excited to welcome Daniel Reffner back to the conference, as he will be serving with Aldersgate UMC in Wichita. We look forward to celebrating the commissioning of Greg Reffner at Annual Conference this year, which marks 14 years that an SC alum has been commissioned or ordained in our conference. We are grateful for the many ways in which the conference supports

Southwestern College.

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. Established in 1904, Aldersgate Village has been providing compassionate, person-centered health care for 116 years.

Accomplishments

On a scenic 168-acre campus at 7220 SW Asbury Drive in Topeka, Kansas, Aldersgate Village features 395 total living units, including 148 maintenance-free, independent living villas, cottages, garden homes and apartments; 12 home plus units; 60 licensed assisted living apartments; and a 175-bed skilled nursing care facility. During 2019, we celebrated 40 years at this location.

One important achievement for 2019 was the opening of our home plus residential option offering a home like setting as an added level of care. The first residents moved in in January, and it was officially named Nancy's Place, in honor of longtime supporter Nancy Lewis. We also were privileged to have Bishop Saenz be a part of our ribbon cutting and ceremony, offering a prayer and blessing of our new building. Since that time, Nancy's Place has exceeded our occupancy goals and has been a wonderful home to many seniors in need of individualized clinical care.

New Initiatives

We completed numerous renovations across our campus during 2019 and look forward to continuing to update both interiors and exteriors. We also cleared some space to add six new stand-alone cottages that are designed to accommodate seniors throughout their golden years. One of the properties is already sold, and we

expect construction to begin in spring 2020.

Improving the Lives of Seniors

As a faith-based organization, we provide both health and spiritual care for seniors and are blessed to have a chaplain available for on-site pastoral services. 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 2019 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 \$175,000 in direct charitable care to frail and needy seniors in 2019.

Strong Ties with our Church Family

Our mission is a challenging one, especially in these difficult times. We have been fortunate to have Rev. Kay Scarbrough on our Board of Trustees, and we thank her for the years of wisdom and guidance. We also look forward to working with the Rev. Jenny Collins, who will begin service in the Topeka District in July.

Ember Hope

Nickaila Sandate, CEO

Supported by 92 years of rich tradition and history, this year brought progress and opportunity for EmberHope Youthville. As the only child welfare agency in Kansas supported by the Great Plains Conference, we were blessed with accreditation, a high-level continuum of care for our clients, facility renovation, and a wraparound model of support for foster families.

In October 2019, the agency earned accreditation from CARF International. Accreditation represents a sign of quality and a

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commitment to 1) quality improvement, 2) focus on the unique needs of each person served, and 3) monitor the results of services. After an extensive internal review of policies and procedures, the agency successfully completed the onsite audit with few necessary improvements.

Earning accreditation enabled the agency to become a provider of Qualified Residential Treatment Program (QRTP) service designation. Therefore, in October, three Newton residential facilities, serving up to 36 female youth 6 to 18 years of age, shifted from Youth Residential Center (YRC) facility designation to one of QRTPs. We will continue to focus on a trauma-informed treatment model. We will now employ registered or licensed nursing staff on a full time basis in addition to the existing licensed clinical staff who are all onsite and available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Additional services with a QRTP designation include family engagement and aftercare support for six months after a child discharges from our care on campus.

Opportunity Academy, a partnership with USD 373, serves the academic needs of middle and high age clients as well as community students in a trauma-informed environment conducive to independent learning. Per Governor Kelly's recent executive order, the school is temporarily closed, and the student population of 47 is conducting coursework online in the cottages in partnership with the school district.

Residential cottages, initially constructed in the late 1980s, are under major renovations. Exterior maintenance, including roof work, has long been overdue. Inside the buildings, kitchens need updating, appliances need to be replaced, carpet and flooring are worn, and bathrooms need an overhaul. Yet, the most pressing need for the housing is to redesign the floor plans to improve the safety and well-being of today's troubled youth. We are excited to provide these improvements for the clients we serve. Social work with the youth has been successful in 2020, 84% of youth and 96.5% of case managers reporting they are satisfied with services provided by EmberHope Youthville.

Work with the Church continues with a new model of support for foster families named 1 Peter 4:10. This wraparound program

provides a structure for congregations to offer time, treasure, and talent to care for foster families within their church family or geographic area by collectively offering volunteer services, meals, transportation, or donations. Designed after a model by Jason Johnson, this easy to implement program partner churches with EmberHope Youthville foster families to care for the 193 children placed in our care.

Epworth Village

Margaret Donovan, CEO

Greetings from Epworth Village headquartered in York Nebraska! 2019 brought reflection and celebration of 130 years of providing services, hope and healing to thousands of children, youth and families. Founded in 1889 as a National Mission Institute of the United Methodist Women we pray and work for the ability to continue serving children and families for generations to come in whatever shape, form and needs that may be so that they may forever thrive.

Epworth Village provides child and family services geared toward programs: Foster Care, In-home Family Support and Services and Child Care with quality early childhood education (Little Jewels Child Care & Enrichment Center). In 2019, we served a total 423 people ranging from newborns to adults, including some special grandmas and grandpas. All our programs and services are a family affair; we work with the whole family which provides a bigger and long-lasting impact for the entire family and especially for the youth and children so that they can carry this on to their future children – the next generation and so forth. Similar to Jesus using five loaves of bread and two fish brought to him by a child to feed the mass of people.

We serve some of our society's most vulnerable, hurting and disenfranchised. The majority of families we serve through our in-home family services and child care programs are low-income and/or financially vulnerable with many living at or below poverty-level. Ninety percent of the families we served through our In-home Family Support and Services and 57% of the children served through "Little Jewels" were low-income. In order to properly serve these families in way that provides long-term

impact requires us to develop many collaborative partners in order to create and improve community systems so that not only the families we serve, but all families, have access to resources and services necessary to thrive.

This also requires that we provide systems advocacy on behalf of the families we serve. And rest assured that Epworth staff are formidable systems advocates for the families. We support this advocacy and let staff know that when they advocate for one family within a system or agency, they have advocated for families they will never know through the ripple effect—they have educated those within that system or agency and helped create change that will impact other families navigating those systems. In the process, staff also help parents to learn and gain skills to navigate the systems and advocate for themselves and their children.

All of Epworth Village's staff and Board of Directors serve in God's love, grace and compassion. No family in distress, no family at-risk of separation, no financially vulnerable family, no individual in the family whether child or adult walks alone. All our United Methodist partners help ensure that no family walks alone through volunteerism, prayer and financial support. All United Methodist partners help us achieve our goal to empower each family we serve with tools for long lasting impact including the road toward familial and financial stability.

Please keep our mission, our staff and our families in your prayers that God may give us the strength, fortitude, safety and guidance as we live through these hard times of coronavirus. We pray the same for you. Stay safe.

Ministries with the Poor Big Garden/United Methodist Ministries, Missouri River District

The Big Garden (United Methodist Ministries) is a mission agency located in Omaha that works to cultivate food security by building community gardens, creating opportunities to serve, and

providing education about issues related to hunger. Founded in 2005, The Big Garden has since planted more than 180 gardens across Nebraska, Kansas, and Southwest Iowa. It is an accredited Volunteers in Mission (VIM) site and one of the three UMW National Mission Institutions in the Great Plains Conference. The Big Garden has a full-time staff of 12.

The Big Garden offers year-round gardening & cooking classes for low-income & marginalized children, youth, and adults including women in recovery, immigrants & refugees, and developmentally disabled persons. Most of the participants suffer from food insecurity, live in food deserts, and seldom have access to fresh produce. Evaluation of The Big Garden's programs continues to show that a large majority of participants successfully learn how to plant, nurture, and harvest fresh garden produce.

In the spring of 2019, Big Garden educators taught 15 classes/week in its elementary school program, reaching 597 children. The middle school program offered 8 classes/week during the school year, reaching approximately 675 children. The Big Garden's summer program was offered at 37 schools, childcare centers, and community agencies, reaching more than 900 participants. Big Garden educators taught 16 hands-on workshops for adults in 2019. The Big Garden also welcomed roughly 100 VIM participants. Big garden staff grew 25,000 vegetable, herb, and flower seedlings on-site, more than half of which were donated to their partner sites. In 2019 The Big Garden continued to grow its partnership with Kansas City's Giving Grove to plant fruit orchards in the Omaha area. The Big Garden hired a Kansas Garden Coordinator, based out of the Stilwell UMC, who also oversees Kansas gardens and The Big Garden's partnership with the United Methodist Health Ministry Fund.

During this season of the COVID-19 pandemic, The Big Garden recognizes that food security is more important than ever. Though we are unable to be physically present in schools and childcare centers, our staff is working harder than ever to increase food production for local pantries and neighborhoods. We are also working to bring online educational resources to help people grow their own home food gardens.

In 2019, The Big Garden received \$127,397 in mission support

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from the Great Plains Annual Conference. The Big Garden is grateful for this support and strives to be the Church's hands and feet in the community. The faithful investment of the Annual Conference in The Big Garden's work results in healthier bodies through its gardens and healthier minds and spirits through its educational programs and mission experiences. Thank you.

Ogden Friendship House of Hope

Cathy Austin, Director

For more than 30 years, our ministry continued to assist the at-risk community of Ogden thanks to your unending support and prayers.

I am the new director. I started as a volunteer, then became an intern before I was voted to be the next director on July 1, 2019. This ministry has been my safe place and second home since I arrived to the United States four years ago from the Philippines.

2019 has been a very eventful year to all of us. Rev. Diana Chapel ensured I was prepared for the position of director before she passed the responsibilities to me. We gave food assistance to 206 households this year through our food pantry. In September 2019 we started a free dinner for everyone on the second Monday of each month at the local Catholic Church parish hall. We also support and help with the school extracurricular events and the annual Ogden community Thanksgiving dinner. We served a total of 1,353 meals all through these programs. Additionally, we assisted a total of 53 households with benevolence vouchers. Our thrift shop did very well last year. There were 2,446 clients who were very happy to support us by finding and buying treasures in our store.

We host the Harvesters Mobile Food Pantry every fourth Tuesday of the month. We served 3,900 people belonging to 903 households, who received food from this program over the course of 12 months. Our mobile food pantry distribution is still ongoing. We follow the safety and health protocols that the Riley County Health Department and Harvesters have shared with us during the pandemic.

It is enlightening to see people come through our door every day and to know God sent them to us not just to shop or ask for help, but to have somebody to share their stories with. Small things that we don't know the importance of, but surely make a difference. I am very privileged to be able to experience these moments every day at work especially the times when they end with a smile or a tear, which is better than a thank you. When a hug or a simple wave makes you feel that it will be ok. It feels great that we are here not just to give assistance, but to help them feel empowered in the midst of their challenges, to let them know that they are not alone in this battle, and most importantly, for them to see God moving in their lives through us.

It was with a heavy heart we decided to close our shop amid the COVID-19 outbreak. We continue to help the people that rely on us, without compromising anyone's health. Clients call ahead to get their food through the back door and receive pre-packed groceries, based on family composition. Food bags are prepared to ensure all kids will have food for the weekend. We packed a total of 350 bags to supplement the food the school has been giving to the kids. We collaborated with local leaders to provide hot meals to residents of local low-income housing every Thursday evening starting the second week of March. We have a total of 23 families that are happily receiving these meals weekly.

I've only been the director for nine months, but all of our clients hold a special place in my heart, especially those single moms that are trying their hardest to be the best version of themselves. I am very blessed to see their changes, promotions and even their down times to see how they get back up to support their family. They inspire me and remind me that sometimes people just need to know that somebody really cares. It might not be always butterflies and rainbows, but we have to remember to be still during the storms. They are a daily reminder that God hears and answers prayers. I am honored to serve God through serving others.

Immigrant Legal Center (JFON)

Erik Omar, J.D., Executive Director

In 2019, perhaps more than any other time in recent history, immigration policies and enforcement practices were front-page news. These news stories continue to have frightening, real-life consequences for Immigrant Legal Center (ILC) clients and impact the day-to-day work of our staff. In the face of these challenges, ILC remains steadfast in our mission to welcome immigrants into our communities by providing high-quality legal services, education, and advocacy.

In October 2019, after more than eight years as the executive director, Emiliano Lerda accepted a new leadership opportunity in the Omaha community. ILC is pleased to announce that a search committee made up of representatives of the board, staff, funders, national Justice for Our Neighbors (NJFON), and community partners selected Erik Omar to take over leadership of ILC in March 2020. Erik is an attorney with a wealth of expertise and is a passionate advocate for immigrants and refugees. ILC staff and board are excited to have Erik at ILC.

With the Great Plains Conference's support in 2019, ILC staff worked out of nine offices across Nebraska and southwest Iowa. We are proud to report ILC legal service providers completed 760 initial client consultations and worked on a total of 4,297 cases. In addition to our typical casework, we responded to a workplace raid in Madison, Nebraska and worked together with Trinity United Methodist Church and other local partners to meet the needs of the families impacted. ILC also expanded our advocacy and education capacity, translating complex judicial rulings so that immigrants and their families can make informed decisions on issues that may impact their future immigration status and equipping immigrants and allies with critical Know Your Rights and Safety Planning information. Together with other advocacy organizations, ILC is currently working for passage of LB 745 to bring uniformity to how Nebraska law enforcement agencies respond to U and T certification requests. The passage of this bill would benefit immigrant survivors of crime and trafficking, thus protecting some of the most vulnerable members of our community.

ILC maintains a strong connection to our origins with the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) through our engagement with the NJFON network and consultation with the Mercy and Justice Ministry team. ILC is grateful for the constancy of the Great Plains Conference's commitment to our work. Because of your support, we can share these words of a client whose family received green cards more than 13 years after fleeing civil war—When we had lost hope and were afraid of losing, your team spent numerous hours studying and researching our case and successfully assisted us in getting our residency. Thank you for all that you do and continue to do for our family and the community.

Released and Restored

Rev. Ruth Karlsson, Executive Director

Following the example of John Wesley and his gaol and death row ministries, as he accompanied condemned men to the gallows, and in conjunction with his mandate to bring the Gospel to the people, Released and Restored continues to share the love, mercy and grace of Christ Jesus with an extremely marginalized population group, prison and jail inmates, the "very least of the least of these."

Ministry Highlights

After Prison – Then What? We at Released and Restored continue to provide solutions and answers to this question through the structured programs we provide that prepare incarcerated for their productive and successful release and return to their local neighborhoods and communities where they will, quite literally become your neighbors.

EMPWR (Embracing My Personal Worth and Resiliency) – EMPWR is a 40-contact hour, 20-week program developed by Released and Restored to address the specific and unique 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 dignity and worthy, emboldens them to leave and avoid

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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 program was launched in the Nebraska State Penitentiary in January 2005 and has been continuously provided for the past 15+ 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 prepares women and men life productive and law-abiding lives post-release by 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 is provided to jail inmates who are serving much shorter sentences. It is a condensed version of the LSRP program.

Re-Entry Support Services – We assist individuals with obtaining documents such as Birth Certificates and Driver’s Licenses, various permit and certifications such as food handler’s permits or certified nursing assistant certificate. In addition, we assist with job searches and provide referrals to other local resources.

Worship and celebration of Holy Communion - at the Nebraska State Penitentiary.

United Methodist Open Door

Deann Smith, Executive Director

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;
- operates a day shelter for the homeless that serves around 150 a day;
- provides housing to homeless families;

- 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 30,000 unduplicated individuals.

Like other social service agencies, our workflow and focus has dramatically changed due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. We are doing our best to respond to the need. We continue to serve the most vulnerable, including the homeless who do not have the option to stay at home. As I write this in mid-April, Open Door has chosen to:

- Indefinitely close the free clothing store, Klothes Kloset, until COVID-19 crisis passes.
- Reduce hours of operation in the homeless day shelter due to staffing shortages. We are still providing basics such as bathrooms, laundry, showers, clothing, etc. Thank you to our church partners who have stepped up and continue to provide us with sack lunches each day!
- Operate the food programs with normal hours but to implement a drive through pick up system. We expected to continue to see an increase in the number of households

served due to the extreme number of layoffs during this pandemic and the resulting economic recovery period.

Open Door is most in need of unrestricted funding that will allow us to have the greatest flexibility in responding to the needs of our clients during this COVID19 crisis. We are 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.

Wesley House

Rev. Marcee Binder, Executive Director

Grace and peace to you as we navigate these uncertain times. My prayers are to you and your family for safety and health. Your faithful support of mission shares has allowed us to serve some of the most vulnerable people in Crawford County. Thank you for your support of Wesley House.

Wesley House continues to find ways to meet the needs of the unemployed and underemployed in the county. Here is the breakdown for 2019:

- Identification Support Program: 36 birth certificates and 23 IDs were procured.
- Daytime Homeless Drop in Center: We average 47 people throughout the year.
- Emergency Food Pantry: 7,700 people were given Emergency Food.
- Operation Smile: 20 people were assisted with oral care.
- Rx Assist: 18 people were assisted with non-narcotic pain medication.
- Operation Cool: 79 fans were distributed to our clients.
- Cozy Kids: 55 vouchers were given for school age children to receive coats.
- Daily Usage: Over 12,000 came through our doors to use our services.
- Feeding America: Over 100,000 pounds of food were rescued from our national, intown grocers such as Walmart.

Programs and the availability of emergency assistance are dependent on financial contributions, donations, grants and foundation support. Volunteers, financial support and donations are provided by a wide variety of organizations, civic groups, area churches and individuals. Wesley House continues to be good stewards of the money that we receive so that we can do the most good. The need is great, yet we continue to be blessed by the GPAC mission shares, support and prayers.

South Central Jurisdiction

Lydia Patterson

Socorro de Anda, President

Lydia Patterson Institute, better known as “La Lydia”, is an institution that has encountered and survived numerous challenges throughout its 107 years of its existence. In 1913, the school was established in part by Methodist ministers and missionaries fleeing from a Mexican revolution and answering their call to ministry on the US-Mexico border. Since its origin, the school has suffered the effects of two world wars, the great depression, numerous peso devaluations, and presently, the violence and drug wars on the border. La Lydia has survived and flourished in the midst of all.

On August 3, 2019, our faith was challenged when an outsider traveled more than 600 miles to El Paso to eradicate Mexicans in the worst massacre in modern history. El Paso is a city with a population of more than 80% Hispanics. That is not to mention the number of Mexicans that cross daily from our sister city of Juarez, Mexico. In the shooting, we lost the father of three of our former students.

For generations, Lydia Patterson has been committed to teach English to non-English speaking students predominately of Hispanic background. Obviously, the incident caused panic and stress in El Paso and Lydia Patterson was no exception. We were to start school the Monday following, and parents were apprehensive and scared. For the first time in the history of La Lydia, we were forced to hire security to patrol our campus. It was heartbreaking, but students and parents were assured that the evil actions of a demented racist would not define us. We reminded them that the power of prayer and the hand of God would not forsake us.

In a positive note, Lydia Patterson moves forward with its commitment to provide a quality education to its students and provide opportunities otherwise nonexistent. My appreciation goes out to the colleges and universities of the United Methodist Church for continuing our ministry by providing scholarships so

that 100% of our students attend college.

As the church struggles with certain identities, Lydia Patterson remains faithful to all in its principles and journey to change lives regardless of color, national origin, economic positions, and any other God given preferences. We aim to be the bridge that unites all Methodists in ministry as mandated by our God and make disciples of every one of its students for the transformation of the world.

We appeal to every church in your conference and this jurisdiction to remain faithful to the ministry of Lydia Patterson and continue to partner with us in doing the work of God at its best. Every day, the lives of young men and women are being changed. Perhaps in one of our classrooms is sitting that one person who will make the difference in our world.

University and Seminary Reports

Africa University

Africa University Development Office

In 2019, Africa University's story was one of resourcefulness, steadfast investment and ministry growth.

Thank you, Bishop Ruben Saenz Jr., the Cabinet and the committed lay and clergy leaders who nurture vitality in the local congregations of the Great Plains Conference. Africa University is blessed by all that you do to affirm the United Methodist connection and global mission. The gracious support of the Great Plains Conference resulted in an 84.99 percent investment of the asking to the Africa University Fund apportionment in 2019. Thank you, Great Plains United Methodists, for your prayers and gifts. Your leadership and generosity enable Africa University to educate and equip leaders who think for themselves, are contextually relevant and have a passion to serve. Since opening in 1992, Africa University has trained more than 9,000 graduates who lead and

serve across sub-Saharan Africa and beyond. These young people are responsible and responsive leaders who offer the best of themselves in serving the needs of their communities.

Institutional Update:

- Africa University has an annual student population of around 2,800, with 25-30 African nations represented in the student body each year.
- The university's three colleges operate as centers for teaching, research, innovation, community engagement. They are imparting crucial skills to help communities to feed themselves, remain healthy, be at peace and move steadily towards a sustainable future. Africa University leads as the only university in Zimbabwe currently accredited to offer online degree programs.
- Students, faculty and alumni contribute ground-breaking solutions to Africa's current challenges. These include graduate programs in migrant and refugee protection, articulated by refugee students, as well as doctoral level training for military chaplains in Africa.
- The university is increasing its use of solar power with the support of the General Board of Global Ministries of The United Methodist Church. A residence hall for women and a new wing of the student union building — gifted to the university by the Dallas-based Highland Park United Methodist Church — will be the first solar-powered facilities on the campus.
- Africa University affirms its commitment to The United Methodist Church, its Cross and Flame, and the denomination's global mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world, in every season and despite a shifting social landscape.

Through its faithfulness, the Great Plains Conference invites and encourages new people to join in the mission and change the world. Thank you, Great Plains United Methodists, for modeling active faith that seeks justice, gives freely and shares the love of God through service.

Thanks to your stewardship of God's blessings, Africa University has gone beyond what some thought was possible. "The things which are impossible with men are possible with God." Luke 18:27 NKJV

Boston University

Mary Elizabeth Moore, Dean

I am grateful to have one last opportunity to thank you for your moral, prayerful, and material support of the Boston University School of Theology (BUSTH), and also to highlight the promising future of the School as a new Dean joins our stellar faculty, staff, and students in summer 2020 to carry on the mission of the School in partnership with all of you.

BREAKING NEWS:

Students: We continue to increase and celebrate diversity in our student body, creating opportunities for in-depth exchanges and a rich community life.

Faculty: We welcomed two faculty this year: Filipe Maia as Assistant Professor of Theology, and Luis Menéndez-Antuña as Assistant Professor of New Testament. Both are extraordinary teachers who delight in working with students.

Scholarships: We continue to offer free tuition to UMC-registered candidates for ordained ministry, and to build student scholarships and housing as key priorities. BUSTH also offers leadership fellowships to support students in ethnic, gender, and sexuality studies: Raíces Latinas, Sacred Worth, Howard Thurman, Indigenous Studies, Korean Studies, Women in Leadership, and African Studies. **Two new Programs:** Faith and Ecological Justice (FEJ) and Raíces Latinas Program in Theology, Leadership, and Research (RL). FEJ leads programs to build ecological awareness, theological research, church collaborations, and community activism in ecological justice. RL sponsors programs to expand Latin American and Latinx theological study and research, and to enhance the leadership of students, young people, and leaders in Latino/Latina communities.

Theology and the Arts Initiatives: Exhibits highlight sacred spaces in Boston; wilderness photography; a 1619 visual lament of 400+ years of slavery; voices and faces of Colombia; and paintings of a gay man struggling with the church.

Campaign: Our BUSTH development campaign concluded with

the raising of \$29.4 million to support students, faculty, and vital programs.

Website and Viewbook: Check out our new BUSTH website (www.bu.edu/sth) and Viewbook.

- Two new Programs: Faith and Ecological Justice (FEJ) and Raíces Latinas Program in Theology, Leadership, and Research (RL). FEJ leads programs to build ecological awareness, theological research, church collaborations, and community activism in ecological justice. RL sponsors programs to expand Latin American and Latinx theological study and research, and to enhance the leadership of students, young people, and leaders in Latino/Latina communities.
- Online Lifelong Learning: We have launched an exciting new program, offering online mini-courses, workshops, and reading groups for professional and spiritual enrichment.
- Theology and the Arts Initiatives: Exhibits highlight sacred spaces in Boston; wilderness photography; a 1619 visual lament of 400+ years of slavery; voices and faces of Colombia; and paintings of a gay man struggling with the church.
- Campaign: Our BUSTH development campaign concluded with the raising of \$29.4 million to support students, faculty, and vital programs.

Website and Viewbook: Check out our new BUSTH website (www.bu.edu/sth) and Viewbook.

PARTNERING FOR MINISTRY AND TRANSFORMATION:

- Creative Callings: In partnership with local churches, we seek to create “a culture of call.”
- Engagement with the UMC: Many of our students are delegates, volunteers, and singers in General Conference 2020.
- Continuing Scholar Program: BUSTH courses are open to alums and local clergy for small lifelong learning fees.
- Doctor of Ministry: The D.Min in Transformational Leadership flourishes 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 in local churches and organizations that foster just

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- peacebuilding.
- Travel seminars: Immersion journeys open worlds to students in the borderlands of Arizona and Mexico, Cuba, Peru, Israel-Palestine, Civil Rights landmarks, and centers for ecological-spiritual renewal.
 - Ecumenical partnerships: We now have four denominational Communities of Learning: Wesleyan/Methodist, Episcopal/Anglican, United Church of Christ, and Unitarian Universalist.
 - 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 the State of Formation for 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 is active in the Green Seminary Initiative. We have also been named as one of the “Seminaries that Change the World.”
- Internships in global service and peacemaking: Students participate in apprenticeship ministries across the world.

COMMITMENT TO JUSTICE:

- Faculty and students have been active in UMCOR efforts to support victims of hurricanes and fires, and in collaborative services to support people suffering the consequences of immigration practices, disability inequities, or racial violence.
- In Town Hall meetings, the community has deep conversations on issues that divide, seeking to develop capacities for relating across difference and to create a community based on the dignity of all.

BUSTH looks to the future. We celebrate transformational leaders of the United Methodist Church, who love with their whole hearts and follow Jesus Christ with their whole lives. Your legacy and witness give us hope and courage for the future.

Candler School of Theology

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

Since our founding in 1914, Candler School of Theology at Emory University has educated more than 10,000 students, shaping thoughtful, principled, and courageous leaders who are dedicated to transforming the world in the name of Jesus Christ.

This is especially important to note amid the current shifts 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, we will continue to invite and welcome those from all expressions of the Wesleyan tradition. Indeed, we will continue to welcome all those who follow Jesus Christ.

This year, Candler has continued to strengthen our deep commitment to alleviating student debt and promoting financial literacy. In 2018-2019, we awarded \$6.3 million in financial aid, with 100 percent of masters of divinity (MDiv) students receiving support and financial coaching. In fall 2019, we announced a major expansion of our financial aid program to include full-tuition scholarships for all MDiv students who are certified candidates for ordained ministry in The United Methodist Church, and new merit scholarships covering 75% of tuition for qualifying MDiv students who identify as pan-Wesleyan, and those pursuing chaplaincy through Candler's new chaplaincy concentration. In addition, all incoming students in the masters of divinity, master of theological studies, and master of religious leadership programs will receive awards covering at least 50% of tuition.

This year also saw the launch of two pilot "formation communities," off-campus student housing that focuses on intentional living

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and spiritual formation. Students from multiple degree programs applied to take part in these pilot groups. At the start of the year, the housemates created a “rule of life” to guide their days together, emphasizing prayer, fellowship, and celebration. A house chaplain—a Candler faculty member or church leader—supports them and shares in the journey. The ten students who took part this year describe feeling a richer sense of community and deeper connections to God and one another in the midst of their busy lives. It is clear that this fulfills a need for our seminarians, and we eagerly anticipate the program’s growth in the coming years.

Candler’s student body continues to reflect the diversity and breadth of the Christian faithful, with an enrollment of 470 from 12 countries and 38 states, with 40 percent people of color (U.S.) and a median age of 27 among MDivs. Students represent 42 denominations, with 45% of all students and 50% of MDivs coming from the Methodist family. We offer six single degrees and ten dual degrees pairing theology with bioethics, business, international development, law, public health, and social work. Our Doctor of Ministry degree is 90 percent online, so students can remain in their places of ministry while completing their degrees.

Candler draws 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. We invite you to visit us in person or online at candler.emory.edu.

Duke University Divinity School

Dean L. Gregory Jones, Dean of the Divinity School, had his term as dean extended for a full five years through 2023.

The Duke Endowment awarded Duke Divinity School (DDS) a \$12 million grant in support of DDS’s three core priorities and traditions: Thriving communities enlivened by healthy congregations and gifted pastors, embodied wisdom through rigorous intellectual vitality, and creative institutions that inspire imaginative and transformative leadership including the Thriving Communities Fellowship program, which will provide 52 new

full-tuition scholarships over the next four years.

DDS launched the Duke Divinity: Black Pastoral Leadership Collaboration which will draw on original research in Black church traditions and historical examples of effective Black church leadership to train and build networks of effective leaders for the Black church of today and the future. The collaboration will be led by the Rev. David Emmanuel Goatley, research professor of theology and Black church studies and director of the Office of Black Church Studies at Duke Divinity School.

In 2019, Duke Divinity School welcomed 215 new students from 33 different states and seven other countries, including Canada, Malaysia, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand and Zimbabwe. The Master of Theological Studies (M.T.S.) and Master of Arts in Christian Practice (M.A.C.P.) degree programs received record enrollments of 35 students and 22 students respectively. The Master of Theology (Th.M., 14 students), Doctor of Ministry (D.Min., 20 students), and Doctor of Theology (Th.D., 4 students) all had strong enrollment. The D.Min. program was named the top online program by TheBestSchools.org. The new Certificate in Theology and Health Care will enroll 8 students, all of whom are fellows with the Theology, Medicine and Culture (T.M.C.) Initiative. The M.T.S. program also includes 8 students who are T.M.C. fellows, for a record year of 16 total fellows. The M.Div. degree program gained 110 new students, with minority students comprising more than 32 percent of the incoming M.Div. class, and Black students comprising 18% of the incoming M.Div. class. Female students made up 44% of incoming M.Div. students, while males were 56%.

Two new faculty members, Brent Strawn and Brett McCarty, joined DDS in July. Strawn, Professor of Old Testament, is an ordained elder in the North Georgia Conference. Prior to joining Duke, he taught at Candler School of Theology at Emory University for 18 years. McCarty, Assistant Research Professor of Theological Ethics, is a theological ethicist whose work centers on questions of faithful action within health care. He is associate director of the Theology, Medicine, and Culture Initiative at DDS and he holds a joint appointment in the School of Medicine's Department of Population Health Sciences.

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Randy Maddox, William Kellon Quick Professor of Wesleyan and Methodist Studies, general editor of the Wesley Works Editorial Project, and elder in the Dakotas Conference, retires at the end of the 2019-2020 academic year.

The Hispanic-Latino/a Preaching Initiative is currently in its fifth year of providing high quality theological education to current and aspiring Hispanic-Latino/a ministers. 21 students from multiple denominations are taking courses with us this year. The Lilly Endowment has awarded grants to Duke Divinity School to coordinate initiatives on “Thriving in Ministry” and “Thriving Congregations” across the United States.

Southern Methodist University

R. Gerald Turner, President

Since its founding in 1911 by the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, SMU has served as a nonsectarian institution of higher learning. Our mission is to expand knowledge through research and teaching and serve as a powerful catalyst for the growth and development of Dallas and the North Texas region. With continued representation from The United Methodist Church, and welcoming students of all faiths, the University is reaching a higher level of accomplishment and global recognition in our second century of shaping world changers.

Students, Faculty and Staff

Fall 2019 enrollment totaled 11,824, including 6,710 undergraduates and 5,114 graduates. Ethnic minority students made up 29 percent of total enrollment. International enrollment of 1,417 (approximately 12% of total enrollment) represented 84 countries. SMU’s class of 2023 was chosen from 15,000+ applicants, with an average 30.8 ACT score, and an average 1377 SAT score – both up from last year.

Rankings

SMU ranks No. 64 among national universities by U.S. News & World Report. The nation’s university presidents, provosts and chief admissions officers are recognizing our strengths, according to two consecutive years of rising expert opinion scores.

- The Cox School of Business full-time M.B.A. ranks No. 43, according to U.S. News & World Report's 2020 Best Business Schools, up from 48th in 2019 rankings; the SMU Cox Executive M.B.A. ranks No. 23 in the nation.
- Dedman School of Law ranked No. 52 nationally by U.S. News & World Report.
- The Center for World University Rankings rates quality of education, alumni employment, faculty and research performance. In 2019, SMU placed SMU No. 315 out of 20,000 universities worldwide; No. 133 nationally and No. 27 for alumni employment, placing SMU in the top 1.6% worldwide.
- SMU ranked No. 16 in a Forbes list of top Southern colleges and universities.
- College Factual (published by USA Today) focuses on graduation rates, graduate salaries and student loan default rates. SMU ranked No. 3 among Best Texas Colleges; No. 92 among Best Nationwide Colleges; and No. 1 for "Highest Paid Music Graduates" in 2019.
- The Princeton Review ranks SMU Guildhall No. 2 for the best graduate game-design program.

Funding

In FY 2019, SMU received \$31.8 million in external funding for domestic and global research, representing a \$5.2 million increase over FY 2018. Current funding agencies include National Science Foundation, U.S. Department of Education, U.S. Department of Defense and Toyota Foundation. SMU's private fundraising finished FY 2019 strong. More than \$118 million in gifts made it a record year. We exceeded our second-year Pony Power goal with \$52 million in gifts to fund our most pressing current needs.

We are excited about the impact SMU and its programs continue to have on the world, and are grateful to continue our work through the Perkins School of Theology in the education and training of all branches of the Wesleyan Tradition. We request your continued prayers and support.

Perkins School of Theology

Craig C. Hill, Dean and Professor of New Testament

- Perkins celebrates our vital connections with the Great Plains Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church: One (1) student affiliated with the Great Plains Annual Conference is enrolled at Perkins and is pursuing a Master of Divinity (M.Div.)
- One (1) student from the Great Plains Annual Conference is among the 30 Perkins Scholars currently enrolled at Perkins School of Theology. The program, launched in 2017, provides increased scholarship aid to outstanding Master of Divinity students, who have leadership potential. Ten new scholars are selected each year, thanks to the generous support of members of the Perkins Executive Board and other donors.

Continued Enrollment Increase

Overall enrollment for 2019-20 at Perkins School of Theology reflects a 6.6% increase from 2018-19. The Office of Enrollment Management also reported three consecutive years of significant growth in new student totals—with 2019 reflecting a more than doubled increase over 2016—contrasting with the trend of decline in schools of theology nationally.

Enrollment at Perkins for the 2019-20 academic year totaled 343 students, including 27 enrolled in the Ph.D. program. Fall 2019 statistics reflect the following: 63.3% of the entire student population are United Methodist and 37% are ethnic minority students. Master's degree programs comprise approximately 46% male and 54% female students. The Doctor of Pastoral Music (D.P.M.) program includes students from southern Asia taking classes in Dallas.

The hybrid Houston-Galveston Extension Program, in its third year of providing a combination of online and residential classes leading to the M.Div. and M.A.M. degrees, totaled 94 students during the 2019-20 academic year.

Perkins Thanks You, Great Plains

Perkins School of Theology is committed to those called to serve so that they might be empowered to lead. We thank our many colleagues, friends and alumni/ae in the Great Plains Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church for your generous support, including referrals of prospective students, as we continue our vital mission of preparing women and men for faithful leadership in Christian ministry.

Saint Paul School of Theology

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 2019-2020 academic year, the seminary enrollment in master and doctoral degree programs increased by 11%.

Saint Paul School of Theology began the 2019-2020 academic year with the addition of Dr. Casey Sigmon in her new role as Assistant Professor of Preaching and Worship, and Director of Contextual Education. Saint Paul also welcomed Dr. Anne Walker as the new Executive Director of the Oklahoma Campus.

With the addition of Dr. Walker to Saint Paul came a new webinar offering titled, "Explore Calling: A Guide to Helping Others Answer the Call." Offered complimentary, the webinar provides a resource for anyone looking to nurture a culture of call in their congregation; including meeting one-on-one with congregations looking to reach out to their community. Dr. Walker also launched the Vision OK Advisory Committee to serve the purpose of gaining support for and assisting in the development of the Oklahoma Campus. Also new this year, Dr. Melissa Pearce and Dr. Walker hosted Listening Sessions to learn more about the challenges pastoral leaders face and dream together about how theological education might meet the changing demands of their ministry.

This March, Saint Paul marked its 60th anniversary with a celebration featuring keynote speaker Past President Dr. Lovett H. Weems, Jr. honoring 60+ years of theological education. Students, alumni, faculty and the entire Saint Paul community came together for dinner, reminiscing and looking towards the future.

Saint Paul's staff and faculty continue to contribute to the academy, church, and society. Dr. Anne Walker worked along with co-writer Dori Grinenko Baker on *Tru Colors*, a guide for assisting young adults in exploring ministry as a career. *Tru Colors*, from Discipleship Ministry, was published in March 2020. Dr. Casey Sigmon wrote the sermon "The Fruit of Self-Control" in the published book, *Preaching to Teach: Inspire People to Think and Act*. Additionally, as part of the 2019 Lectionary Commentaries on the website workingpreacher.org, Dr. Sigmon and Dr. Israel Kamudzandu contributed commentaries. In addition, Dr. Sigmon recently published "Homiletical Possibilities and Challenges in Colossians" in *The Review & Expositor* journal from November 2019.

Saint Paul held several events and forums this year beginning with hosting an Overland Park Chamber of Commerce Wednesday Wake-up where Overland Park business members and community leaders started their day on the Kansas Campus with coffee, networking and learning more about the seminary's mission. In November, Saint Paul was the host location for the Metro Organization for Racial and Economic Equity (MORE2) Faith and Democracy Prayer Breakfast. MORE2 and Church of the Resurrection are partnering with Saint Paul in the recently launched Doctor of Ministry focus, "Spiritual Leadership in Unsettled Times." Throughout the year, students on both campuses participated in educational forums with discussions on a myriad of topics such as, "Sustaining Pastoral Leadership Through Personal Wellness", "Transgender Day of Remembrance", and "The Enneagram and Your Spiritual Growth." In April, the Evangelical Society hosted a lecture featuring Dr. Kimberly Alexander, author of *Pentecostal Healing: Models of Theology and Practice* and co-author of *Women in Leadership: A Pentecostal Perspective* and *What Women Want: Pentecostal Women Ministers Speak for Themselves*.

Honoring Saint Paul's longstanding commitment to praxis learning and ministry, part of the 2019-2020 curriculum included practicums which are workshop-style seminars that teach ministry skills. For Spring 2020 FOCUS Week, Alumnus Rev. Dr. Emanuel Cleaver III, Senior Pastor of St. James UMC, taught the course *Urban Church in the 21st century* which explores the Urban

Church and its context in relation to ministerial practices and theological understandings.

For the 2019-2020 fiscal year, Saint Paul Course of Study (COS) School educated 265 individual students with a total registration of 650 classes; offering a total of 53 courses located in Leawood and Hays, Kansas; Oklahoma City; Columbia and Springfield, Missouri. Saint Paul is in the second year of offering a hybrid (online and on-campus) schedule for six courses during the Winter term. Plans to increase the number of hybrid course offerings are in development. Saint Paul launched a part-time, accelerated pilot COS satellite program (PML) in Columbia, MO in 2018 and added a second track in 2019.

Saint Paul School of Theology is blessed to be in ministry in the name of Jesus Christ and to help others respond to God's call. We are a seminary that offers classes and experiences to folks from many denominations and faith walks. Our work as faculty and staff is to provide excellence in theological and practical education for ALL persons called and capable to attend. Remember: "Where two or more are gathered" Christ is there with us.

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

United Theological Seminary

For nearly 150 years, United Theological Seminary in Dayton, Ohio, has been preparing faithful, fruitful leaders to make disciples of Jesus Christ.

Students

In the Fall 2019 semester, United equipped 459 women and men for leadership in the Church, including 272 masters' students and 187 doctoral students. An ecumenical community of many denominations, races and nationalities, United welcomed students from 11 countries, 42 states and 37 denominations, with the student body comprised of 49% African American, 42% Caucasian, and 10% ethnic/racial minorities. The Seminary prepared 165 Course of Study students and served 36 students through the Hispanic Christian Academy, a 3-year Spanish online

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course of ministry program for Hispanic/Latino lay pastors and leaders. Altogether, approximately 660 students followed God's call through United Theological Seminary.

United graduates are making an impact in their communities as they spread the Good News. 88% of alumni/ae are currently employed in or retired from ministry 70% serve in local parishes

- Rev. Dr. Brad Kalajainen (DMin '99) received the 2019 Effective Ministry Award for his transformative leadership of Cornerstone UMC in Grand Rapids, Michigan.
- Rev. Dr. James Bushfield (MDiv '79, DMin '92) received the 2019 Distinguished Alumnus Award for his leadership and ministry in the Indiana Conference of The UMC.
- Rev. Dr. Sandra Coley (DMin '14) received the Outstanding Doctor of Ministry Award for her advocacy of organ donation among African American communities.

New at United

United introduced a 36-hour Master of Arts (MA) degree, designed for those who wish to earn a degree while completing the requirements for Advanced Course of Study in pursuit of ordination in The United Methodist Church. The MA program is available fully online, on-campus or in a combination.

United continues to offer innovative learning through its Live Interactive Virtual Education (LIVE) environment introduced in 2018. In the first year, 59 students participated in LIVE courses, connecting with classmates on campus in Dayton, OH, and across the country by attending classes in real-time via simultaneous webcast.

Becoming Debt-Free

United remains committed to becoming debt-free by the seminary's 150th anniversary on October 11, 2021. Thanks to the support of generous donors, United has received more than \$2.5 million toward its goal of raising \$4 million to "burn the mortgage." Becoming debt-free as an institution will enable United to focus on generating income for scholarships that lighten the load of student debt for seminarians.

In Romans 10:14, St. Paul writes: "How shall they call on him in

whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? AND HOW SHALL THEY HEAR WITHOUT A PREACHER?" For 150 years, United has been preparing faithful and fruitful Christian preachers and leaders who proclaim the Good News of God's unconditional love which has come to us in Jesus Christ. Thanks be to God!

Wesley Theological Seminary

In his book, "A New Church and a New Seminary," President David McAllister-Wilson writes, "Leadership requires a seminary to foster both wisdom and courage." For 138 years, that stance has been a hallmark of Wesley Theological Seminary. We are grateful for many partners in this mission, and we look forward to what God will do in and through us as we seek to faithfully minister to the world in the future.

Working toward God's vision for the church

Through the Thriving Congregations Initiative, Wesley will work with three cohorts of regional congregations in a two-year process, with the goal of following Jesus in mission and ministry. Interested congregations can contact

innovation@wesleyseminary.edu for more information.

The Religious Workforce Project is a study of the current and future nature of religious work, particularly in local congregations. Through the Wesley Innovation Hub, Wesley has worked with 18 congregations in the greater Washington area to experiment with ministries with young adults outside the church. Is God calling you – or someone you know? Wesley offers an 81-hour Master of Divinity, a 36-hour Master of Arts, and a 60-hour Master of Theological Studies, any of which can be focused around specializations in public theology, urban ministry, arts and theology, missional church or African American church leadership. Our Community Engagement Fellows program prepares students to engage in entrepreneurial, community-based ministry. For people with work, ministry and family commitments, Wesley's Master of Divinity degree can be completed via online, weekend, short-term intensive and weeknight courses in five years. Check out upcoming course offerings at wesleyseminary.edu/admissions/try-a-class-3.

Take your ministry to the next level

In addition to full master's degrees, Wesley offers graduate certificates for those preparing for specialized ministry! The new Certificate for Children and Youth Ministry and Advocacy (CYMA) is designed for people who work with and advocate for children and young people, whether in churches, schools, or non-profit organizations. The non-residential certificate can be completed in 12 to 15 months through online coursework and up to two residential sessions. For more information, visit

www.wesleyseminary.edu/admissions/cyama-3. 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/

Wesley is a leader in Doctor of Ministry programs in specialized tracks that can include international study. Wesley is pleased to offer two new Doctor of Ministry tracks for 2021: "Curating Community Through the Arts," aimed to empower leaders with both conceptual and practical skills needed to utilize the arts in ministry; and our latest Cambridge, England-based DMin track, "For the Sake of the World: Church Transformation in Wesleyan Perspective," for leaders concerned with exploring renewed ministry possibilities. Find out more or apply at www.wesleyseminary.edu/doctorofministry/.

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. Find out more about how you can be part of the future of Wesley at www.wesleyseminary.edu/support/.

Miscellaneous

United Methodist Health Ministry Fund

David Jordan, President/CEO

Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to share the progress

we have made in the last year in our work to improve the health and wholeness of Kansans. The United Methodist Health Ministry Fund was established in 1986 by the Kansas West Conference, now the Great Plains Conference of the United Methodist Church, using \$30 million of the proceeds from the sale of Wesley Medical Center in Wichita. Our mission is to support Healthy Kansans through cooperative and strategic philanthropy guided by Christian principles. To achieve this, we have committed our time to focus on three strategic areas: access to care, early childhood development, and Healthy Congregations.

Over the last year, we have supported the Annual Conference and churches throughout Kansas and Nebraska to be healthy and positively affect personal health and the health of their communities. We have also focused our efforts to assist in state-level change that aligns with our mission and strategic areas of funding.

In access to care, we received a HRSA grant to improve the patient experience for rural patients with diabetes. In collaboration with a group of rural hospitals that comprise the Kansas Frontier Community Health Improvement Network, we are working to assess, measure, and improve the ways rural residents diagnosed with diabetes navigate the health care system. We also launched a project to ensure a complete count of all Kansans in the 2020 Census. In the coming months, please be sure to be counted. Millions of dollars in funding for health care and our rural communities depend on all Kansans participating in the upcoming census.

We continue to focus on early childhood development programming and policies. There is a great deal to be proud of — from improved breastfeeding initiation and duration rates to state investments in evidence-based home visiting programs like the Attachment and Behavioral Catch-up (ABC) program. On the breastfeeding front, Kansas experienced a 20% increase in six-month exclusive breastfeeding, moving from 27th to 11th among states. Governor Kelly recognized the importance of breastfeeding as she declared August as Breastfeeding Awareness Month.

Our Healthy Congregations program is growing. Nearly 100 churches are working to improve congregational and community

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health through the program. This past year, we held our 18th annual Healthy Congregations retreat, bringing 110 participants together to explore new ways congregations can help improve critical factors in the places we live, learn, work, and pray. In November, we continued that conversation at our Intersections of Faith and Health Conference that brought together more than 85 faith leaders, health care professionals, and community members to Salina, KS from across Kansas and Nebraska.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our annual report. To learn more about Healthy Congregations and other programs designed to support health and wholeness please visit our website: www.healthfund.org

Kansas Area United Methodist Foundation

This past year was marked by building strategic partnerships to help the Foundation to make a greater impact in our ministry. The Foundation partnered with Wespeth Institutional Investments for our investment fund management, and with the United Methodist Development Fund, UMDF, for serving our loan ministry across the Great Plains Conference. These partnerships stem from the fact that we are stronger together, especially when we play to one another's strengths. The Foundation is excited by the ways God is moving across our connection and for what we can accomplish together to impact our churches, communities, and ministries for generations to come. 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.

LEGACY GIVING

One of the key priorities for the Foundation is helping families and churches leave a legacy to impact future generations. This past year, 10 families met with the Foundation's estate planning attorney to create or update their documents. In addition, seven churches created a new partnership with the Foundation to invest their resources to make a lasting difference. Thank you to the churches and individuals who have partnered with us.

INVESTMENT FUNDS

The Foundation finished 2019 with \$54,253,587 in assets under management. In November, the Foundation changed its investment manager to Wespath Institutional Investments. This strategic partnership allows the Foundation to continue offering competitive investments and add an additional investment option, the Balanced Fund. The Balanced Fund is a great option for long-term investments.

In 2019, the total distributions of \$2,802,172 made an impact through individual and church scholarships, grants, supporting church mission trips, 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.

For the first year, the Foundation awarded 16 Pathways for Discipleship Grants to churches and ministries in Kansas. The grants are awarded in three key areas: Children and Youth, Ministry and Outreach, and Leadership Education.

Thank you to the churches who partnered with the Foundation and created a new account in 2019: Andover UMC, Council Grove/Dunlap UMC, Eureka First UMC, Lecompton UMC, Lenexa UMC, Mayfield Federated Church, and Wichita University UMC.

CHURCH DEVELOPMENT LOAN MINISTRY

In 2019, the Foundation created a partnership with UMDf, to be the lender and servicer of the loans, while the Foundation will maintain its relationship with the church and offer Certificates of Participation. 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 Foundation's Church Development Loan Ministry that provides competitive loans to our churches.

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 Foundation supports the ministries of the local church and the Great Plains Conference through the development of gifts. The Foundation is happy to highlight a few of the services we provide, all at no cost. For detailed information on each of these services, plus our annual report of financial information, please visit our website at www.numf.org or call us at 402-323-8844.

New Start/New Faith Community Grants

Spring is for new beginnings, which is why every spring, the Foundation awards New Start/New Faith Communities financial support in the form of grants. These grants are available for 3 years to Conference-approved new starts.

Seminary Scholarships & Local Pastor Scholarships

NUMF Seminary Scholarships began many years ago as a hope and a dream to support seminary students. Today, the Foundation manages over 20 scholarships for seminary students. And new this year, another dream found its reality. The Foundation is pleased to announce the availability of four new scholarship awards focused on supporting the needs of a treasured, and growing, group of people: our local pastors.

Ministry Grants

Every fall, the Foundation accepts applications for its ministry grant program. Over the years, NUMF has supported over 90 churches to create and grow new ministries and outreach. We look forward to doing the same this fall.

Seminars, Workshop, Events

The Foundation is grateful to provide education, training and valuable resources to both pastors and laity. A pastor's

appreciation reception, legacy workshops, generosity sermons, and a new monthly event for clergy called Lunch & Learn are some of the ways in which we have been partnering with you. We continue to develop new tools and resources to help sustain and grow your ministry.

Church & Pastor Resources

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. 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 sustaining a church and its ministries. Let us help in ensuring the financial growth of your church so you can get back to what you love about being a pastor: your people.

Empowering United Methodists

The word 'stewardship' typically leads the average person 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 and encourage 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.

Thank you for allowing us to be Your Partner in Ministry