

# ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

## BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Rev. Stephanie Ahlschwede, chair

The Great Plains UMC Trustees are entrusted with the stewardship of property under the care of the Conference. This includes parsonages and offices associated with the conference and districts, and properties that have been transferred to the Conference as a result of congregation status changes. Status changes since our last Annual Conference are listed below. In addition, this past year the Trustees examined the long-term sustainability of the Conference insurance programs as well as the status of the current conference office lease and our longer-term functional and space needs for conference ministries. Proposals related to this research projects are submitted separately.

Conference Trustees actions regarding property since the last Annual Conference

### Properties Sold

Chetopa St. Paul UMC closed church (Parsons District)  
Long Pine UMC closed church (Elkhorn Valley District)  
Pomona UMC parsonage (Five Rivers District)  
Carneiro UMC closed church (Hutchinson District)  
Walnut UMC closed church (Parsons District)  
Wichita Dawson parsonage (Wichita West District)  
Kenesaw UMC closed church (Prairie Rivers District)  
Auburn UMC closed church (Topeka District)  
Flint Hills District parsonage  
Hutchinson District parsonage  
Cedar Vale KS UMC parsonage (installment sale is active as of April 15)

Properties Transferred

Iola Calvary UMC (Five Rivers District) to Iola Wesley UMC

The following closed church properties are held by the Trustees for disposition:

Ada UMC (Salina District)

Glade UMC (Hays District)

Pomona UMC (Five Rivers District)

Wichita Dawson UMC (Wichita West District)

Almena UMC (Hays District)

Craig UMC (Elkhorn Valley District)

In addition, three fleet vehicles have been sold.

The Trustees would like to thank Pat McKaig, who serves as Conference Property Manager, and Scott Brewer, our Conference Treasurer and Director of Administrative Services, for their diligence, patience and accuracy this past year. Their work makes ours much easier.

**Proposed Local Church Insurance Policy of the  
Great Plains Annual Conference - Adopted**

The Great Plains United Methodist Conference (GPUMC) will obtain Worker Compensation insurance to not only cover conference staff but staff (including pastors) of all local churches in the Great Plains Conference ~~within the GPUMC.~~ Each local church will be billed for the actual cost of the premium incurred based on compensation paid to staff of each church.

~~The churches of the former Nebraska and Kansas West Conferences will continue to be~~ All churches in the conference are responsible for purchasing property, liability, and all other coverage necessary to protect each congregation and its assets.

Churches in the Five Rivers, Flint Hills, Kansas City, Parsons,

and Topeka Districts in the former Kansas East Conference will  
c

ontinue to be covered by a mandatory the current group  
policy that provides all insurance needed by each local church  
until June 30, 2023, after which time they may elect to obtain  
coverage

outside of this conference-administered program. Churches  
in these districts reporting less than 100 professing members  
in their 2020 statistical report may opt out of the mandatory  
property coverage for the 2022 renewal period, provided they  
formally submit their opt-out notice no later than October 1,  
2021. Churches that choose to opt out of the property  
coverage are still required to continue to participate in the  
liability and directors & officers coverage until June 30, 2023.

(The current “opt out”

provision will continue to be available for churches under  
50 in membership.) This group will continue unless or until  
a petition is sent to and approved by members of the Great  
Plains United Methodist Conference who are clergy appointed  
to and lay members from churches within the bounds of the  
former Kansas East Conference. The provisions included in  
this paragraph shall automatically expire on July 1, 2023.

### **Trustees Report Regarding a Permanent Great Plains Conference Office**

In accordance with the authority granted to it by action of  
the regular session of the 2017 Great Plains Conference, the  
Board of Trustees shall proceed with the purchase and  
construction of a permanent office. In establishing this  
office, the board shall only draw from existing reserve funds  
and shall not obtain or utilize any debt financing.

#### Properties Transferred

Iola Calvary UMC (Five Rivers District) to Iola Wesley UMC

The following closed church properties are held by the  
Trustees for disposition:

Ada UMC (Salina District)  
Glade UMC (Hays District)

## PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

Rev. Craig Hauschild, Chair

It is the recommendation of the Conference Personnel Committee that a 3% increase to minimum compensation levels be granted for 2022. Below you will see that no increase was given for 2021. Based on cost of living projections, it is our assessment that 3% is an appropriate increase.

Clergy Status	<u>2020</u>	<u>2021</u>	<u>2022</u>
Full Time Local Pastor	37,617	37,617	38,746
Associate Member	40,051	40,051	41,253
Provisional Member	42,486	42,486	43,761
Full Member	44,921	44,921	46,269

Rate of Increase: 3.00%

## 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 service in the Pre-82 Pension Plan. The board voted to use the 2% or COLA reflected in the Comprehensive Funding Plan for 2022. The 2021 PSR is \$823 and set for \$839 for 2022.

### 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 an

increase for 2022. The board will continue to review yearly.

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

In the past, the board's minimum target funding level for the Pre-82 Pension Plan has been 120% to provide for market volatility. The asset allocation to Equities has, however, declined and is on a gradual path towards 25%. The board will look at revising the target in the near future. With the lower equity allocation, Wespeth reduced the Discount Rate assumption which raised the liability valuation. The asset valuation was inversely impacted by the five-year market return smoothing. These two impacts decreased the funding ratio to 111% for 2022. The Board has discontinued utilizing the Pre-82 surplus as a source of funding and will use other identified reserves. The board will continue to bill the church for CPP benefits at 3%, CRSP DB at 3%, and CRSP DC at 3% for 2022 with the board covering the additional cost of 6.2% from reserves. Churches with (1/4) 25% appointments will be billed 10% UMPIP with the remaining 2% from reserves. The Board believes the funding level will increase in subsequent years as the strong market returns of 2019 and 2020 are fully recognized.

### **2021 Comprehensive Funding Plan**

The board is required to submit a comprehensive funding plan each year to Wespeth and Investments. The funding plan must meet the standards for a Pre-82 funding plan as established by Wespeth 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 Wespeth Benefits and Investments.

### **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).

**2021 JOURNAL  
Reports**

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 Wespath Benefits and Investments, during the period January 1, 2022 through December 31, 2022 by each active, retired, terminated, or disabled Clergyperson 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 Wespath Benefits and Investments and from a commercial annuity company that provides an annuity arising from benefits accrued under a Wespath 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.

**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.

**Incapacity Leave Health Grants**

First 24 months the health grant is \$1,186 per month for \$14,232 annually. After the first 24 months and each year thereafter (up to 3 years of assistance) an application must be submitted validating dependent coverage and cost. The maximum per month should not exceed \$1,186.

**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 half 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 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 Wespeth 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 a Medicare or 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 of the Conference Benefits Officer and Benefits Assistant for the Benefits Department.

**EPISCOPACY COMMITTEE**

Rev. Maria T. Campbell, chair

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

2020 was a year of indefinite uncertainty as our world was challenged by the pandemic. This resulted in the quarantine of our people and thus, many churches not being open for

in-person worship. During this time, the bishop has led the conference with compassion and vital support for our churches, pastors, laity and individual communities. He has directed the Conference staff to provide the needed additional resources that allowed our churches to continue the mission of the church. The Bishop led and preached worship services throughout the year that were recorded for use by individual churches. This allowed needed respite for some pastors, as well as, the ability to provide quality worship for many churches. The bishop also guided the conference to make important decisions to ease financial burden of mission shares on churches in the early months of the pandemic.

In addition to addressing the current needs of our world and Conference, the Bishop has been a guiding force to establish justice ministries organizations (DART and WORC) in both our cities and rural areas. The Great Plains Conference is answering the question, "What does the Lord require of you?" We have a strong history of meeting the mercy ministry needs of the people of Kansas and Nebraska. Under Bishop Saenz, we are hearing and addressing the call to do justice. We are grateful for his leadership and passion to stand up and speak out to ensure that all people are treated justly.

The Episcopacy Committee is dedicated to supporting the work of the bishop and the cabinet. It is our hope that the entire Conference joins us in prayerfully supporting their ministry to us.

## **COMMISSION ON ARCHIVES AND HISTORY**

Melinda Rittgers, Chairperson

The commission is a body of four members elected from Kansas and Nebraska along with the archivists from Kansas and Nebraska. The archives for Kansas are housed at Baker University, Baldwin City, Kansas, and for Nebraska at Nebraska

Wesleyan, Lincoln, Nebraska. Currently there are co-chairs of the commission (see list at end) who share responsibility for overseeing the work of the commission and the archives.

The commission and archivists researched and compiled a list of churches having significant anniversaries (years of ministry) in 2020 and is currently working on a similar list for 2021. Over 35 congregations were identified with 125 and 150 years of ministry in 2020. Each church was sent a certificate acknowledging this event signed by Bishop Saenz and the co-chairs of the commission, Don Everhart and Doris Wills. Certificates for 2019 that had not been received at Conference were also mailed out. Since there is, at this time, no definitive database for church founding dates along with historian contacts in these churches, the commission' along with the archivists for Nebraska and Kansas, is attempting to gather this information for use in future years. It would be helpful if churches would reply to inquiries regarding their history and send it to the commission, also the commission needs the name of a church historian or other contact person from each church.

In other matters, the commission has acted as a consulting group for the archivists and their work. The archives for Kansas has an archives advisory board consisting of the archivist, directory of the university library, a Baker faculty member, the Chairs of the archives commission and the archivist for the Nazarene Church – a Methodist and former member of the Kansas Conference Archives Commission. This Board helps formulate the budget of the Kansas Methodist archives and oversees a special award for a student written paper about Methodism using the Kansas Methodist archives. This past year the award went to Zachary DeGreeff, a Baker student and son of a Methodist pastor, who wrote “Kansas City or Bust!” about a period in the 1930s when a Methodist educational committee wanted to move Baker University from Baldwin City to Kansas City. He also presented his paper at the virtual conference of Kansas Association of Historians in March 2021 and the Great Plains Conference AV team made

a video of Zach and his Baker mentors explaining the issues surrounding the paper and showing scenes of the times on campus and in Baldwin. The commission is receiving papers for consideration of a 2021 award.

The commission held 4 Zoom meetings since the Spring of 2020 during which the budgets for the archives commission and the two archives were formulated and submitted to the Conference Treasurer. The commission participated in the Conference Virtual Booth for Laity both in 2020 and in 2021 and the Chairs have attended (by ZOOM) Conference level meetings as they were held. During the commission Zoom sessions discussions have included the gathering of historical data for the individual churches in the Great Plains Conference and hearing reports from the archivists regarding the research requests that they have answered. In person research is still not encouraged at either archives, due to COVID-19 mandates as well as limited space at both Baker and Nebraska Wesleyan. There have been many research requests- such as baptismal, marriage or membership records for churches that are closed, plus the need for information on pastors throughout Kansas-Nebraska history and other events that Methodism was part of during our long history from Territorial days to the present. The commission has also supported the addition of a part-time research assistant for Methodist records at Baker and is attempting to discover ways that the same might happen for the Nebraska archives, along with improving the physical facility at Nebraska. The discussion to find ways of finding more space and improve the storage and accessibility of the Archive materials for the Nebraska portion of our Methodist history is ongoing.

Currently the commission is working on the anniversary certificates that will be sent out for 2021 and a video about the archives work for the virtual 2021 Great Plains Annual Conference.

Please contact the archives commission team by email- [archivesTeam@greatplainsumc.org](mailto:archivesTeam@greatplainsumc.org) or by the addresses for

individual commission members as listed here:

Baker archives- Sara DeCaro- [saradecaro@bakeru.edu](mailto:saradecaro@bakeru.edu)

Don Everhart Co-chair [cdeverhart@aol.com](mailto:cdeverhart@aol.com)

Nebraska archives- Karrie Dvorak-  
[gpcarchives@greatplainsumc.org](mailto:gpcarchives@greatplainsumc.org)

Doris Wills Co-chair- [educator2@aol.com](mailto:educator2@aol.com)

Mel Luetchens

Carolyn May

Mark Schulze

Kayla Mangrich (nominated in 2021)

David Shrum

Peg Walters

## **TREASURER'S REPORT**

Scott Brewer, Conference Treasurer/Director of  
Administrative Services

With more and more people are fully vaccinated, most churches in the Great Plains have now reopened to accommodate at least some level of in-person worship. This is a cause for celebration, of course – even for introverts like me who really enjoyed social distancing (or at least for the first six months of it).

Over the past few months, I have heard lots of talk of “going back”: Going back to restaurants, concerts, sporting events, school, and – of course – church. As the limits on interaction subside, we are starting to see what, I think, are the first hazy outlines of a post-pandemic future and, well, it's different.

When the pandemic began in March 2020, churches were forced to innovate and adapt in ways that seemed unimaginable just a few weeks prior. In 2019, only 19% of our churches reported any online worship attendance online; in 2020, 79% were worshipping online. Online worship lowered the barriers to encountering the living Christ through word

and sacrament and in turn, we saw increases in attendance that were unexpected and remarkable. Taking both in person and online attendance into account, our churches reported a 55% increase in worship attendance between 2019 and 2020, nearly double what it was just five years ago. Now it must be noted that online attendance numbers are not as reliable or measurable as in-person attendance. Even still, it is hard for me to interpret these numbers as anything but a praise sighting made possible by God's grace working through your courage and your creativity and leaders in our local churches.

There are lots of ways we can describe 2020, most of them totally inappropriate for publication in the conference journal. I choose to remember 2020 as the year church kept being the church. Our modes and forms of worship changed, but we still worshipped. We couldn't serve our communities the same way, but we still served them. In 2020 churches reported over 37,000 fellow United Methodists in Kansas and Nebraska served God and their local mission fields through 4,652 community ministries that served over 1.1 million people. That's just 1,075 less people served than in 2019.

In a year in which giving to congregations decreased 3%, the percentage paid on Mission Shares (taking the 17% moratorium into account) was over 99%, a new record. Thanks to you and your churches, three out of every four churches paid at least 100% of the Mission Shares request in 2020, and nearly a third paid 120% or more. All I can say is, wow!

I wish we were together in one room right now. Just think of the thunderous applause that last line would have gotten.

But it's not to be, and frankly, that's not why we give. These difficult past fourteen-odd months have forced us to concentrate hard on the essentials of the church being the church. Worship, prayer, personal devotion, collective action generosity: In these things we abide.

We don't know what the next year holds, or the year after that. And in case you haven't heard it enough, things are never going back to the way they "used to be." We are entering a new age, the outlines of which we can just start to make out. Online worship, for instance, is part of our new reality, whether we like it or not. Great Plains local churches report in VitalSigns that, on average, three people are still worshipping online for every one congregant who is worships in person, a ratio that has been consistent since autumn of 2020.

The church is changing, but it is still the church. Congregations continue to find new and creative ways to live out the call. We're innovating and experimenting with technology to maintain meaningful connection to God and each other, we're reaching out to our neighbors, we're taking responsibility for the good of our entire communities, we are seeking peace, mercy. We do these things because we are the church that is what the church is called to be.

The church is still the church and we in Administrative Services are still administrative services. We continue to do the quiet, unremarkable, unsung work that keeps the machinery for ministry in working order. We continue to assist churches with questions on how to take advantage of pandemic stimulus programs like the PPP. We are working to lower the price of property and liability insurance, including a commitment of \$1.5 million this year to lower premiums for local churches. We're providing more training and support to clergy on managing their personal finances, planning for retirement, and managing staff. We're implementing new technologies to reduce the administrative burden on pastors, staff, and volunteers. And we continue to strive for excellence in the stewardship of the financial gifts you have entrusted to us for the glory of God, including yet another clean audit.

I am so grateful for the amazing team I'm privileged to be a part of – Sabrina Aubuchon, Niki Buesing, Adryan Eubanks, Darci Koci, Lorie Lindenmuth, JoEllen McGranahan, Pat

McKaig, Peggy Mihoover, Susan Petersen, and Jan Swift who started working for the Kansas East Conference 45 years ago this year.

And I am so grateful to you. Thank you for the opportunity to serve as treasurer here in the Great Plains Conference. May God continue to bless you and your ministry in the coming year.

## 2021 JOURNAL Reports

	2020		2021	2022	2021 vs 2022	
	Approved Budget	Actual	Approved Budget	Approved Budget	\$\$\$ Chg 2021 to 2022	% Chg 2021 to 2022
<b>Great Plains MS Budget Summary</b>						
<b>INCOME:</b>						
Mission Shares	\$1,285,185	\$1,402,756	\$1,041,222	\$13,636,871	(\$404,351)	-2.9%
Moratorium		(\$2,366,765)				
Less: Allowance for Unpaid Mission Shares	(\$856,664)	(\$104,456)	(\$1,857,854)	(\$1,425,550)	\$432,304	-23.3%
<b>Net Mission Share Income</b>	<b>\$13,428,521</b>	<b>\$11,731,535</b>	<b>\$12,183,368</b>	<b>\$12,211,321</b>	\$27,953	0.2%
% of Mission Share Asking	94.00%	99.12%	86.77%	89.55%		
<b>Other Income:</b>						
Restricted Reserve-Budget Support (4%)	\$1,901,525	\$1,901,525	\$2,004,822	\$1,650,354	(\$354,468)	-17.7%
PPP grant		\$1,319,300		\$0		
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$15,330,046</b>	<b>\$14,952,360</b>	<b>\$14,188,190</b>	<b>\$13,861,675</b>	<b>(\$326,619)</b>	<b>-2.3%</b>
<b>EXPENSES:</b>						
<b>Personnel</b>						
Wages and Housing	\$3,544,400	\$3,311,640	\$3,305,064	\$3,246,298	(\$58,766)	-1.8%
Other benefits & Payroll taxes	\$824,986	\$672,050	\$652,369	\$712,446	\$60,076	9.2%
<b>Total Personnel</b>	<b>\$4,369,386</b>	<b>\$3,983,690</b>	<b>\$3,957,433</b>	<b>\$3,958,744</b>	\$1,310	0.0%
<b>Episcopal Office</b>						
General Church Ministries for Episcopacy	\$702,039	\$643,061	\$699,878	\$692,651	(\$7,227)	-1.0%
Episcopal Office Expenses	\$70,628	\$11,143	\$26,196	\$29,552	\$3,356	12.8%
Episcopal Residence Maintenance	\$15,000	\$15,395	\$19,500	\$19,500	\$0	0.0%
District Office Expenses	\$316,215	\$153,182	\$261,149	\$257,049	(\$4,100)	-1.6%
Cabinet Operations	\$693,900	\$421,732	\$623,925	\$623,925	\$0	0.0%
<b>Total Episcopal Budget</b>	<b>\$1,797,782</b>	<b>\$1,244,513</b>	<b>\$1,630,648</b>	<b>\$1,622,677</b>	<b>(\$7,971)</b>	<b>-0.5%</b>
<b>Clergy Excellence</b>						
General Church Ministries for Clergy Excellence	\$800,688	\$735,850	\$788,223	\$789,980	(\$8,243)	-1.0%
Board of Ordained Ministry	\$176,000	\$108,063	\$177,000	\$170,500	(\$6,500)	-3.7%
Transition Into Ministry	\$227,200	\$87,125	\$216,700	\$245,740	\$29,040	13.4%
Clergy Excellence Programming Expense	\$211,000	\$53,641	\$179,600	\$151,800	(\$27,800)	-15.5%
Clergy Excellence Office expense	\$32,600	\$12,610	\$35,300	\$38,100	\$2,800	7.9%
<b>Total Clergy Excellence Budget</b>	<b>\$1,447,488</b>	<b>\$997,289</b>	<b>\$1,406,823</b>	<b>\$1,396,120</b>	<b>(\$10,703)</b>	<b>-0.8%</b>
<b>Congregational Excellence</b>						
General Church Ministries for Leadership Development	\$390,865	\$359,198	\$389,661	\$385,638	(\$4,023)	-1.0%
SCJ (Lydia Patterson) Leadership Development	\$97,643	\$89,730	\$97,643	\$97,643	\$0	0.0%
Congregational Leadership/Training	\$228,600	\$86,250	\$103,000	\$101,000	(\$2,000)	-1.9%
Campus Ministry	\$640,000	\$607,000	\$615,000	\$615,000	\$0	0.0%
Camping Ministry	\$712,500	\$601,530	\$651,300	\$651,300	\$0	0.0%
Resource Center	\$2,000	\$0	\$0	\$20,000	\$20,000	
Intergenerational Discipleship Ministry	\$120,000	\$62,490	\$76,800	\$69,000	(\$7,800)	-10.2%
Ethnic Ministry	\$438,500	\$213,722	\$272,000	\$208,500	(\$63,500)	-23.3%
New Church Starts Ministry	\$525,000	\$350,000	\$353,500	\$357,035	\$3,535	1.0%
Congregational Excellence Office Expense	\$61,900	\$34,178	\$74,160	\$84,460	(\$10,300)	-13.1%
<b>Total Congregational Excellence Budget</b>	<b>\$3,217,008</b>	<b>\$2,404,098</b>	<b>\$2,633,064</b>	<b>\$2,569,576</b>	<b>(\$63,488)</b>	<b>-2.4%</b>
<b>Mercy and Justice</b>						
General Church Ministries for Mercy and Justice	\$2,370,626	\$2,178,590	\$2,363,328	\$2,338,925	(\$24,403)	-1.0%
Disaster Response	\$28,250	\$6,938	\$19,570	\$24,570	\$5,000	25.5%
Mercy and Justice Ministries	\$167,100	\$85,232	\$142,875	\$143,375	\$500	0.3%
Mercy & Justice Office expense	\$24,450	\$8,653	\$16,950	\$16,950	\$0	0.0%
<b>Total Mercy and Justice Budget</b>	<b>\$2,690,426</b>	<b>\$2,279,413</b>	<b>\$2,542,723</b>	<b>\$2,523,820</b>	<b>(\$18,903)</b>	<b>-0.7%</b>
<b>Administrative Services</b>						
General and SCJ Ministries for Admin Services	\$404,278	\$370,679	\$403,219	\$399,676	(\$3,543)	-0.9%
Administrative Committee Expenses	\$97,295	\$91,743	\$117,970	\$123,128	\$5,158	4.4%
Administrative Services Office Expense	\$147,552	\$127,208	\$148,000	\$151,500	\$3,500	2.4%
Information Technology	\$204,000	\$125,584	\$158,500	\$158,500	\$0	0.0%
Annual Conference Expense	\$143,032	\$97,034	\$134,100	\$128,000	(\$6,100)	-4.5%
Safe Gatherings	\$142,500	\$60,051	\$115,500	\$94,000	(\$21,500)	-18.6%
Conf Office Building Maintenance expense	\$232,000	\$220,730	\$208,330	\$208,330	\$0	0.0%
Trustees: Insurance, Auto, Dist Office & Parsonage	\$391,300	\$366,998	\$377,300	\$362,950	(\$14,350)	-3.8%
Communications Program Expense	\$146,000	\$73,112	\$121,150	\$117,850	(\$3,300)	-2.7%
<b>Total Administrative Services Budget</b>	<b>\$1,907,957</b>	<b>\$1,533,139</b>	<b>\$1,784,069</b>	<b>\$1,743,834</b>	<b>(\$40,235)</b>	<b>-2.3%</b>
Missional Opportunity fund request	\$0	\$0	\$233,431	\$46,804	(\$186,627)	-79.9%
<b>Total Great Plains Conference Budget</b>	<b>\$15,330,047</b>	<b>\$12,442,142</b>	<b>\$14,188,190</b>	<b>\$13,861,675</b>	<b>(\$326,516)</b>	<b>-2.3%</b>
<b>Net Income (Loss)</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$2,510,218</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>		

# GREAT PLAINS CONFERENCE Reports

	2020		2021		2022		2021 vs 2022	
	Approved Budget	Actual	Approved Budget	Approved Budget	\$\$\$ Chg 2021 to 2022	% Chg 2021 to 2022		
<b>Great Plains Grant Budget Summary</b>								
<b>INCOME:</b>								
Restricted Reserve-Budget Support (1%)				\$412,589			\$412,589	
<b>Total Income</b>				<b>\$412,589</b>				
<b>EXPENSES:</b>								
Clergy Excellence:								
Renewal Leave Grants				\$25,000	\$25,000			
Congregational Excellence:								
Children/Youth Grants				\$10,000	\$10,000			
Multi-Ethnic Emerging Ministry Grants				\$144,265	\$144,265			
Mercy & Justice:								
Anti-racism & Empowerment of Black, Indigenous, & People of Color				\$195,331	\$195,331			
Administrative Services:								
Communications Zoom license church fees				\$97,993	\$97,993			
<b>Total Great Plains Grant Budget Expenses</b>				<b>\$412,589</b>			<b>\$412,589</b>	
<b>Net Income (Loss)</b>							<b>\$0</b>	
<b>Mission Agency Support*:</b>								
1% of church operating income (\$21 for Agencies)	\$1,428,519	\$955,021	\$1,404,122	\$1,363,687	(\$40,435)	-2.9%		
<b>Colleges/Universities</b>								
Nebraska Wesleyan Univ - Lincoln, NE	8.22%	\$80,114	8.04%	8.04%		0.00%		
Baker University - Baldwin City, KS	8.22%	\$80,114	8.04%	8.04%		0.00%		
Saint Paul School of Theology - KS/OK	8.22%	\$80,114	8.04%	8.04%		0.00%		
Kansas Wesleyan University - Salina, KS	8.22%	\$80,114	8.04%	8.04%		0.00%		
Southwestern College - Winfield, KS	8.22%	\$80,114	8.04%	8.04%		0.00%		
<b>Health &amp; Welfare Institutions</b>								
UM Homes/Aldersgate Village (Good Sam. Frnd) - Topeka, KS	4.68%	\$45,624	5.27%	5.27%		0.00%		
Asbury Park (Good Sam. Frnd) - Newton, KS	2.22%	\$21,652	0.00%	0.00%		0.00%		
GraceMed Health Clinic - Wichita and Topeka, KS	3.17%	\$30,932	3.12%	3.44%		0.31%		
Released & Restored - NE	2.22%	\$21,652	2.50%	2.86%		0.36%		
EmberHope (Youville) - KS	2.78%	\$27,065	3.12%	3.12%		0.00%		
Epworth Village - York, NE	2.46%	\$23,972	2.77%	2.77%		0.00%		
Tyree Health and Dental Clinic - Wichita, KS	1.98%	\$0	0.00%	0.00%		0.00%		
Wesley Towers - Hutchinson, KS	0.00%	\$0	2.22%	1.94%		-0.88%		
<b>Ministries with the Poor</b>								
United Methodist Ministries - Omaha, NE	13.25%	\$129,140	14.01%	14.01%		0.00%		
Immigrant Legal Center(JFON) - NE	10.95%	\$106,714	11.07%	11.28%		0.21%		
Friendship House of Hope - Ogdan, KS	0.79%	\$7,733	0.54%	0.54%		0.00%		
Wesley House - Pittsburg, KS	4.68%	\$45,624	5.00%	5.00%		0.00%		
Fellowship and Faith - Topeka, KS	0.32%	\$3,094	0.36%	0.00%		-0.36%		
UM Open Door - Wichita, KS	4.68%	\$45,624	4.91%	4.91%		0.00%		
Genesis Family Health (UM Mex-Amer Minist), KS	3.17%	\$30,932	3.57%	3.93%		0.36%		
<b>Ecumenical/Interchurch organizations</b>								
Rural Response Hotline, NE	1.51%	\$14,630	1.34%	1.34%		0.00%		
<b>Total Mission Agency Support Budget</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>\$955,021</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>100.00%</b>				
Directed Conf Advnc MAS not included above		\$66,328						
<i>*All Mission Agency Support funds are distributed based on the above percentage ratio.</i>								
<b>For Information Only - included in the above MS budget</b>								
<b>General Church Appointments</b>								
Episcopal Office	\$702,039	\$643,061	\$699,878	\$692,651	(\$2,161)	-0.3%		
Africa University	\$71,478	\$65,686	\$71,257	\$70,522	(\$221)	-0.3%		
Black College	\$319,387	\$293,512	\$318,404	\$315,116	(\$993)	-0.3%		
Ministerial Education	\$800,688	\$735,850	\$798,223	\$789,980	(\$2,465)	-0.3%		
World Service	\$2,370,626	\$2,178,590	\$2,363,328	\$2,338,925	(\$7,298)	-0.3%		
General Administration	\$281,492	\$257,844	\$280,626	\$277,728	(\$996)	-0.3%		
Interdenominational Cooperation	\$52,620	\$57,546	\$52,421	\$51,792	(\$193)	-0.3%		
<b>Total General Appointments</b>	<b>\$4,608,330</b>	<b>\$4,232,089</b>	<b>\$4,594,143</b>	<b>\$4,546,704</b>	<b>(\$14,187)</b>	<b>-0.3%</b>		
<b>South Central Jurisdiction Appointments</b>								
Lydia Patterson Institute	\$97,643	\$89,730	\$97,643	\$97,643	\$0	0.0%		
SCJ Reserve restoration	\$7,536	\$48,365	\$7,536	\$7,536	\$0	0.0%		
SCJ Mission And Administration Fund	\$52,630	\$5,925	\$52,630	\$52,630	\$0	0.0%		
<b>Total SCJ Appointments</b>	<b>\$157,809</b>	<b>\$145,020</b>	<b>\$157,809</b>	<b>\$157,809</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>0.0%</b>		

## 2021 JOURNAL Reports

### 2021 Conference Advance List

<b>Great Plains Mission Partnerships</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Project</b>
Nigeria Hope for Children of Africa/Scholarships	300	
Haiti Covenant	302	
Zimbabwe Chabadza Covenant	303	

<b>Campus Ministries</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Project</b>
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

<b>Great Plains Camping, Inc.</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Project</b>
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

<b>Great Plains Ethnic Ministries</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Project</b>
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	

## CONNECTING COUNCIL

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

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

This year the Connecting Council was updated in August 2020 and April 2021 on several conference initiatives or ministries and approved several recommendations as listed below:

- Bishop Saenz shared about the impact of the pandemic on the local congregations
  - o churches have reached out to their communities in new ways, living out their discipleship of faith, hope and love
  - o the conference has provided resources such as components of worship services to assist clergy and congregations
  - o congregations have offered creative worship experiences, including outdoors
  - o most churches are continuing digital worship initiated during the pandemic
  - o churches and clergy have struggled with decisions about mask wearing and protocol for social distancing in their buildings
- Technology grants went to 53 churches to purchase and upgrade equipment for online worship
- Zoom licenses have been purchased by the conference for all appointed clergy. Additional licenses are available for congregations needing a second license
- Laity Summit was held March 20, 2021, with 240 laity participating virtually. The event was well-received and included a Festival of Booths allowing participants to connect with organizations and ministries

- UM Camps will be open this summer. Camps stepped up in 2020 with online and virtual alternatives to engage children and youth in a camp experience
- A grant from the Missional Opportunity Fund was approved to hire a consultant to work with each camp for improvements
- Update on the work of DART (Direct Action and Research Training) was given, identifying the work that has been done in Johnson and Wyandotte (KS) counties. They will be hiring community organizers for each county and looking to move into Lincoln area next
- Annual Conference items were affirmed:
  - o 2022 proposed budget was affirmed
  - o Offerings for worship services were affirmed: Memorial Service, NAMI chapters; Opening Worship, YSF; Ordination Service, Crouse Grant Fund for clergy
  - o Approved the revised standing rules

## **CLERGY EXCELLENCE**

### **CLERGY EXCELLENCE DIRECTOR REPORT**

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

The 2020-2021 year required shifts in the way ministry was done for all of us. For the clergy excellence team, it meant that planned retreats and events were shifted to all virtual or hybrid and reimaged.

- At the Threshold webinar/podcast was initiated to address concerns of clergy that had been voiced in various contexts, and this continues to be a regular feature focusing on ministry in the local church, thriving in challenging times, and

- effectiveness in ministry.
- Events such as candidacy summit and licensing school had to be reimaged.
  - Seminary visits were all online rather than in-person but has meant that seminarians could visit with several conference leaders rather than just one.
  - Clergy and congregations had to figure out how to get to know one another where pastoral transitions happened. A mental health professional helped clergy and SPRC chairs imagine ways to transition effectively
  - The Great Plains Conference has been invited to participate in a pilot program with GBHEM called Reflective Supervision. Reflective Supervision is a one-on-one relationship designed to be a safe space for clergy to reflect on the practice of ministry and their leadership in the local church. Seven individuals are in process of certification as a Reflective Supervisor and will begin supervising clergy in the fall of 2021.
  - We continue to offer Culture of Call grants to churches, camps, and campus ministries to encourage an intentional focus on God's call in the life of believers and raising up leaders for the church
  - We have offered mini-grants for clergy to engage in self-care opportunities where they can rest, be healthier and feed their spirit
  - A workshop on supervising staff was attended by 32 clergy from the Great Plains Conference. Led by Susan Beaumont, this laid a foundation for better staff relations, greater accountability, and healthier churches.
  - Renewal leave grants were awarded for 2021, as funds were approved in the 2021 budget. Five applications were received by Dec 1, 2020 for a total of \$14,000. Most applicants have been serving as clergy for at least 10 years. They see the renewal leave as time for them to restore their spiritual, emotional, and

physical health, with a high percentage of their time devoted to spiritual disciplines, prayer and meditation, and reading. Some are planning length of time at solitary activities such as fishing, hiking or a private retreat; some are including a time of reconnecting with friends for activities such as kayaking. While away from leading worship at their appointed congregation, they are attending worship at other churches.

- The grant details document is the programmatic recommendation in response to the resolution referred to Clergy Excellence at the 2019 annual conference.

### **Renewal Leave**

*The Book of Discipline* of The United Methodist Church in ¶1350.3 recognizes that clergy serving local churches need a time of refreshment which goes beyond the disciplinary requirements for continuing education and spiritual growth. Occasionally clergy need a time of renewal to be the best leader. Renewal leave is a time for clergy to take a respite from the normal exercise of pastoral ministry. *The Book of Discipline* states that clergy “may request a formational and spiritual growth leave of up to six months while continuing to hold an appointment in the local church.”

Based on the Gospel of Mark, where after returning from their missionary journey Jesus invited the disciples to “*come away by yourselves to a lonely place, and rest a while,*” Renewal Leave is not “empty” or unstructured or task oriented but is an intentional time of purposeful activity and rest promoting refreshment and renewal. Clergy return refreshed with renewed energy for continued ministry, often with a fresh vision, as well. The congregation can engage in new ministry with lay leadership while the pastor is on Renewal Leave. Often new leaders emerge in the local church as people step up to assume new responsibility.

### **Approval of Renewal Leave**

Applications for Renewal Leave shall be sent to the Director of Clergy Excellence. An application must be received at least 120 days prior to the date the Renewal Leave begins and by the deadline of December 1 of each year. All applications will be considered at the same time. Grant awards will be determined by the review team no later than one month after the above due date. A maximum of \$3000 is available for a Renewal Leave grant.

Pulpit supply is the responsibility of the pastor and the church. The District Superintendent may be able to provide contact information of individuals willing to provide pastoral leadership to the church during the Renewal Leave. Funding for this person may be included in the grant application. *If there are other pastoral care needs not already covered by current staff or volunteers, that could be included in the request.*

Depending upon the amount of money available and allocated to such purposes, annual conference funds shall be made available on an equitable basis among the approved applicants. Each application shall be considered carefully and prayerfully by the Chair of the Covenant team of the Board of Ordained Ministry Covenant Team, Dean of the Cabinet, and the Director of Clergy Excellence. Their decision will be reported to the clergy person, the SPRC, and to the District Superintendent of the pastoral charge.

### **Criteria for Approval**

Applicants must be full members, associate members, or full-time local pastors who have completed Course of Study, currently in an appointment. Applicants must have served a minimum of six (6) consecutive years under appointment prior to their application. (*The Book of Discipline*, ¶1350.4).

Applicants who have been granted Renewal Time previously may apply additional times. Renewal Leave grants may be requested once every eight years of ministry. However, first-time applicants shall be given priority.

The following shall be carefully considered:

1. The circumstances of each applicant.
2. The recommendations of the District Superintendent, the Pastor-Staff Parish Relations Committee, and the Administrative Board/Church Council.
3. The availability of sufficient funds to underwrite the request.

### **Steps for Approval**

Prior to submitting an application, the applicant must do the following:

1. Meet jointly with the District Superintendent and the Pastor-Staff Parish Relations Committee of the local church/charge being served at the time of the request to describe the plan for the Renewal leave.
2. Secure the approval of the Administrative Council(s)/Church Council(s) and the Pastor Staff Parish Relations Committee of the church/charge being served at the time of the request.
3. Secure the written approval of their District Superintendent at the time of the request. It is the applicant's responsibility to complete the application, secure all required signatures, and forward the application to the Director of Clergy Excellence at least 120 days prior to the date requested for the Time of Renewal and by December 1 of a given year. If there is not 120 days, the application needs to wait until the next opportunity to apply or request special consideration.

**Funding**

1. The local church/charge will continue to pay the pastor's salary and benefits during the period of time she or he is on Renewal Leave.
2. If awarded a grant, payment of the grant funds will be made by the annual conference directly to the church after receipt of a voucher from the  
  
local church Treasurer for expenses incurred. If the grant includes funds to pay the person giving pastoral coverage, this will be remitted according to arrangements made before the Renewal Leave. If the grant is to cover expenses incurred by the pastor, payment will be made to the pastor after submission of appropriate receipts.
3. All reimbursement requests must be submitted to the Director of Clergy Excellence within the month after the completion of the Renewal Leave, or by December 31 of the year the renewal leave was taken, whichever comes first.

**Enabling Arrangements**

1. The District Superintendent shall provide names of any clergy available to provide pastoral support for clergy during Renewal Leave.
2. Detailed arrangements for dates of coverage and responsibility of the clergy providing pastoral support or lay persons providing leadership shall be made by the pastor who is on Renewal Leave, the local church/charge, the District Superintendent, and in consultation with the this/these individuals.

## GREAT PLAINS BOARD OF ORDAINED MINISTRY

Chair Rev. Andrew Conard

The work of the Board of Ordained ministry connects with clergy from first sensing God's call in their life through credentialing and beyond retirement. As a Board, we use these words as a guiding statement: "As a witness to, and example of, Christ's ministry, the Board of Ordained Ministry shepherds those whom God has entrusted to us; we recognize each one as a gift to the church to strengthen the Kingdom of God on earth. We will tend to their formation and offer oversight with humble authority and a spirit of service."

We spent much of this last year determining how to continue our work during a global pandemic. While it hasn't been ideal, God has brought us through this season, and candidates for ministry continue to flourish and serve in the church. We can tell the story of the work of the Board of Ordained Ministry in so many ways. Recognizing a few of the numbers is a start.

- 35 people attended Candidacy Summit in 2020-2021 as their first step into vocational ministry.
- 36 or more certified candidates in 2020-2021
- 21 people attending licensing school
- \$16,351 given in financial support to Course of Study students
- \$154,685 given in financial support to seminary students.
- 23 people commissioned as provisional members
- 26 continuing as Provisional Members
- 7 people to be ordained and welcomed into full membership
- 2 people received by transfer from another annual conference

Thanks to each of the Board of Ordained Ministry members,

members of each of the District Committees on Ordained Ministry, and the Clergy Excellence Staff for excellent work in unusual circumstances this year.

## **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 a 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 2020, we welcomed four new clergy to join 11 others. One pastor, Rev. Kyle Reynolds, graduated from five years in the program. Nearly everything this year moved into the virtual sphere, as did everything else. 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, almost entirely via Zoom. While typically mentoring pairs have the opportunity to apply for a continuing education grant for a shared experience within their two years in Phase 1, those plans were postponed for an unknown time.

The Phase 2 pastors (those in the last three years of the program) met with Rev. Nancy Lambert virtually for a Clergy Community of Practice. Plans for a Wesleyan Heritage Pilgrimage in the Southeast part of the U.S. that the Phase 2

pastors were supposed to take have been put on hold. One of the pastors, Rev. Daniel Kipp (Elkhorn Hills UMC, Elkhorn, Nebraska), was able to gather a committee to start 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. Five new pastors will join the TiM Program starting in July 2021. Two pastors, Rev. Isaac Chua and Rev. Kayla Mangrich, will graduate from the TiM Program in June 2021.

In July 2020, the TiM Board welcomed a new Chair, Rev. Jenny Collins, added one new member and one completed his term. One member stepped away from the Board mid-year. Because the TiM Program is completing its 10th year, the Board is enacting an assessment of pastors who graduated from the program. We anticipate being able to determine the actual impact of the program and also identify possible shifts that may be necessary for the future success of the program.

## **GENERAL BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION & MINISTRY (GBHEM)**

Submitted by Rev. Greg Bergquist,  
General Secretary

The General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM) announced its blueprint for the future, "Our Road Reimagined," in 2020. The plan details the realignment of GBHEM's culture and organizational structure to allow the agency to further its mission in a more effective, innovative and sustainable way. The creation of the plan was the result of a months-long process to survey and remodel the agency

to set a course that is more collaborative, diverse and equitable at all levels.

While our approach is transforming, GBHEM's mission is not. We remain committed to helping United Methodist lay and clergy leaders discover, claim and flourish in God's call on their lives.

Over the last quadrennium, the world, The United Methodist Church and our constituents' needs have changed considerably. To address those shifting needs, we are adapting culturally, strategically and operationally to successfully carry out our important mission and ministry well into the future. We are developing an innovation mindset we know will be important moving forward.

- Last fall, GBHEM began carefully redesigning our organization to transition to a more cross-functional culture with three primary areas of focus: Constituent Relations and Services; Product Innovation and Implementation; and Administrative Relations and Services. This structure is allowing us to be more effective, agile and sustainable.
- Further, these changes are aligning our Ordained Ministry and Higher Education teams strategically, creating more intentional collaborations, and building greater connections between the Church's pastoral and academic ministries.
- The agency's realignment also includes initiatives to reinvigorate our commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, and further strengthen our global focus. Our new structure opens the door for fresh opportunities, collaborations and partnerships and becoming more entrepreneurial and creative in our approach.

GBHEM looks confidently to the future. We are taking bold steps to remain good stewards and evolve in service to Christian leaders in a significant way throughout the Church, the Academy and the world.

Regardless of the shifts and changes we are all experiencing, the same spirit of service and leadership that first inspired John Wesley lives on in each of us. We have been called in new and transformative ways. GBHEM is excited to share more with you in the months ahead. We invite you to connect and collaborate.

## **UNITED METHODIST COMMUNICATIONS**

In 2020, United Methodist Communications celebrated 80 years of communication ministry!

It was a year dominated by a global pandemic and our agency pivoted to respond to all levels of The United Methodist Church. Left wondering what to do and how to do it, church leaders turned to UMCom for information, resources and training.

We quickly developed resources, training, grants and technology solutions to help churches adapt to this changing landscape. With new courses on digital ministry, online training doubled. By offering 1000 Zoom licenses, we helped churches adapt to virtual worship and offered sermon by phone services.

As the worship experience changed, we created a growing list of churches conducting services online. Coupled with Find-a-Church, millions of page views showed us that people yearned for spiritual fulfillment.

When people felt isolated, they turned to our social media channels. We reached 78 million people and experienced a 37

percent increase in engagement.

We also worked directly with 2,500 churches to support their outreach in unique ways, including granting branded items that promoted love and understanding.

When giving decreased, we created new resources and training – which resulted in a more than 40 percent increase in giving-resource downloads.

Across all our channels, pandemic-related stories permeated our content. UMC.org crafted dozens of pandemic-related features and collaborated with Discipleship Ministries to produce a virtual Easter choir. For UM News' 1.7 million users, it was the top story. Covid 19 helped to drive a near 3-fold increase in ResourceUMC users.

And, UM Connect – our mass-messaging system – was used to send and receive nearly 540 thousand messages of health and hope in 11 countries...including the U.S.

Our national advertising campaign pivoted to portray the care and compassion happening throughout the church, creating 234 million impressions.

But, in the midst of all this, racial tensions in the U.S. exposed the same concerns within our denomination. In a multi-level church initiative, we developed messaging and content- while facilitating dialogue to work toward racial justice.

We continued to build our capacity to communicate in the languages of the church and provide easily accessible content in those languages. Collectively, we posted over 700 stories, translated resources and developed multi-media content in Spanish, Korean Portuguese and French, alone. We shared messages of hope and evangelism through advertising in Nigeria and Cote d'Ivoire and assisted UMC-operated radio stations in Africa.

In 2020, United Methodist Communications engaged people with the story of God's work in the world, equipped the Church at all levels and claimed our role as the strategic communications and marketing agency.

Now, that's the Power of Communication!

## CONGREGATIONAL EXCELLENCE

Rev. Nathan Stanton, Director of Congregational Excellence, Connectional Ministries, and New Church Development

The 2020-21, ministry year for the Great Plains has been an adventure, to be sure. The pandemic has upended life around the world and in the church. Many of the ministry highlights from this past year have been the result of the adaptation of churches and ministries in this dangerous, deadly and challenging time. The Congregational Excellence team has continued our commitment to the broader mission field through our collective mission, vision, and covenant.

The Great Plains Congregational Excellence Department's vision is "On the adventure to resource the Great Plains mission field."

The mission of the team is "To identify, steward, and deploy multiple resources to help the church make disciples for Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world."

### **Highlights from the team this year:**

*Sara Shaw – Camping Ministry Coordinator* -- Great Plains Camps' purpose is to develop Christian spiritual leaders, provide intentional places apart to encounter God, extend genuine Christian hospitality and community, nurture Christian faith and discipleship, teach creation care and appreciation, collaborate with United Methodist Churches

and agencies, inspire and equip guests to do love and justice.

Rev. Dr. Kalaba Chali – Mercy and Justice Coordinator -- The purpose of the Mercy and Justice Team is to equip and empower churches in the work of mercy and justice ministries. In 2017 the team established a strategic plan to increase the percentage of churches involved in progress-oriented justice ministries by ten percent over a five-year period. From this aim, our key initiative for “the Doing Justice Initiative,” launched in February 2020. To date, we have increased the number of churches involved in justice ministries by two percent and we have created the pathway for growth by working in partnership with the Direct Action Research Training Center (DART) and the Western Organization of Resource Councils (WORC), the Great Plains Conference has committed \$2.1 million of seed money to build six new nonprofit organizations over a five-year period to assist churches in living out God’s call to justice. The first two DART nonprofit organizations have now launched in the Kansas City area with 14 United Methodist Churches and 31 additional congregations participating to this point in Johnson and Wyandotte counties. In Nebraska, WORC has completed a statewide assessment of needs and opportunities, identified three potential cities for establishing the first local chapters, and hired their first staff person who began work on April 19.

Leadership Development and Education -- In other efforts, the team continues to support our social justice internship program for young adults, the Micah Corps. This summer we will have six interns from Conway Springs, Hays, Hebron, Hiawatha, Humbolt, Lincoln, Wichita and several with international experiences from Ethiopia, South Korea, Ukraine, and Zimbabwe.

International Mission Partnerships -- We celebrate and continue our mission partnerships with the Methodist Church of Haiti, the United Methodist Church of Nigeria and the Zimbabwe East Annual Conference. Through your financial support, we are focusing our efforts on scholarships for young people these countries. A Zimbabwean orphan from Old Mutare just graduated with a Bachelor of Sciences in Agriculture, three Nigerian orphans from Jalingo

who are attending Africa University in Zimbabwe are back in January for a yearlong internship and six students from Lagonave, Haiti are pursuing their college education in Port-au-Prince.

Rev. Hollie Tapley – Disaster Response Coordinator -- 2020  
Disaster Response Report for Congregational Excellence -  
When 2020 rang in, none of us ever dreamed that our biggest disaster would be a pandemic. Even in the worst of the pandemic, your Disaster Response Ministry made a difference: Donated 2,860 N95 masks and 433 Tyvek suits to nine counties and two hospitals in Kansas. Shared 165 gallons of FEMA donated hand sanitizer to Bartlett & West, and 110 gallons with Washburn University. Entered into a partnership with the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) to provide our Kansas United Methodist Churches as free covid testing sites. The Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services joined KDHE with offering free BinaxNOW rapid covid testing kits to any United Methodist Church in the Great Plains Conference. We also continued to help homeowners in the State of Nebraska for the 2019 flooding. Because of your generous support, in 2020 we provided \$279,555.29 to survivors through grants and volunteer work.

Shane Warta – Lay Leadership Development Coordinator  
-- Lay Servant Ministries again took part in creating the 2021 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 are recruited to support the goals of identifying potential leaders and cultivating them into leadership roles, strengthening the clergy/laity partnership, and exploring one's own personal spiritual life and practices. The Summit this year was entirely virtual and served at least 260 lay persons. Under the training umbrella, and direction, of Lay Servant Ministries continues to be Certified Lay Ministry. We celebrate the 30 individuals who lead congregations through worship and care. There are five individuals who are completing CLM certification and another

5 who are starting course requirements. We lift up these individuals in prayer and are grateful for their ministry.

Rev. Melissa Gepford – Intergenerational Ministry Coordinator

-- In 2020, Intergenerational Discipleship began a two-year contract with Ministry Architects, a leading consulting firm to help churches and conferences build and create sustainable ministry systems for Kids and Youth. This contract includes a conference-wide Kids and Youth Ministry assessment, coaching, cohort training, a vision summit, equipping events, and workshops. We have a fantastic team of our conference's own Kids and Youth Ministry leaders working alongside Ministry Architects to design a sustainable structure for conference-level youth and kids ministry. At our virtual Vision Summit in March 2021, Kids and Youth Workers, Cabinet members, and key conference staff collaborated to name our Values and Goals for the coming years.

Values: [https://docs.google.com/document/d/1ORNb16Xu-wXrt2ipPqIp-bKDs\\_AwaRcx6mhn5PnkOAU0/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1ORNb16Xu-wXrt2ipPqIp-bKDs_AwaRcx6mhn5PnkOAU0/edit?usp=sharing)  
Goals: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Y1QX7FksCBYt-vk-Ahvz3shdBOH9qIB4OMWcpuZyPbFo/edit?usp=sharing>

Rev. Nicole Conard – Campus and Young Adult Leadership Development Coordinator -- Vital Congregations –

Overseeing lay leadership, multi-ethnic partnerships, congregational vitality processes and intergenerational discipleship, Vital Congregations offers coaching, grants, and resources to help congregations take the next faithful steps. Readiness 360 is an online survey tool offered free for churches to discover how to multiply missional impact, creating a vision for next steps in a congregation. [www.greatplainsumc.org/readiness-360](http://www.greatplainsumc.org/readiness-360). Grants for congregations are available at [www.greatplainsumc.org/grants](http://www.greatplainsumc.org/grants)

**Campus Ministries** – The Great Plains UCMC Board gathers data, analyze, hear stories of transformation, and offers grants to 14 campus ministries: 4 United Methodist Colleges and 10 campus ministries at secular schools. Connect with a campus ministry geographically near your congregation who are reaching students with God's grace. Twice a year intentional

conversation with district superintendents, local boards, campus ministers and liaisons convene to review the financial, administrative, and missional purposes of each ministry and celebrates how students are coming to know God's amazing grace. If a congregation wants to partner with a campus nearby where there is not a current campus ministry, contact the Great Plains UMCM Board for opportunities to connect and apply for a matching campus – church connection grant.

*Donna Ernest – Congregational Excellence Administrative Assistant* – Donna Ernest is in her third year with Congregational Excellence. She masterfully manages and coordinates seven full-time portfolios for the team.

## **VITAL CONGREGATIONS TEAM**

Rev. Dr. Trudy Kenyon Anderson, Chair

Fulfilling the purpose of the Board of Discipleship ¶630, Board of Laity ¶631, Disability Concerns ¶653, Parish and Community Development ¶633.5, and Young Adults ¶650 (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 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.

The Vital Congregations Team oversees and helps to guide the work of four general areas: organizing, equipping and launching laity; helping congregations reach their full potential by providing resources and grants to overcome financial barriers; ensuring sufficient resources to support intergenerational ministries; and resourcing ethnic ministries throughout the conference through grant funding and by serving in a board capacity.

The following represent our current, short-term, and long-term goals:

- Promote a better storytelling process to capture and share conference-wide narratives
- Ensure a minimum of 30% of funding resources reach ethnic ministries and provide companion support to ensure success
- Streamline communications and clarify expectations for grant compliance
- Promote greater lay involvement in networks including children and youth representation
- Complete work with Ministry Architects
- Boost Readiness 360 participation
- Continue to support networks by providing tools for assessment and vitality

## **NEW CHURCH DEVELOPMENT**

Rev. Nathan Stanton

The Great Plains New Church Development Board consists of these board members:

Executive Team: Rev. Dr. Dennis Ackerman, Chair, Rev. Patrick

McCloughlin, Vice-Chair, Pastor Mandy Barkhaus, Secretary, and Kim Whitehouse, Lay Representative, Ex-Officio: Rev. Nathan Stanton, Ex Officio, Dir. of Congregational Excellence, DCM, and New Church Starts, Rev. Dr. Mitch Reece, Cabinet Rep., Scott Brewer, Board Treasurer

Board Membership: Rev. Dr. Charles Murithi, Denise Sherman, Beverly Benson, Rev. Alan Gager, Ron Christensen, Dave Rock, Hector Sanchez and Rev. Curt Magelky

### **Re-Imagining Innovations and Planting**

GP NCD opened up 2020 looking to reimagine a process and culture of planting in the Great Plains, as the 20 by 2020 plan wrapped up during that year. A retreat was held with Dr. Paul Nixon just before the pandemic shut things down. The board was able to affirm on innovation in the process for assisting planters to have a healthier start to innovating by testing their ideas. This process is called Innovation Coaching, and for the first year, three new innovators were funded and were part of an eight-person cohort led by Nixon. The cohort included innovators from Oklahoma and Arkansas. With year one almost completed these people will now have a second year working on these projects with Nixon and their colleagues. A second cohort will be set to go in August following a shark tank for new projects before the board.

### **Planter Incubator Goes Online**

A successful new fully online approach to the Great Plains Planter Incubator was created this year in light of the pandemic. Thirty-three clergy and laity, participated in this year's session which included sessions on: Developing a Leadership Pathway, with Kelly Brown and Ken Willard, Developing a Ministry Action Plan with Dr. Iosmar Alvarez, Asset Based Community Development Innovating with Adam Barlow-Thompson and, Fresh Expressions with Matt Lake, and Online Planting, Fresh Expressions, and Discipleship, with Jason Moore and Rosario Picardo. Two extra sessions were done as well. Cultural Intelligence with Stephanie Moore Hands and DISC personality inventory with Rev. Marcee

Binder. Each of these individuals had their opportunity to pitch ideas before the NCD board.

Great Plains Current New Church Plants (\*Denotes completed funding):

Wichita, Heart of Christ UMC – Ronda Kingwood

\*Olathe Common Grace UMC – Rev. Dr. Nanette Roberts, Sr. Pastor, Rev. Kyle Reynolds, plant pastor

Kansas City, Ushindi UM Fellowship – Joseph Ogole, Pastor

Kansas City, Agua de la Roca – Rev. Elmer Fugon Armijo

Omaha, Iglesia Comunitaria – Juan Carlos Veloso, Pastor

Lincoln, Neighbors – Trever Rook, Pastor

\*Lincoln, ConnectioN Point – Richard Randolph, Sr. pastor, Beth Graverholt, plant pastor

2021 New Church Development Launches:

Topeka, Café Quetzal, Rev. Christine Scott-Potter

St. Paul's UMC, Benson, NE, Multi-Ethnic Outreach, Rev.

Stephanie Ahlschwede, Sr. pastor, Rev. Andrew Finch, outreach associate pastor

2020-22 Innovation Coaching Projects:

Topeka, Tabernacle and Table, Marshall Larson, pastor

La Cygnes, Food Closet and Evangelism Outreach, Velma Tim, pastor

2021-23 Innovation Coaching Projects:

TBA

Great Plains New Church Development, inc. 2020-21

Expenditures:

2020 NCD Funding:

\$43,708 total pastor training (Incubator and coaching)

\$29,454 Fresh Expression/Innovation grants to existing churches (Innovation Grants and Coaching)

\$938, 338 paid out in 20 by 2020 grants (7 churches)

1 new church start in 2020 (Ushindi UM Fellowship, KCK)

## GREAT PLAINS UNITED METHODIST CAMPS INC.

Rev. Bill Ritter, chair

In ordinary times this report would tell of the thousands of children and youth who attended our camps at Horizon, Chippewa, Lakeside, Fontanelle and Norwesca and the hundreds who gave their lives to Christ at camp. As we all know, the past year has been anything but ordinary. Our camps devised ways to continue to be in ministry despite not having traditional activities. Through generosity of our donors and the Payroll Protection Plan, we were able to keep staff in place and keep facilities in good repair.

During the past year Great Plains Camping, Inc., worked on some very necessary tasks. A COVID-19 protocol has been developed and approved by the board. We also have revised and approved an employee handbook for all staff in camping ministry. New site directors were hired at Camp Fontanelle and Camp Lakeside. Alyssa Downs starts as Lakeside May 1 and Ryan Siver started at Fontanelle April 1. We all are thankful for Trent Meyer of Fontanelle and Ross Janovec of Lakeside for their faithful service.

Some highlights and examples of camping ministry during the pandemic include:

### Fontanelle

- Started \$2,700,000 building project
- 42 families served through family escapes
- 300 kids in virtual camp experiences
- Camp in a Box

### Horizon

- Donated food and bedding to local community
- Established campership fund to help send kids to camp
- Provided spaces for families and small groups to experience the outdoors

#### Chippewa

- Traveling Chippewa Experience in many UM Churches
- Generated over \$100,000 through Sustaining Matching Fundraiser
- Over \$700,000 in repairs from 2019 storm
- Camp in a Box

#### Lakeside

- Over 300 Camp in a Box distributed
- Lay Speaker School
- Family Retreats
- Improvements to site

#### Norwesca

- Online camp with 1,600 hits
- Worked with Health Department to provide Quarantine space
- Community garden
- Pastor retreat

## **GREAT PLAINS UNITED METHODIST CAMPUS MINISTRY, INC.**

Rev. April Wegehaupt, Chair

Gathering in worship, service, study and fellowship is the approach that our Great Plains campuses are seeking to follow. This approach mirrors that of John and Charles Wesley in their “holy club” at Oxford.

The Great Plains Campus Ministry sites have their own “holy clubs” that take different forms depending on their particular settings. Our campus ministers are missionaries who must learn the cultures in their ministry locations. They learn the culture of each campus site and provide ministry opportunities to reach the students where they are, thus providing an avenue for the students to grow as disciples. In a normal year, this is not always an easy task.

This last year's pandemic added another layer for each campus ministry site to work through. Social distancing, school closings, technology, endless zoom meetings, and budget issues have been just a few additional challenges our ministry sites have faced this year. Each of our ministry sites did not stop leading their "holy clubs"; instead, they adapted to the societal shifts that were continually changing.

The GPUMCM Board has worked to address concerns of adequate funding for ministry sites. We have developed a flexible system that enables the effective evaluation of each site. This system captured the adaptability necessitated by the pandemic. Our adopted philosophy for ministry is, "Campus Ministry is a movement of grace empowering students to live transformed lives to transform the world."

The following steps demonstrate how the GPUMCM Board is working to live into its 2021 vision:

- We conducted site visits with district superintendents, UCMCM board representative, conference staff, local board representative, campus minister and students.
- We invited Great Plains churches to share information about their college students with us and to share information about our UM campus ministries with their congregations and students.
- We used technology to conduct all of our meetings in order to continue doing the work before us. We anticipate resuming in-person meetings with campus ministers and the UMCUM board members in 2021-22. Our meetings, whether in person or virtual, enable us to work towards being the most effective we can be with conference resources.
- We have been living into our peer-learning modules and identifying ways to incorporate best practices from each of the sites.
- We are utilizing our new rubric that was established for end-of-the-year site visits and grant requests. This rubric includes campus 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 or relationship with UM churches, innovation and risk taking, experiencing self-sufficiency and strength of self-government.

The Great Plains Annual Conference 10 campus ministries and four United Methodist schools:

United Methodist Schools – Nebraska Wesleyan University (Lincoln), Kansas Wesleyan University (Salina), Baker University (Baldwin City, Kansas) and Southwestern College (Winfield, Kansas).

Our Great Plains United Methodist Campus Ministries are present at University of Nebraska-Lincoln, University of Nebraska-Omaha, University of Nebraska-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)

How important is campus ministry? Consider these statistics:

- The current generation of college students is the largest since the Baby Boom but has the lowest percentage of individuals to grow up in a church home.
- Approximately 80% of college students have never had significant church experience.
- More significant life choices including vocation, lifestyle, relationships and the role of faith are made during college than any other stage of life.

We are at a time in history when people are more sensitive to spirituality, and this is very true when it comes to our college campuses. Many students say they are searching for a purpose in life or that they have discussions about the meaning of life with friends, and similar numbers have high

expectations that college will help them develop emotionally and spiritually.

What a great opportunity for the United Methodist Church, through our campus ministries and UM related colleges, to have an effect on the lives of these students!

At the core of all United Methodist campus ministries are these values: Inviting, equipping and sending. There is a strong desire for students to know the all-encompassing love of God. Through a personal invitation, students practice a life of faith in an authentic community, living out what it means to be a disciple of Christ. Equipping provides opportunities for students to become growing, serving, learning, and leading disciples in the United Methodist tradition.

Discipleship happens through hospitality, worship, service, generosity and faith-forming relationships and by helping students acknowledge and respond to their unique God-calling in both vocations and ministry in the church. Sending embodies a hope for the future of the United Methodist Church as we raise up a new generation of disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

## **MERCY AND JUSTICE**

### **MERCY AND JUSTICE TEAM**

Rev. Sarah Marsh, chair

The purpose of the Mercy and Justice Team is to equip and empower local congregations in the work of mercy and justice ministries. In 2017 we established a vision plan with one central measurable outcome: “to increase the percentage of local congregations involved in progress-oriented justice ministries by 10% over a five-year period.” From this aim, our key initiative for the Great Plains Conference, the Doing Justice Initiative, launched in February 2020. To date, we have increased the number of churches involved in justice ministries by 2%. And while it will take more time to meet the

10% mark, we have created the pathway for growth through this initiative. We believe that when we reach our goal, we will see the culture of our conference shift to reflect more fully God's mission of both mercy and justice.

### **The Doing Justice Initiative**

In partnership with two national experts in community change, the Direct Action Research Training Center (DART) and the Western Organization of Resource Councils (WORC), the Great Plains Conference has committed \$2.1 million of seed money to build six new non-profit organizations over a five year period to assist churches in living out God's call to justice. You can hear Bishop Saenz tell the story of how this transpired through the video testimony he shared in February 2021 at the DART Clergy Conference. (Minute 48 on Day 3). [https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLQ\\_IX1IPrsx\\_UNW-cFGCffnzPmD9WfOKXS](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLQ_IX1IPrsx_UNW-cFGCffnzPmD9WfOKXS)

The first two DART non-profit organizations have launched in the Kansas City area with 14 United Methodist Churches and 31 additional congregations participating to this point in Johnson and Wyandotte Counties. Learn more in this article. Hays, Hebron, Hiawatha, Humbolt, Lincoln, Wichita, and several with international experiences from Ethiopia, South Korea, Ukraine and Zimbabwe.

We celebrate, as well, our continued partnerships with the Methodist Church of Haiti, the United Methodist Church of Nigeria, and the Zimbabwe East Annual Conference. Through your financial support, we celebrate the graduation of Sarudzai Manhando from Fairfield Homes (Orphanage at Old Mutare), Zimbabwe, who completed a Bachelor of Sciences in Agriculture this year. In Port-au Prince, Haiti, six students from Lagonave continue their education in nursing, economics, teaching and engineering. And the three students from Nigeria's Jalingo Orphanage who are attending Africa University are back in Nigeria for a year-long internship working with communities that raised them. Our support for

high school and technical college education for youth from Jalingo Orphanage also continues.

We remain committed to raising up leaders for the church and the world.

## **DISASTER RESPONSE**

Kerry Herkleman, Chair

“Now when Jesus saw the crowds, He had compassion for them because they were troubled and helpless ...”

Matthew 9:36 F

The Disaster Response Team is transforming the world for Jesus Christ by responding to disasters with compassion and care. Not only do we want survivors to have a “safe, secure, and sanitary” home following a disaster, it is our heart’s desire for homeowners and their families to see the presence of Christ and the Church, to experience hope, and to encounter the grace of Jesus Christ.

When 2020 rang in, none of us ever dreamed that our biggest disaster would be a pandemic. In the early days as hospitals and emergency managers were scrambling to locate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), our team decided to donate what we had in stock, saving only enough to take care of our volunteers for a few days in case of a natural disaster. In all we were able to donate 2,860 N-95 masks and 433 Tyvek suits to nine Kansas counties and two hospitals. FEMA provided us with 330 gallons of hand sanitizer. We shared 165 gallons with Bartlett & West and 110 gallons with Washburn University. We saved some for conference employees to have around the office and for guests to use as they entered.

As the pandemic continued to challenge us all, Bishop Saenz instructed our ministry to offer our United Methodist Churches to assist the Kansas Department of Health and

Environment (KDHE) and the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (NDHHS) with COVID testing. KDHE accepted our offer, and we entered a partnership with them in late January 2021. As of this writing, four of our churches have been serving as testing facilities since the end of February 2021. Also, of this writing, the onboarding process is taking place for several more of our Kansas United Methodist Churches to be in ministry in this unique way.

Due to the overwhelming success of our partnership with Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) has a supply of BinaxNOW tests that it can distribute at no cost to Great Plains UMC churches. BinaxNOW test kits require no additional equipment, provide results in 15 minutes, and are an effective option to quickly identify whether an individual is infectious. The test kits can be used to rapidly test symptomatic individuals, provide real-time input to mitigate the risk of large social gatherings by identifying individuals who pose a transmission risk, and/or offer scalable testing for recurrent screening programs. For interested churches, contact our Conference Disaster Response Coordinator, Rev. Hollie Tapley at [htapley@greatplainsumc.org](mailto:htapley@greatplainsumc.org).

And if this is not showing you our passion for ministry – we continued to provide grant assistance following the Nebraska 2019 Floods, and other natural disasters that happened in 2020. Because of your generous support, in 2020 we provided \$279,555.29 to survivors of disasters within the Great Plains Conference.

# GENERAL BOARD OF GLOBAL MINISTRIES – FROM EVERYWHERE TO EVERYWHERE

[www.umcmmission.org](http://www.umcmmission.org)

Jerry Feese, Conference Secretary of Global Ministries  
In 2020 churches and individuals in the Great Plains  
Conference gave 753 gifts totaling \$510,108.21 to General  
Board of Global Ministries (GBGM) Advance projects.

### GIVING SUMMARY

**Donations From:**

203 Churches	\$420,195.81
Individuals	<u>89,912.40</u>
Total	\$510,108.21

**Donations To:**

15 Missionaries	\$18,857.12
50 Advance Projects	189,894.33
18 GBGM & UMCOR Special Focuses	<u>301,356.76</u>
Total	\$510,108.21

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.

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](mailto:feedell@sunflower.com).

## Great Plains Conference Missionaries

Sandra Kay Raasch, missionary serving Belize-Honduras,  
Advance #15075Z

Koni Purscell, Church and Community Worker serving Big  
Stone Gap District UMC, VA, Advance #982931

Rev. Sergio Felipe Tristan, serving National Plan for Hispanic/  
Latino Ministries. Rev. Tristan ended his missionary service on  
06/30/2020.

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.umc-  
mission.org/give-to-mission/about-the-advance](http://www.umc-mission.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](https://www.umcmission.org/serve-with-us/global-mission-fellows)

## PEACE WITH JUSTICE MINISTRIES

Andrea Paret, peace with justice coordinator

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

We yearn to be able to go about our lives in peace and harmony, to do the things we enjoy with our families and friends and not be confronted with traumatic news. All of us human beings, made in the image of God and beloved children of God, no matter where we are from, no matter what our skin color is, yearn to be able to care for our children and not fear for their safety or fear that we will not be able to provide for them. But too many in our own country and around the world live in constant uncertainty and fear. God calls us to work towards the beloved community where everybody can live an abundant life.

We still live under the COVID-19 pandemic which is affecting certain groups of people, among them people of color, much more severely than others. And millions of people live in the midst of war and violence. Millions of people are displaced worldwide, desperately seeking refuge.

Amos shares God's call for us, "Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream." (Amos 5:24) God is not calling us to work for a few drops of water, a trickle, but the vision is a flowing river.

May we each individually and in our faith communities pray and discern how we can work for justice. May we engage in respectful conversations and learn to really listen to each other. May we allow voices to be heard from those who come with different experiences and whose voices are too often drowned out or ignored. And then let's act.

Many laypersons and clergy across our conference are continuing the work for justice to help bring about God's kingdom here on earth. There are times when we feel overwhelmed with the darkness of this world. But thankfully we can be strengthened and renewed through our relationship with God and Christ. We do not have to solve all the problems of the world. But God calls us each to do our part.

Over the summer, PWJ Ministries connected with the Micah Corps interns. Even though they were not able to travel across our conference, they shared with many churches during worship and Sunday school classes.

Peace with Justice Ministries is involved in the work of the Anti-Racism Task Force that was formed last summer under the umbrella of the Mercy & Justice Team with the goal of working towards dismantling racism. I am also taking part in a statewide collaboration group in Nebraska advocating for the safety and dignity of meatpacking workers. The majority of these essential workers are immigrants and refugees who are working hard to keep our food supply functioning.

This past year was a challenging year with many people losing their jobs or having their hours cut, with medical bills and so much more. We are thankful that nevertheless churches in all but one district participated in the Special Offering for Peace with Justice Sunday in 2020. Half of the offerings stay in our conference and half go to the General Board of Church and Society for grants to projects working on peace with justice around the world.

This year's Peace with Justice Special Sunday is scheduled for May 30 (first Sunday after Pentecost) but each congregation can choose a Sunday that works for them.

"As disciples of Christ, we are called to love our enemies, seek justice, and serve as reconcilers of conflict. We must insist that the first moral duty of all nations is to work together to resolve by peaceful means every dispute that arises between or among them." — United Methodist Social Principles, ¶165.C

## **HOLY LAND TASK FORCE**

Carol Ekdahl Garwood, chairperson

The resolution "Christians in the Holy Land," passed at the 2015 Annual Conference, called for the creation of a task force to review and research actions that can be taken to

respond to requests by our UMC missionaries and our Palestinian sisters and brothers in Christ to formulate recommendations for our Great Plains Conference delegates to General Conference.

The goal is “to reject all acts of aggression and violence, to respect the equality and dignity of all the region’s people, and to forge solutions based on the principles of international laws and human rights.”

The task force has been offering educational events about the current situation on 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 GPconnect.
- 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.
- Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, we were unable to sponsor any in person events this past year.

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

## **LAY MINISTRY LAY LEADERSHIP**

Lisa Maupin, Conference Lay Leader

It goes without saying that the year 2020 was a challenge on many different levels. Yet amidst the challenges great work happened by laity in the Great Plains. Laity pivoted from how church, mission and justice traditionally happen and opened

themselves up to exploring new ways to engage and participate in being a faith community without walls.

### **Engagement and Learning in a Virtual Setting**

2020 forced the church into the virtual world. Yet in that moment the Conference Lay Leadership team was able to creatively and effectively transform traditionally in person events into a virtual setting. A delayed Annual Conference Laity Session was conducted in the Fall 2020 where laity were able to learn from their peers as ministry stories were shared from across the conference, engage in conversation with the Conference Lay Leadership team and worship together as one faith

community. Other activities included a virtual Potluck for dinner and conversation with each other and a Festival of Booths where laity could visit with ministries from across the conference and gather resources for their local work and churches. We took the expo hall and idea sharing online!

### **Building a New Normal**

The Laity Summit planned in partnership with Great Plains Lay Servant Ministries was also conducted online and challenged laity to “Build a New Normal.” This intentional theme framed learning and conversation about how we can be a foundation for what is to come for laity in their leadership on the local, district and conference levels. The format was a full day of workshops, keynote speaker, Festival of Booths (Part 2) and worship. Participants left the Summit ready to apply what they learned about gospel discipleship, using technology, graceful leadership and breaking down racist systems.

### **Thank you to District Lay Leaders**

The Conference Lay Leadership team offers tremendous thanks to the service of current and previous District Lay Leaders. These individuals have served and represented their districts in a variety of ways and have assisted with advocating for laity and lifting up new lay leadership to the Great Plains Annual Conference.

We learned a lot this year about ourselves, our comfort zones, how to do ministry and build community in new ways and how to take risks. This isn't what we wanted to do but we did it! It was a beautiful and painful process that required grace and creativity. It also launched us to new heights in our ability to develop lay leadership skills through intentional programming, engage Great Plain laity in building a community, and lift up new leaders and leadership teams. 2020 was a challenge but it brought Great Plains Laity a chance to engage in fostering an environment to build a new normal for the local church that isn't confined by walls and limitations.

## **LAY SERVANT MINISTRIES**

Mary Feit, CLSp

The Great Plains Conference Committee on Lay Servant Ministry 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 us to live out our call to mission and ministry. The year 2020 introduced many unusual challenges for our efforts to provide quality training and networking events. The pandemic forced us into the virtual world. Regardless of the many challenges, we did provide 13 educational events throughout the conference. During this time, we all persevered to learn and embrace the virtual world. Plans for training in 2021 number at least 26 events with many more in the planning stages.

Lay Servant Ministries again took part in creating the 2021 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 are recruited to support the goals of identifying potential leaders and cultivating them into leadership roles, strengthening the clergy/laity partnership, and exploring one's own personal

spiritual life and practices. The Summit this year was entirely virtual and served at least 260 lay persons.

We are very grateful for the excellent work done by the Communications Team who accomplish a very professional and informative online Laity Summit. We are grateful to the conference for increasing support of Lay Servant Ministries including conference staff and district administrative assistants who are more engaged in keeping records, issuing letters and certificates of accomplishment, and improving communication among lay persons across the conference.

Under the training umbrella, and direction, of Lay Servant Ministries continues to be Certified Lay Ministry. We celebrate the 30 individuals who lead congregations through worship and care. There are five individuals who are completing CLM certification and another five who are starting course requirements. We lift up these individuals in prayer and are grateful for their ministry.

## **UNITED METHODIST MEN**

George Houle , Director for Men's Ministry

The GP UMM Vision: Building an ongoing relationship between Jesus Christ and men of all ages, inside and outside the church, by mentoring other men and engaging in small groups, recognizing each man's unique fit within the body of Jesus Christ.

1 Thessalonians 5:11 Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.

17 pray continually,

We persevered. We adjusted. We listened, learned and loved in ministry to men, for men and through men in service to His church. Our emphasis was on Connection, Prayer and Making Disciples.

How and what?

**CONNECTION:**

- A major accomplishment was to gather contact information from Conference and District sources of all the men they had in their data bases that were somehow connected to UMM. We gathered it all into a single data base by district and other groupings.
- Using that data base, we Initiated a monthly newsletter. We are also able to connect by district for any special events and to keep everybody informed on what is happening and where.
- Monthly leadership meetings on Zoom.
- Monthly SCJ meetings on Zoom.
- Traveled to Nashville to participate in National Association of Conference Presidents meeting in March. This was our last in-person connection.
- One day strategic planning using Zoom.
- Hosted a Zoom booth at Annual Conference.

**PRAYER:**

- Every Friday night leaders from the SCJ gather for prayer time on Zoom.
- Helped plan a New Year's Eve Watch Night that rolled through each of the 4 US times zones.
- Coordinated with Lisa Maupin as prayer partners presenter during the SCJ time slot.

**MAKING DISCIPLES:**

- Coached Ohio UMM leaders weekly for three months on Wesley Fellowship groups using the Wesleyan Building Brothers process. Our in-person presentation in Ohio was cancelled.
- Mentored on discipleship through Wesley Fellowship using material from Wesley Building Brothers and Rev. Kevin Watson's "The Class Meeting."

## UNITED METHODIST WOMEN

Janice Elmore, President

United Methodist Women is the nation's largest denominational faith-based organization for women and is in its 152nd year of service to women, children and youth around the world. We equip women and girls around the world to be leaders in every aspect of life. We are grateful for our history and how it has revealed that the foundation is built upon the solid rock.

The impact of COVID-19 pandemic disrupted our lives, families and our worship. We recognize that the world has been changed through the experiences of racism, protests, demonstrations, unemployment, social isolation and climate change. We are facing transitional days ahead, but God is still in control and He will see us through.

We have not been able to meet in person, but technology has allowed us to conduct meetings and continue with our services, duties and responsibilities. UMW has turned faith, hope and love into action through spiritual growth, faith talks, social action alerts, service and advocacy, education, the reading program, and the welcome and legacy toolkits.

Every year, members of United Methodist Women raise millions of dollars for national and global mission. Here in the Great Plains Conference, we raise money for our Mission u mission education event, LEAF, the Big Garden, Epworth Village and Della Lamb. We are in mission right here at home.

Assembly happens once every four years and is open to ANY woman who wants to attend. In 2022, thousands of UMW from all across the U.S. and dozens of other countries, will gather in Orlando, Florida, for three days of worship, workshops, fellowship, interactive learning and inspiration.

**The social action priority issues for the quadrennium are:**

**Criminalization of Communities of Color:** Interrupt the School-to-Prison Pipeline: There is an increase in mass incarceration in the United States that disproportionately impacts people of color due to institutionalized racism, racial profiling, and mandatory sentencing. The concept of criminalization refers to the growing number of government policies and practices based on fear that apply punitive laws for largely nonviolent offenses in racially selective ways on whole communities. Black students are disproportionately suspended from class, starting as early as preschool, according to new data from the U.S. Department of Education. United Methodist Women will actively work to dismantle current policies that depict children of color, particularly girls of color, as criminals and that respond with mass profiling, arrest and incarceration.

**Climate Justice: Just Energy 4 All:** While climate change affects everyone, it does not affect everyone equally. The poorest people in industrialized and developing nations suffer the worst effects of the buildup of greenhouse gases in our atmosphere. Women and children comprise an estimated 70% of the world's poor. United Methodist Women calls for sound stewardship of the earth and sound relationships within and between communities, whether local, state, national or international work. We work to provide practical, theologically sound tools to guide and inspire your work, to create a healthier environment locally, nationally and globally.

Past mission priority issues: Economic Inequality, Maternal and Child Health, Human Trafficking, Global Migration, Domestic Violence, Climate Change, Gender Justice, Racial Justice, Economic Justice, Health Care, Food Justice.

# MISSION AGENCIES

## COLLEGES AND 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.

The COVID-19 pandemic brought many challenges within the last year, but our students, faculty and staff have shown tremendous perseverance and we are looking forward to the future. Baker students continued to excel in the classroom, whether that meant virtual or on-site during the pandemic, and on the playing field.

The Rev. Kevin Hopkins is completing his seventh year serving as minister to the university. He is the third minister in Baker's long history. Even in the midst of a global pandemic, spiritual life thrives at Baker. Osborne Chapel is home to many students during Thursday Chapel services, which are student led and spirit filled. 3 Baker students are exploring calls to ministry. The Baker Ambassadors continue to provide a source of spiritual leadership to the university and the surrounding community. The Chapel Praise Band and BU Concert Choir are looking forward to making weekend visits to area churches when the pandemic lifts.

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**

Kansas Wesleyan believes in the UMC commitment to intellectual and spiritual development occurring together, and that education can be a part of the redemptive work of the church. KWU has always focused on holistic, integrated learning, including the combination of academics, co-curricular and extracurricular activities. However, in the last year, the university has given extra focus to developing the student beyond the classroom, in order to help prepare

individuals to effect change in the world around them.

One way that has taken place is through the work of the university's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) efforts. These have been undertaken to ensure that students of all beliefs, creeds, color and gender are represented and welcomed at Kansas Wesleyan. The hiring of Dr. Allen Smith, a local pastor, to lead the Office of Diversity and Student Success, was followed by local school principal Brandon Cheeks and long-time educator Pedro Leite coming on-board. This office's efforts led to an increase in events and representation of students from different backgrounds and cultures. In addition, a campus-wide DEI committee has also initiated recognition of other underrepresented groups during the year. DEI initiatives have also made their way to the classroom as well, helping to make sure that the educational experience at Kansas Wesleyan encompasses everyone.

The mental and spiritual health and development of students has also been a focus this year. The university initiated "Let's Talk," a regular opportunity for students, faculty or staff to speak with a counselor free of charge and confidentially. In addition, a campus dog joined the KWU staff and has been available to help boost the mental and emotional health of everyone on campus, including students.

From a spiritual perspective, campus ministry opportunities continued to grow during the past year. Those included Rise Up!, a partnership with the Department of Music that allowed students to learn the skills necessary to lead worship. Online opportunities were also created, to allow students the option to participate in Campus Ministry, even if they did not feel comfortable attending crowded events (due to COVID-19).

A KWU education leads to the development of well-rounded students like Kelsey Ripperger, a senior, who recently accepted an internship in the Washington, D.C. area. Ripperger is a multi-year honor roll recipient, a letter winner on the volleyball team, past president of the KWU Student

Environmental Club and a member of the Alpha Chi honor society. She also was president of the KWU chapter of Phi Alpha Theta, a resident assistant, a member of student government and a member of the Student-Athlete Advisory Committee. She has also been active in the community, and in fact, was quoted in a Salina Journal story this past Fall regarding efforts with community cleanup activities. Kelsey is a shining example of the result of a Kansas Wesleyan education, a liberally educated leader who can think critically, solve complex problems and demonstrate strong communication skills on route to causing real change in the world around them.

For more information, visit [www.kwu.edu](http://www.kwu.edu). Go Coyotes!

## NEBRASKA WESLEYAN

Nebraska Wesleyan University continues to be a vibrant presence in the Wesleyan spirit as a member of the Great Plains Annual Conference. Our mission calls us 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. We thrive in this mission that guides us in our service every day.

This year we have faced particular challenges due to COVID-19. Our priority this year has been to keep our students, staff and faculty as safe as possible from infection, while maintaining the quality of education that characterizes Nebraska Wesleyan University. Early on we adopted guidelines according to the CDC, creating educational spaces that provided safe social distancing. Every class followed procedures for disinfecting surfaces and every student, staff and faculty member were required to wear face coverings. In order to accomplish the safest possible spaces, we had to learn to deliver education in different ways. We adopted a hybrid educational model where students alternated between in-person and virtual learning. We also

provided on-campus testing for students, particularly for those whose curricular and co-curricular experiences required close contact. Thanks to all of these measures and the investment of the NWU community, we have been able to deliver a quality education with a very low infection rate, much lower than the city of Lincoln.

While tackling the COVID-19 challenge, we have also invested ourselves in dreaming about the future. We are currently dreaming and discerning what God wants us to be as an institution in the years to come. Our new strategic plan is leading us to be more involved in the northeast Lincoln neighborhood and in the Lincoln community as a whole. We are also being drawn to invest in new pedagogies and to take to the next level the way in which we support our students. We are looking at ways in which we can be more faithful to our Diversity, Equity and Inclusion efforts on campus. We are also being called to increase our resources so we can welcome more students to enjoy the Prairie Wolf experience.

COVID-19 has not prevented us from seeking to help our students, staff and faculty in their spiritual development. Although we have needed to adapt the ways in which we connect with the community, we still have had a successful year. We have done three book studies to advance our community's goals to be more inclusive. We have held Bible studies, prayer services and worship services. The significance of our work helping students, faculty and staff continue their discernment has yielded two students, Joshua Seifert and Samantha Redfern, to pursue a career in ministry after graduation. They are part of a group of seven others who have responded to a call to ministry in the last three years.

We are committed that all of our students may find their vocation. That is why we, with the help of the Great Plains Conference, continue to provide our Methodist students with significant scholarship support to help them in their university studies and vocational discernment. During 2020-

21, 134 United Methodist students received \$2,800,670 in scholarships, grants and tuition waivers provided by Nebraska Wesleyan University. This includes 101 students who received \$83,175 in need-based Great Plains United Methodist Scholarships and two ministerial dependent students who received \$35,964 in ministerial discounts. We are grateful for this partnership. We are looking forward to new ways in which we can continue to partner. Together with the Great Plains Conference we are making great leaders for the transformation of our neighborhoods, towns, cities and the world.

## **SOUTHWESTERN**

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.

Southwestern became the first college in Kansas to open for the fall semester by moving students to campus in July to complete a pre-semester quarantine along with faculty and staff. All students, faculty, and staff were tested for the virus upon their return to the campus community and testing continued throughout the semester. By doing so, Southwestern was able to limit and contain the spread of COVID-19. By the end of the fall semester, the college had completed over 6,000 antigen tests on campus. A response team at the college designed and successfully implemented a Fall 2020 plan while welcoming a record-breaking freshman class to campus. Southwestern also modified student life activities, including weekly chapel gatherings and homecoming festivities. The college's commitment to community service was also fulfilled throughout the semester.

The Southwestern College board of trustees voted unanimously to move forward with construction of a new

residence hall. Following action by the 27-member board, design development work began immediately and the facility will open as early as the summer of 2023. The board decision comes on the heels of Southwestern's recent selection by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) for an \$11.66 million financing package through the Rural Development Community Facilities direct loan program to build a new residence hall. Southwestern's full-time enrollment has grown by 35% over the past five years, outperforming the market. State public higher education enrollment has fallen by 5% over the same period. Preliminary drawings of the new residence hall show a 94-bed three-story facility, built on the open lot on the south side of Warren Avenue, diagonally across from Stewart Field House. The conceptual designs include suite-style living targeted to sophomores and juniors; the facility also includes common gathering areas and fitness space for students.

As Southwestern College has promoted social distancing, masks, and hand washing, local music educators at The Community Music School (CMS) at Southwestern College continued to reach and teach young musicians through virtual lessons.

For continuing growth in ministry students are not hindered by time or location—Southwestern College has continuing online education for a range of interests. If you or someone you know is deeply involved in a ministry area as a volunteer or as a part- or full-time staff person, be sure to explore our extensive online certification programs offered by the Institute For Discipleship's BeADisciple.com. These year-long, pay-as-you-go, accredited certifications provide solid theological understanding and practical knowledge to support your ministry. All courses are taught by instructors who have years of on-the-ground experience in their topics of specialization. Since 2007, BeADisciple.com has served more than 14,000 learners worldwide with the highest quality of Christian online education.

The college continues its commitment to secure funds for the improvement of current facilities across campus, including the creation of premier learning spaces in academic buildings and significant renewal work being completed this summer in the residence halls and performing arts buildings. Southwestern is also committed to building a new, additional athletic facility, the DeHaven Center, on the north side of Richard L. Jantz Stadium to accommodate growth in athletics. In support of these campus improvement efforts, Southwestern recently launched its Forward / Now Campaign.

# HEALTH AND WELFARE INSTITUTIONS

## ALDRSGATE 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 117 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.

The start of the year 2020 unexpectedly brought challenges by way of a national health pandemic. The organization was immediately struck by the significant restrictions being placed on senior care living. Our dedicated staff played an extraordinary part in keeping our residents safe and informed while still creatively keeping them connected with loved ones and friends. I am proud of the ways we have shaped the

community together, the ways we have made a vital difference in the lives of our residents. We closed the year at such a profoundly disorienting time which our community will remember long into the future. Many of our milestones and celebrations we were not able to mark together by way of in-person gatherings, but we remained connected through our shared faith and service even when the connection was virtual.

### **New Initiatives**

While the typical hustle and bustle within our community slowed down due to the pandemic, our initiatives to continue to improve on our services did not. We successfully completed numerous capital improvements and renovations across our campus during 2020. We added six new stand-alone age-in-place independent living cottages, with all six being occupied in the first quarter of the new year. We also focused on exterior and interior improvements to much of the property. As we begin the new year, we look forward to even more development as we continue to focus on the growing and changing needs of area seniors.

### **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. Our mission is a challenging one, especially in these difficult times. We were also fortunate to have Topeka-Flint Hills District Superintendent, Rev. Jenny Collins join our Board of Trustees in July 2020.

The organization remains appreciative of the churches in the Great Plains Conference for their continued support of our charitable care program, the Good Samaritan Fund which provided \$529,963 in direct charitable care in 2020. 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 over \$3.4 million in uncompensated care in 2020 making us, once again, Kansas' largest provider of long-term care services under Medicaid.

Our Christian and socially responsible mission will continue as we strive to ensure that seniors of this region receive compassionate, person-centered health care in a warm and welcoming community.

## **EMBER HOPE**

Nickaila Sandate, CEO

EmberHope Youthville continues to focus on the Strategic Plan 2019 – 2023, the purpose of the plan is to guide future priorities and decisions for EmbeHope Youthville during these years. The plan addresses the five strategic focus areas: Board Development, Recruitment, and Retention, Marketing and Communication, Diversifying Funding, and Enhancing Quality Programs. With nearly 7,000 children in the State of Kansas Child welfare system, EmberHope Youthville has implemented a new Rolling Strategic Plan for the fiscal year 2022 – 2025 to address the ever-changing needs of those at risk which will allow for annual adjustments to the strategic plan to meet Client Challenges such as the lack of support services and resources from Mental Health, Crisis Care, Education, Medical, Transitional Living Programs, Restorative Justice, Advocacy, and positive relationships. We will continue to identify focus area objectives and include those in the future planning process.

We are elated to share Pastor Judy Arnold, has joined EmberHope Youthville as Chaplain. Pastor Judy will enhance church and community outreach programs, establish spiritual support education, conduct spiritual education opportunities, develop and implement spiritual programs for the residential children on our campus, offer spiritual guidance to foster families, as well as provide spiritual support to all employees.

EmbeHope Youthville is very excited to share the new Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facility (PRTF), which will open late summer on our campus. The PRTF will serve female youth in Kansas, 12 – 18 years old, who require a high level of care due to mental illness, substance abuse, or severe emotional disturbance. A PRTF is a 24-hour residential facility and is designed to provide an environment with a consistent structure, therapeutic intervention, and stability with a high degree of supervision for the youth. PRTF provides therapeutic services addressing the needs of the entire family to maintain the family unit, thereby avoiding placement of the youth into the child welfare system. PRTF staff will work actively with the family, other agencies, and the community to offer strengths-based, culturally competent, medically appropriate treatment designed to meet the individual needs of the youth. The therapeutic environment is trauma-informed and supported by Evidence-Based Program models such as Trust-Based Relational Intervention®, Motivational Interviewing, and Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy.

We are encouraged by the movement forward over the past year but there is still much to be done. The need for services continues to rise and renovations to the housing cottages for the youth living on campus, built in the 1990s are desperately needed. We continue to rely on the clergy as leaders and ask for their support on behalf of the church to enable us to fulfill our mission.

## **EPWORTH VILLAGE**

Margaret Donovan, CEO

Greetings from Epworth Village headquartered in York, Nebraska! This past year posed many challenges with the sudden onset of the pandemic; it also exemplified staff commitment and care in serving children and families. Our Foster Care and In-home Family Support Services staff maneuvered a 10 week period of providing services and home

## 2021 JOURNAL Reports

visits virtually. Not wanting to create a crisis or hardships for families, our Child Care Center staff took extra precautions and safety measures to remain open for the parents whose livelihood required them to be on site for work. Throughout the rollercoaster in dealing with COVID-19, staff demonstrated a high level of adaptability, resiliency and commitment, both as individuals and as a team. They made many personal sacrifices to keep the children and families as safe as possible. Throughout all this, we were able to serve 103 families, 190 adults, and 172 children ranging from newborns to 19 year olds transitioning to adulthood.

I want to use this opportunity to thank you all for your commitment in supporting Epworth Village this past year. Your generous financial and in-kind donations allowed us to help parents keep their families safe with masks, cleaning supplies, etc. which helped lessen hardships and stress for them. In addition, donations from UMW units and United Methodist Churches helped assist families with basic needs and household items. Around 90% of the families we serve through our In-home Family Services are low-income, with many living at or below the poverty line, so you can see how impactful the donations are for families. After staff have assisted homeless families in securing affordable housing, it is especially heartwarming to be able to help families with basic necessities and items for starting their new household. Thank you for helping these families and supporting the Epworth Village mission. It does take a Village!

We are excited about great things happening in 2021. While maneuvering through the pandemic our board of directors was moving forward in the development of our 2021-2023 strategic plan. The plan focuses on stewardship, sustainability, capacity building, and program growth and development. As part of the plan, the board is looking at the best use for Epworth Village's campus property and working with UMW National Office, which owns the campus property, and other partners on this.

The strategic plan also involves strategies for strengthening organizational infrastructure and capacity in order to situate Epworth Village to continuously be prepared for future opportunities to add programs/services which further improve the lives of children and families. Our focus is on services that provide long-term outcomes for the whole family as the best method to address the needs of at-risk families, children and youth. To expand our capacity we will be adding some new evidence based models and approaches to our services. Staff are excited about being trained in and introducing Motivational Interviewing into our programming this year. We are all looking forward to the future in implementing the strategic vision for Epworth Village.

Here's to an upcoming year filled with hope and healing for families, continued growth and development of the Epworth mission, and bright futures for even more families. Together, we can make this happen! And thank you for being a part of the Epworth Village ministry.

P.S. Don't' forget to mark your calendars for our annual Heart of the Matter fundraiser which is October 15th this year!

## **MINISTRIES WITH THE POOR**

### **BIG GARDEN/UNITED METHODIST MINISTRIES, MISSOURI RIVER DISTRICT**

That 2020 was a challenging year was an understatement. At The Big Garden we responded to unprecedented levels of food insecurity in our community by increasing our capacity to grow food, forging new partnerships to address the increased need and pivoting to provide much of our usual programming in virtual format.

In March of 2020 when quarantines began, the lines at food pantries began to grow at an alarming rate. We recognized that the need for fresh produce would skyrocket and immediately moved to maximize our food production on our urban farm campus and at our community garden network across the city. Many of those gardens are at schools and childcare centers that were closed, and no one was available to plant or maintain those gardens. Our staff began planting those gardens in April and maintained many of them throughout the spring and summer.

We developed a new partnership with the Latino Center of the Midlands, developing an urban agriculture internship that employed 20 young people from South Omaha. These interns learned how to grow fresh produce and helped manage dozens of gardens in the community. We also partnered with a farmer who allowed us to use two acres of his farm exclusively for vegetable production. By the end of the growing season we had delivered almost 15,000 pounds of fresh produce to people in need in our community.

With schools and childcare centers closed, our educators pivoted and became adept at developing videos and online gardening lessons. We send kids home with grow kits and vegetable seedlings so they could still have hands on gardening experiences even though they couldn't be at school. Our educators developed a whole suite of video lessons that engaged students in gardening and cooking activities while they were home. All of these videos are available for free on our website.

In addition to our work in Omaha, we continued to expand our garden network across the Conference. Late in 2019 we hired a Big Garden Kansas coordinator. We expanded our garden network in Kansas and began planting small orchards at several locations. We plan for even more growth in our Kansas operations in 2021.

In this year of illness and uncertainty, we are grateful for

the faithful support of United Methodists across the Great Plains Conference. Your continued financial support for The Big Garden has meant that thousands of our neighbors have had fresh food to eat when they might not have otherwise. We continue to be grateful for the commitment of the Great Plains United Methodist Conference to addressing hunger.

## OGDEN FRIENDSHIP HOUSE OF HOPE

Cathy Austin, Director

### Food Pantry and Meal Programs

Number of Clients that received food from our pantry: **242**  
(individuals)

Total Number of Household: **126**

Total number of meals served: **2,840**

- Due to the ongoing pandemic we decided to close on March 17, 2020. We made sure that we were still able to provide food to our clients that rely on our food pantry. We did a call ahead service where the clients have to call and set an appointed time and day to pick up the food that we pre-packed based on their family composition. We are very blessed to have received a lot of prayers and financial support from different organizations during this time. We had an opportunity to start a feeding program to support more families specially those who have kids at home by packing sack lunches to be given away by the local school and Ogden Community Center. We packed a total of 1,766 lunch bags as of December 2020.
- We are privilege to work with different entities in the community that we were able to install two blessing boxes here in Ogden. This allow all families and individuals to have access with free food and hygiene items 24/7.
- In the month of August, we were able to continue our Ogden Community Meal, a free home-made dinner for every one every second Monday of the month, after

cancelling it last March due to the pandemic. We are doing take-outs only to keep everyone safe. We served a total of 1,074 meals for the year 2020.

### **Thrift Store Client Log**

**(We were closed form March 17, 2020 to May 21, 2020)**

Total: **1,807** (individuals)

### **Benevolence voucher/ Gas cards**

Gas Vouchers total: **31**

Benevolence voucher total: 7

### **Report of Ogden Mobile Food Pantry**

Total of people received food: **5,415**

Total of Household: **1,216**

Groceries distributed: **75,407 lbs.**

## **IMMIGRANT LEGAL CENTER (JFON)**

Erik Omar, J.D., Executive Director

The unwavering support of the Great Plains Conference, National Justice For Our Neighbors, and United Methodist Committee on Relief allows Immigrant Legal Center (Justice For Our Neighbors – Nebraska) to continue to advocate zealously on behalf of our clients. During 2020, ILC assisted 1,446 persons with immigration legal services and worked on 3,273 cases. Together with community partners, ILC also successfully worked for the passage of LB 518. LB 518 empowers immigrant survivors of violent crime and trafficking by bringing uniformity to how Nebraska law enforcement agencies respond to U- and T- certification requests. (U- or T-certification is necessary to allow

immigrant survivors to apply for visas.) Prior to passage of the bill, depending on the jurisdiction in which the crime occurred, law enforcement's unresponsiveness to certification requests proved a barrier to survivors seeking immigration relief. By requiring uniform and timely responses to U- and T-Visa certification requests, immigrant survivors in Nebraska can now confidently seek the safety of the immigration relief for which they are lawfully entitled.

Client success stories cheered us all during this difficult year. A favorite is a young man who was overjoyed to pick up his lawful permanent resident card. Years earlier he had traveled on his own to the U.S. to be reunited with his mother after a long separation. ILC attorneys helped him file for Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS). This allowed him to live with his mother, study, become the first in his family to finish high school, and earn a full scholarship to college. Upon graduation, he intends to teach in a dual-language program so he can inspire children with similar stories to work towards the same success. We are proud of his accomplishments and are grateful for all those who fund the legal services that make stories like his possible.

ILC adjusted our work in 2020, to safeguard the health of our clients and staff. When immigration-related COVID-19 information became available, staff contacted clients and distributed information through our website and social media. Staff conducted English/Spanish language media interviews and hosted online Q&A sessions to assure immigrants that it was safe to access medical care and to answer questions about COVID relief programs. Five of our seven rural offices are in counties previously identified "hotspots" traced to meat packing facilities. As a trusted resource for immigrant communities across Nebraska, ILC was, and continues to be, uniquely able to answer sensitive questions from immigrants fearing loss of status or deportation as a result of seeking healthcare or other benefits for which they are eligible during the COVID-19 crisis. Immigrant Legal Center thanks the Great

Plains Conference for the continued financial support.

## **UNITED METHODIST OPEN DOOR**

Deann Smith, Executive Director

**It is a vast understatement to say this has been a challenging year!** We have all been impacted by the COVID19 pandemic. Open Door started the fiscal year in October 2019 preparing for typical things like the Turkey Drive, Thanksgiving food distribution, Christmas family adoptions and other end of the year appeals. We celebrated our volunteers with a nice dinner and music gathering. But not long into 2020 we, like many of our churches and ministries, had to learn how to quickly adapt to new COVID19 safety protocols while still trying to respond to the continued needs of those we serve. While many in our community stayed at home to wait it out, we joined the rest of the essential workers and kept serving. Because of your support and donations we kept going! Where it was possible, we met the surge of increased need. In other programs, due to social distancing, the capacities were decreased and we adapted our operations to best serve those we could. Yet, through it all we did it together. Thank you for reaching out with your gifts and support so we could continue to serve God's people, many for the first time, with the most basic of needs in the worst of circumstances. **Over 26,000 unduplicated individuals served in 2020:**

- **Commodity Supplemental Food Program:** 17,769 food boxes served to 2,449 unduplicated elders 60+ years old in 11 South Central Kansas communities.
- **Community Food Ministry:** 25,636 boxes of food served to 6,168 families/13,939 unduplicated individuals who found themselves hungry.
- **Klothes Kloset:** 9,108 families provided free clothing and small household items.
- **Homeless Resource Center:** 1,541 unduplicated homeless individuals provided a safe place to - take showers, use the

restroom, have a meal, receive mail, get medical attention, store their belongings, search for housing, etc.

- **Family Rapid Re-Housing Program:** 42 families/140 individuals found a new home after living on the streets, in an emergency shelter or fleeing domestic violence.
- **Vision Quest:** 66 families/229 individuals were able to avoid homelessness by working this intensive case management program.

### **Advocacy and Education**

In addition to the above programs, Open Door staff served on: the Impact ICT Continuum of Care coalition to end homelessness; The Homeless Prevention coalition to collaborate with other providers on ways to prevent homelessness; and the Mental Health and Substance Abuse Coalition to ensure access to care for persons experiencing these health issues.



1150 N. Broadway  
Wichita, KS 67204

**(316) 866-2000**

GraceMed has clinics in  
Wichita, Topeka, McPherson  
and Clearwater Kansas.

**Mission Statement**

GraceMed is a federally qualified Health Center (FQHC) that provides comprehensive, integrated healthcare encompassing the spiritual, emotional and physical needs of individuals and families in the communities we serve. We show the love of Jesus Christ by providing compassionate, accessible, high-quality health care for residents in the communities we serve. Our patients are able to rely on us for most, if not all the health and care they need. Access is everything at GraceMed and everyone is welcome to it. To learn more visit [www.gracemed.org](http://www.gracemed.org)



**52,849**

Unique Patient visits in 2020



**126,637**

Total clinic visits in 2020



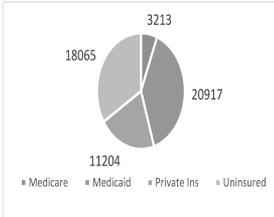
**Service Area Includes:**

- ✓ Sedgwick County
- ✓ McPherson County
- ✓ Shawnee County

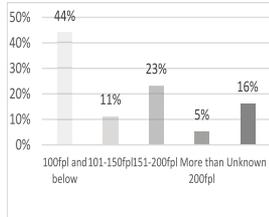
**Services Provided:**

- ✓ Primary/Preventive Care
- ✓ Pediatric Services
- ✓ Pre-natal Services
- ✓ Geriatric Services
- ✓ Behavioral Health
- ✓ Substance Use Disorder/ MAT
- ✓ Optometry Services
- ✓ Podiatry Services
- ✓ Dental Care
- ✓ Diabetic Care/Education
- ✓ Laboratory Services/Diagnostic
- ✓ Pharmaceutical Assistance
- ✓ Health Marketplace
- ✓ KanCare (Medicaid/CHIP) applications
- ✓ Immunizations (all ages)
- ✓ Family Planning/STD Screening
- ✓ Referrals for specialty care

**2019 Patients by Insurance Type**



**2019 Patients by Income Status**



Health centers are consumer-driven and patient-centered organizations that serve as a comprehensive and cost-effective primary health care option for Kansas' most underserved communities. Health centers serve everyone regardless of ability to pay or insurance status. They increase access to health care and provide integrated care services (medical, behavioral, oral and substance abuse) based on the unique needs of the communities they serve.

Health centers provided care to 274,486 Kansans with 869,562 visits in 2019 (5,419 homeless and 6,086 veterans) and delivered more than \$300 million in total economic activity.



COMMUNITY CARE  
NETWORK OF KANSAS  
Health. Equity. Justice.

# SOUTH CENTRAL JURISDICTION

## LYDIA PATTERSON

Socorro de Anda, President

It is my honor to submit a report of the only institution of the South Central Jurisdiction to your conference. It is my wish to thank the bishop and the members of the conference for the committed support to Lydia Patterson in the past year.

The year 2020 has been one unlike any other in my 36 years serving this ministry. We have endured many crises before such as drug wars, violence, peso devaluations, border and immigration issues, and other pandemics but none as terrifying as COVID-19. This time the lives of our students and staff were threatened. This time, we knew not how to attack it.

In early March, we closed our doors in order to keep our students and staff safe. By God's grace and not knowing that He had a hand in what was to come, we had computerized our classrooms about four years prior. Going from on-site to on-line was done within 24 hours. We encountered some glitches, like students without internet or computers at home. We moved fast to provide them with tablets and "hot spots" so that no student would be left behind. The plan, of course was to return to the classroom in a few weeks. The few weeks turned into months and months to a year. We did manage to celebrate the Class of 2020 with 69 graduating seniors. Of the 69 seniors, 69 are in college today.

We began the fall semester with a drop in enrollment. Parents were struggling to pay tuition. By then, many were unemployed and had lost loved ones to the pandemic. Our job was to see that our students returned and that we were there to make it possible. We moved swiftly to raising more

## 2021 JOURNAL Reports

scholarships. The uncertainty of the situation was alarming, and many parents opted to keep their children home.

Teachers and staff are heroes and heroines. They have done an amazing job of keeping the students focused and on course. A few students may be falling behind, but they will receive extra help during the summer to catch up. This administration will seek funds so that these students can attend tuition free and jump back on board.

The past 12 months have been a test to our faith. We, at Lydia Patterson, did not lose faith. While in the middle of the pandemic, we completed a soccer practice field with green grass and colorful pergolas to welcome the students when they return. We remodeled the music room so that the students would have something positive and with optimism to return to. The students, parents, teachers, have all endured such pain, that we moved to bring back hope. We have all lived through horrifying times, but it is our faith that will get us through. While we went to virtual learning, we maintained our weekly devotionals on Zoom. For the past year, the staff has gathered to pray every single day.

We look forward for when the students can return to some type of normalcy. We look forward for the students to enjoy sports again and participate in extracurricular activities. The lay ministry students anxiously await the time to go out and serve in the local churches. We look forward to a normal graduation when we can celebrate the amazing student body that Lydia Patterson has. We look forward to your visit to our campus, whether it be on a mission trip or simply to experience firsthand the sanctity of this ministry.

God is good all the time. We have received many good wishes and prayers from our supporters together with financial support for our students. We will survive. My most sincere appreciation to all those kind people that have thought about us while trying to keep their own house safe. My gratitude goes out to all our supporters on behalf of every student at "La Lydia."

# UNIVERSITY AND SEMINARY REPORTS

## AFRICA UNIVERSITY

### Africa University Development Office

The opportunity to update and thank the Great Plains Conference as a partner in ministry with Africa University is truly a joy. Africa University is grateful to the local congregations of the Great Plains Conference for investing 91.9 percent of the asking to the Africa University Fund in 2020. In an especially challenging year, Great Plains United Methodist congregations increased their support for the Africa University Fund by almost seven percent. Thank you for being a source of inspiration and strength for the students, faculty, and staff of Africa University.

The events of the past year have brought about profound and lasting adjustments to how we live, work, serve and connect. For Africa University, these include:

- A shift to online-only teaching and learning from late March through December 2020. As the only university in Zimbabwe accredited to offer online degrees, Africa University had the infrastructure and expertise to transition smoothly and break new ground with competency-based student assessment tools.
- Africa University is now ranked number one in Zimbabwe and 39th among the top 200 universities in Africa, having moved up 59 spots in the rankings in 2020.
- Excellent student retention and modest enrollment growth, with a 99 percent uptake of online learning by students. More than 3,000 students enrolled for the 2020-2021 academic year—16 percent more than the previous year—with 2,395 studying full-time. Fifty-seven percent of full-time students were female, and 24

- percent were international.
- Innovation, outreach, and service through:
  - o The development and distribution of masks and hand sanitizer (of its own design/formulation), that have now been certified for commercial production.
  - o The launch, via a web application, of farm to household delivery of fresh produce, meat, poultry, and milk products by the Africa University Dream Farm Trust.
  - o Two student-led initiatives—“Feed a Family” and “Ben Hill UMC Women’s Residence Girl Child Support Program”—provided medical care, food, and school fees assistance to vulnerable families in the wider community. Campus and home-based students gave up meals, raised additional resources, procured supplies, and organized safe distribution to families.
- The successful completion of two new buildings—the Highland Park UMC-funded student union facility and a dormitory for female students. A new solar farm powers the Highland Park women’s dormitory.

Africa University’s online campus is here to stay, thanks to infrastructure upgrades and the lessons learned while staying focused on its mission in 2020. Africa University is working to grow its pan-African presence and impact through new programs, partnerships, and an effective blend of in-person and online learning options.

Thank you, Great Plains United Methodists, for helping to prepare young leaders to be “an aroma that brings life” to a world that is crying out for justice, compassion, healing, and wholeness (2 Corinthians 2:14-16). Through your prayers and gifts, young people who might otherwise be marginalized living fully into meaningful discipleship.

Through their steadfast support, local churches participate with Africa University's students, lecturers, and administrators in disciple-making by example. Growing its investment in the Africa University Fund to 100 percent is a goal well-worth attaining as Great Plains United Methodists strive to lead new people into an abundant life in Christ.

In journeying alongside Africa University in ministry, Great Plains United Methodists are the church in the world—seeding hope and sharing the love of Christ. Thank you, Great Plains Conference, for affirming that when we are all in it together, God's grace is indeed sufficient. To God be the glory.

## BOSTON UNIVERSITY

G. Sujin Pak, Dean

I am grateful for my first opportunity to thank you for your moral, prayerful, and material support of the Boston University School of Theology (BUSTH). A year like 2020 makes the School's historic and ongoing commitments to social justice even more relevant, and we remain hopeful in our continued partnership with you.

### **BREAKING NEWS:**

- **Virtual Learning:** Our faculty, staff, and library pivoted to fully remote learning in Spring 2020 upon the COVID-19 lockdown, continuing through the summer terms. Boston University's "Learn from Anywhere" hybrid approach to learning began in Fall 2020, which included a thorough on-campus testing program and strict COVID-19 precautions to ensure the safety of students, faculty, and staff.
- **Students:** We continue to increase and celebrate diversity in our student body. Our Fall 2020 entering class was among our largest classes ever, with 128 new students enrolling in September.
- **Faculty:** We celebrated dean emerita Mary Elizabeth

Moore's 12-year service to the School as she stepped down on December 31, 2020. New dean G. Sujin Pak began her appointment on January 1, 2021. Dean Pak is known for her commitments to academic rigor, social justice, and United Methodism, which made her a wonderful fit for the leadership of BUSTH.

- **Lilly Endowment Grant for Thriving Congregations Initiative:** BUSTH was awarded a nearly \$1 million, four-year grant to work with urban congregations responding to trauma. The project will focus on responding to congregants who are continually shaped by and reacting to compounding traumatic events, such as systemic racism, gun violence, homelessness, or immigration stressors.
- **Scholarships:** We continue to offer free tuition to UMC registered candidates for ordained ministry. Leadership fellowships support students in ethnic, gender, and sexuality studies: Raíces Latinas, Sacred Worth, Indigenous Studies, Korean Studies, Women in Leadership, and Black Church Studies.
- **Online Lifelong Learning:** BUSTH began to offer online workshops and reading groups for professional and spiritual enrichment of alumni and other religious leaders. Topics include religious Afro-futurism, spirituality through the writings of Howard Thurman, and practices of grief in a time of pandemic. To learn about or participate in the next BUSTH Lifelong Learning offerings, visit [bu.edu/sth/oll](http://bu.edu/sth/oll).
- **Theology and the Arts Initiatives:** Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, our traditional exhibits moved to an online space. The current exhibit is available [here](#).
- **Development:** Recently raised funds reflect broad support from alumni, friends, faculty, staff, and students, with a far-reaching impact on the School's ability to pursue its mission. More than 2,800 donors, including 1,927 alumni (a 50% alumni participation rate), contributed to the recent campaign.

**PARTNERING FOR MINISTRY AND TRANSFORMATION:**

- **Doctor of Ministry:** The DMin in Transformational

Leadership flourishes with lively student cohorts that are interfaith, broadly ecumenical, culturally diverse, and global.

- **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.
- **Chaplaincy education:** BUSTH and the Chaplaincy Innovation Lab received a grant to support the joint project “Innovations in Chaplaincy Education,” which will seek to redesign courses on chaplaincy in higher education.

#### **COMMITMENT TO JUSTICE:**

- Faculty, staff, and students are active in #BlackLivesMatter efforts to seek racial equality, and also in supporting people suffering the consequences of immigration practices or disability inequities.
- Work continues to improve accessibility, sustainability, and responsible investing. BUSTH is the first certified Green School in BU and is active in the Green Seminary Initiative.

## **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 master 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 master 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 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](http://candler.emory.edu).

## **DUKE UNIVERSITY DIVINITY SCHOOL**

L. Gregory Jones, Dean of Divinity School

Edgardo Colón-Emeric, the Irene and William McCutchen Associate Professor of Reconciliation and Theology, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Director of the Center for Reconciliation will become Dean of Duke Divinity School (DDS)

July 1, 2021. Dean Gregory L. Jones will leave DDS to become president of Belmont University.

DDS announced a new hybrid version of its Master of Divinity (M.Div.) program that will give students the opportunity to earn the M.Div. degree without relocating to Durham, N.C. The hybrid learning curriculum combines remote coursework with week-long residential intensives. The first cohort will begin coursework in fall 2021.

DDS welcomed the largest incoming class in school history with 257 new students from 35 different states and seven countries. Our Master of Arts in Christian Practice (28 students) and Doctor of Ministry (52 students) programs received record enrollments. The Master of Theology (13 students), Master of Theological Studies (34 students), and Doctor of Theology (6 students) had strong enrollment. Our new Certificate in Theology and Health Care will enroll 6 students. The M.Div. degree program gained 113 new students. Across all degree programs, 31 percent of the incoming class identified as a race/ethnicity other than white.

2020 witnessed an expansion of DDS's partnerships, including the Kern Family Foundation partnership with the Office of Wesleyan Engagement to provide accelerated pathways for undergraduate students to pursue the M.Div. degree at Duke. DDS welcomed its first cohort of students at Martin Methodist College. The Americas Initiative, a fellowship of organizations, scholars and practitioners convened by the Center for Reconciliation, works on peacebuilding among Latin American and Latinx communities, particularly those of Indigenous and African descent. The five-year Black Pastoral Leadership Collaboration, begun in the fall of 2019, is working to harness the research and experiential wisdom of Black pastoral leaders nationally through a leadership school and practical theology archiving project.

DDS sought to reckon in deeper and broader ways with systemic racism and injustice and the school sought opportunities to strengthen its partnership across Duke

University. A Story Listening and Gathering project solicited alumni, students, faculty, and staff to share stories of how race and racial discrimination affects DDS to inform the school's broader anti-racism efforts. A new Race and the Professions Fellowship, in partnership with the Kenan Institute for Ethics, and the Churches Promoting Recovery Project, in partnership with the Theology, Medicine, and Culture Initiative, provided new opportunities for students to deepen their vocational formation and reimagine community transformation beyond campus.

DDS hired eight new faculty members in 2020. Peter Casarella is a Professor of Theology. Sarah Barton is an Assistant Professor of Occupational Therapy and Theological Ethics. Quinton Dixie is an Associate Research Professor of Church History and Black Church Studies. Zebulon Highben is Associate Professor of the Practice of Church Music. Alma Tinoco Ruiz is a Lecturer in Homiletics and Evangelism and Director of the Hispanic House of Studies. Janet Martin Soskice is the William K. Warren Distinguished Research Professor of Catholic Theology. Norbert Wilson is Professor of Food, Economics, and Community. Wylin D. Wilson is an Assistant Professor of Theological Ethics.

## **SOUTHERN METHODIST UNIVERSITY**

R. Gerald Turner, President

Since its founding in 1911 by the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, Southern Methodist University has served as a nonsectarian institution of higher learning, with a mission to expand knowledge through research and teaching and serve as a catalyst for growth in Dallas and North Texas. With continued Methodist representation on its Board of Trustees and welcoming students of all faiths, SMU is reaching higher levels of accomplishment in our second century of shaping world changers. Consistent with the University's appreciation for its Wesleyan heritage, the University voluntarily submits this report.

**COVID-19**

SMU arose as a leader among academic institutions in managing the global pandemic by hosting in-person classes and athletic seasons, avoiding significant layoffs and preventing large COVID-19 outbreaks on campus. After pivoting to fully online instruction in spring 2020, we successfully held a fall semester with flexible education and campus experiences while protecting our community's health and the University's financial strength.

**Students, faculty and staff**

The Class of 2024 comprises 1,531 students from 43 different countries with 31% students of color, making this the most ethnically and racially diverse first-year class in SMU history.

**Rankings**

SMU continues to receive high rankings and recognitions among prestigious reviewers, including:

- Top 20% best national universities by U.S. News & World Report (2021) and first among Dallas-area universities.
- Top 11% of U.S. universities by The Wall Street Journal/Times Higher Education (2021).
- Among the nation's best institutions for undergraduate education by The Princeton Review's "The Best 386 Colleges" and its "2021 Best Colleges: Region by Region"
- Top 5% best nationwide colleges and top 3% best Texas colleges by College Factual (2021).
- SMU's Perkins Chapel at No. 16 on the nation's most beautiful college churches and chapels by College Rank.

**Funding**

In FY 2020, SMU received nearly \$30 million in external funding for domestic and global research. SMU's FY2020

private fundraising was a record \$121.5 million in gifts. Current-use funding was \$48 million, surpassing the three-year goal of \$150 million.

### **Research and graduate education**

SMU continues striving for our goal of becoming a tier-one research institution, led by our new Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs Elizabeth Lobo. We also launched the Moody School of Graduate and Advanced Studies, increasing our research and Ph.D. offerings.

Perkins School of Theology continues to expand its partnership with Houston Methodist Hospital – site of the Perkins

Houston-Galveston Extension Program, which offers a hybrid format for M.Div. and M.A.M. students. The first M.Div. graduates will receive their degrees in May 2021. A new concentration in health care chaplaincy for students pursuing the M.Div. degree launched in spring 2021 and Perkins is adding a Doctor of Ministry (D.Min.) degree program in Houston in June 2021.

We are grateful for our ongoing work through Perkins School of Theology in the education and training of all branches of the Wesleyan tradition. We request your continued prayers and support for SMU as we seek to make an impact on the world.

## **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.

- Two (2) students affiliated with the Great Plains Annual Conference are enrolled in the Master of Divinity (M.Div.) program at Perkins.

## 2021 JOURNAL Reports

- One (1) Perkins student affiliated with the Great Plains Annual Conference was placed as an intern during the 2020-21 academic year.
- One student from the Great Plains Conference received funding from the PACE (Perkins Annual Conference Endowment) grant, totaling \$5,095.
- 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 103 students during the 2020-21 academic year or slightly more than half of the 200 students enrolled in these degrees.
- Beginning June 2021, Perkins School of Theology will add a Doctor of Ministry (D. Min.) program in Houston, in addition to the existing D. Min. program in Dallas. The doctoral level program integrates scholarly research with the practice of ministry. Courses will be taught at Houston Methodist Hospital. With two international airports, Houston also offers the advantage of easy access by air from many cities in the U.S. Perkins's three-year D. Min. curriculum includes two years of coursework, with students traveling to Houston for two weeks of courses in person in June and January. The remainder of the program, which includes a directed study and the writing of a dissertation, can be completed remotely.

### **Enrollment Update**

Enrollment at Perkins for the 2020-21 academic year totaled 347 students, including 28 enrolled in the Ph.D. program. Our enrollment size puts Perkins among the "largest" schools (52nd out of 277 schools) within the Association of Theological Schools. Fall 2020 statistics reflect the following: 65% of the entire student population are United Methodist (82% of M.Div. students) with another 23 denominations / traditions represented. 27% are ethnic minority students with an additional 6% comprising international students. 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 103 students during the 2020-21 academic year or slightly more than half of the 200 students enrolled in these degrees.

### **Highlights**

New initiatives include: sequenced M.Div./M.A.M. and M.B.A. degree program; certification in Healthcare Chaplaincy (at Houston Methodist); D.Min. Program based in Houston-Galveston.

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**

Neil Blair, President

Saint Paul School of Theology, a seminary of the United Methodist Church, is committed to the formation of people for innovative, creative ministry. We are one institution, online and on-campus, in Kansas and Oklahoma. This past year, we have all faced new challenges amid these unsettled times. Saint Paul School of Theology began the 2020-2021 academic year offering students an online option for all courses. With many students choosing to attend class solely online, our Student Council created a monthly “Chat & Chew” where students, faculty, and staff come together to eat lunch and talk about life, seminary, and ministry. In addition, Rev. Rod Newman, our Oklahoma Campus Chapel Coordinator, crafts a weekly Community Prayer to provide encouragement and faithfulness as the school seeks to provide spiritual formation in new ways.

Kansas Campus Chapel Coordinator Dr. Casey Sigmon took worship to new technological levels by introducing our weekly online worship service via Zoom, bringing our separate campus chapel services together for one service where all are invited to create a sacred atmosphere from wherever they are. Along with our featured alumni worship preachers, the community was blessed this fall by the presence of Musician in Residence Hannah Rand, from The Many, who led the music each week for worship. In Spring 2020, Odell Talley, Director of Music for Swope Parkway United and organist for Zion Travelers Missionary Baptist, served as Musician in Residence. For those who cannot join us live, chapel recordings are available on the Saint Paul YouTube channel.

This year, we have faced several challenges that turned into opportunities for new recruiting spaces and partnerships to enhance students' seminary experience. With the change from in-person to virtual events, Rev. Shannon Hancock, Director of Admissions and Communications, has expanded her reach to prospective students by participating as a virtual exhibitor at online conferences. Rev. Hancock engages with prospective students via apps such as Whova and HopIn to highlight Saint Paul's unique course delivery system and formative community.

In February, Saint Paul held the 2021 Slater-Willson Lecture online featuring Rev. Dr. Miguel A. De La Torre. His lecture, "Why Do They Come?" explored the political, economic, and social causes of our current immigration crisis. Before the lecture, Rev. Dr. De La Torre participated in a student-led forum, entering a conversation centering around the practical aspects of ministry and immigration. Later in April, Saint Paul Evangelical Society, led by Dr. Hal Knight, hosted a lecture given by Dr. Sammy G. Alfaro, Associate Professor of Theology at Grand Canyon University and Pastor of Iglesia Nuevo Dia (New Day Church), on the "Pastoral Strategies for Ministering Among Latinx Immigrant Communities." And for the first time, on May 22, Saint Paul held a virtual commencement celebration with videos, cap and gown photos, online

congratulatory messages from friends and family, and a commencement address by Rev. Chebon Kernell. The class of 2021 had 22 graduates, including 16 Master of Divinity and 1 Doctor of Ministry graduates. Due to the pandemic, for safety concerns, Saint Paul has postponed our 60th Anniversary Celebration. However, we have rescheduled the event for Friday, October 22 and look forward to coming together as a community for a safe, in-person gathering.

Through a Board initiative related to diversity and inclusion, Saint Paul created a working group on Native American theology and ministries comprised of Native theologians and church leaders. Their efforts are focused on how the church and academy can work together toward healing generational trauma related to the spread of Christianity and the genocide of Indigenous North Americans.

As we have happily reported in past years, Saint Paul is financially sound and operates with a balanced budget. The changes made these last years have established a solid financial foundation for years of sustainability. We continue to be grateful for donations from the community that provide technology, scholarships, and emergency assistance to students. Our significant investments in technology have recently allowed our staff, faculty, and students to transition to a fully hybrid educational delivery model providing a safe learning environment during the pandemic. Our faculty was uniquely adept at managing technology in the classroom before the pandemic, making the transition to all online courses a smooth process.

Saint Paul School of Theology is blessed to be your partner in ministry and help those seeking more to answer the call. We are a seminary that offers online and on-campus classes with a flexible schedule to help our students manage pastoral leadership demands in the 21st century. We are grateful for your support of our students and our seminary. May we continue to live into the call of Jesus Christ to be faithful witnesses for healing in these unsettled times and for

generations to come.

## UNITED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Dr. Kent Millard, President

“I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?” — Isaiah 43:19

It appears God is doing some new things at United Theological Seminary, even in the midst of health, racial, and political crises.

**God is doing a new thing at United financially.** United continues to make progress toward its goal of becoming debt-free by the Seminary’s 150th anniversary on October 11, 2021. Thanks to the faithfulness and generosity of alumni/ae and donors, less than \$1 million remains of the original \$4 million mortgage debt. After the mortgage is paid in full, the Seminary plans to convert those mortgage payments into money for student scholarships.

**God is doing a new thing in enrollment.** Over the last five years, United’s Doctor of Ministry program has grown by 48%, from 170 students in the 2016-17 academic year to 251 in 2020-21. In Fall 2021, Dr. Elvin Sadler, General Secretary of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, will become the Associate Dean for Doctoral Studies, upon the retirement of Dr. Harold Hudson who has been a vital leader at the Seminary for 17 years.

**God is doing a new thing with partners in church renewal.** In the 2020-21 academic year, United has partnered with Fresh Expressions US and the Mosaix Global Network to introduce two new Houses of Study. These houses oversee specialized tracks in the Doctor of Ministry and Master of Divinity programs. Rev. Dr. Michael Beck is director of the Fresh Expressions House of Studies, and Dr. Harry Li is director of

the Mosaix House of Studies.

In collaboration with the Northwest Texas Conference of The United Methodist Church, United also introduced Rooted/Enraizados, a certificate program for coaches and mentors of Hispanic/Latino church planters. In 2020-21, the program served students from more than five annual conferences.

**God is doing a new thing with the establishment of The Bishop Bruce Ough Innovation Center.** Beginning in 2021, the Innovation Center honors the ministry of Bishop Bruce Ough by providing a hub of learning for church leaders seeking the framework, support, and courage to introduce the Gospel of Jesus Christ in new and creative ways. Rev. Sue Nilson Kibbey joins United as the inaugural director of the Innovation Center.

United's prayer is that United Methodists will perceive the new things that God is doing in our communities, congregations, and ministries as we strive to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

## WESLEY THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

For the world, 2020 was a year like no other. In the midst of a global pandemic, plus resurgent racism, mass unemployment, and politically challenging times in the U.S., Wesley remained committed to fostering wisdom and courage, preparing graduates to lead innovative ministries while remaining grounded in our biblical and theological traditions for the sake of God's inbreaking kingdom. The mode of educational delivery changed overnight, as we became an all-online seminary on March 15, 2020, and have remained so to keep students, faculty, staff and all members of the Wesley community safe from COVID-19 exposure on campus.

Wesley is pleased to announce new opportunities for UMC congregations to explore, clarify, and pursue thriving in their communities. Through The Source Collaborative, Wesley will work with three cohorts of regional congregations in a two-year process of prayer, community engagement, congregational visioning, and coaching, with the goal of following Jesus in mission and ministry. Interested congregations can contact [innovation@wesleyseminary.edu](mailto:innovation@wesleyseminary.edu) for more information.

The [Religious Workforce Project](#) is an expansive study of the current and future nature of religious work, particularly in local congregations, so as to understand what opportunities and constraints may exist in the future and to adapt resources and training accordingly.

We invite you to discover the latest research and conversations generated by the Wesley community through our new web portal, #EngageInTheseTimes, at [www.wesleyseminary.edu/engage](http://www.wesleyseminary.edu/engage).

### **Using research and partnerships to reach and equip the next generation of ministers**

Research shows that the primary way people learn about and begin to consider seminary options is through their pastor or an alumnus. Whether you feel called or you know someone who does, **Wesley is ready to work with you** as we make theological education more accessible and relevant to the realities of ministry today—for laity and clergy, for those seeking a degree or certification or continuing education, and for ministry from within or beyond the church.

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, children and youth ministry and advocacy, or African American church leadership.

For full-time students, we offer a modern and affordable residential community in the nation's capital. Our **Community Engagement Fellows** program prepares students to engage in entrepreneurial, community-based ministry. Generous stipends are available for each Fellow while they complete their MDiv degree. Our **3+3 Fast Track BA/MDiv program with Shenandoah University** allows students to complete both degrees in six years, entering ministry more quickly and with less debt.

For people with work, ministry, and family commitments, **Wesley's Master of Divinity degree can now be completed via online, weekend, short-term intensive, and weeknight courses in 5 years.** Check out upcoming flexible course offerings for Summer and Fall 2021 at [www.wesleyseminary.edu/admissions/try-a-class-3](http://www.wesleyseminary.edu/admissions/try-a-class-3).

# OTHER

## 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. Our connections with nearly 100 Great Plains United Methodist churches through our Healthy Congregations program enabled a rapid response to help teams support emerging community needs as the Covid-19 pandemic spread. The Health Fund made 48 grants totaling \$24,095 to support food distribution, mask production, social supports and other local responses in communities throughout Kansas and Nebraska.

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 partnered with Kansas Appleseed to ensure all Kansans, especially those living in southwest Kansas, were counted as part of the decennial Census. The outreach conducted by Kansas Appleseed and our Spanish language and social media advertising played a major role in ensuring that 99.9% of Kansans were counted and that our state did not lose hundreds of millions of dollars in federal funding. We also supported convening and research efforts centered on sustaining health care in rural communities and understanding the implications of telehealth for Kansans.

In early childhood development, we partnered with the Kansas Department of Health and Environment to participate in a national project, Pediatrics Supporting Parents, aiming to integrate social and emotional development screening into the pediatric visit. As a result of this collaborative work, the state – effective January 1st – now covers maternal depression screening, making it possible for thousands of women to access important services.

The Health Fund received a five-year, \$999,058 Thriving Congregations grant from Lilly Endowment Inc. to expand the Healthy Congregations (HC) Program in partnership with Wichita, KS-based Neighboring Movement, whose Good Neighbor Experiment (GNE) connects asset-based community

development with Christian values by helping teams practice learned skills of community neighboring. The Fund has supported HC team participation in GNE since 2019 as a strategy to address social isolation and related health challenges in local communities. The Lilly grant will help the Fund further integrate GNE within the HC program and expand availability to more congregations in the Great Plains Conference and beyond.

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](http://www.healthfund.org)

## **Kansas Area United Methodist Foundation**

The year 2020 was one where most of us were required to adapt, learn new things, and refocus our purpose, even if in new ways or modes. The Foundation has done likewise, so that we can fulfill our ministry with you. One such adaptation was in our trainings and materials for families and churches. We moved many of the normal in-person trainings to online versions that are accessible on-demand for churches and families.

One special program we have created is a new monthly Learn & Grow seminar, facilitating experts in the field to help families, churches, and agencies with many different aspects of financial wellness. It is our vision that we will continue to grow this program so that we become the trusted resource for all things financial. We seek to be a hub of resources and connections, knowing that through partnerships with others, we can serve our constituencies well.

Thank you for your faithfulness and dedication. You are the ones who are serving and making a difference in our

communities across Kansas. It is our honor to offer financial support to you and to partner with you as you fulfill the mission of the Church.

### **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, nine families met with the Foundation's estate planning attorney to create or update their documents. In addition, 32 new accounts were created 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's Balanced Fund, a long-term investment fund, returned 19.45% in 2020, net of investment fees, and the Foundation ended the year with more than \$60.7 million in assets under management. In 2020, the total distributions of \$3.24 million made an impact through supporting individual and church scholarships, 17 Pathways for Discipleship Grants, church mission trips, children's programs, 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.

### **EDUCATIONAL SEMINARS**

The Foundation is honored to serve churches through providing free, monthly educational programs through the Learn & Grow Seminar Series. Topics for the seminars vary each month and focus on personal and church finances and resources. In addition, the Foundation started a Clergy Financial Wellness Initiative. The 8-month program strives to deliver deep and holistic financial training for clergy and provides resources and training to become more financially healthy in their family life and with their leadership in the church.

## SEMINARY SCHOLARSHIPS

Through providing scholarships to support seminary education, the Foundation invests in the next generation of clergy. In 2020, 40 scholarships were awarded through the Kansas Area United Methodist Foundation Seminary Scholarship and the Pass the Torch scholarship.

CONNECT WITH US

[foundation@kaumf.org](mailto:foundation@kaumf.org)

## Nebraska Area United Methodist Foundation

Jackie Urkoski, Executive Director

The Nebraska United Methodist Foundation is grateful for the opportunity to serve you. The Foundation provides many services and financial tools to churches and its members, which help to support the ministries of the local church and the Great Plains Conference. We are thankful for your continued partnership in such a unique year. In 2020, we managed \$52 million in total assets, with \$2.5 million going back to churches and ministries from their invested funds. Over \$230,000 was distributed to Nebraska churches, ministries, related organizations, pastors, and seminary students through avenues such as grants, donor-advised funds, and scholarships. In addition, \$26,000 in life income distributions were made back to individuals from financial tools such as Charitable Gift Annuities. Over \$2 million of deposits were made during 2020 into new and existing accounts. We thank all of the churches and individuals for continued good stewardship of their gifts and for entrusting us with their funds. For detailed information on our Investment Services or other programs, please visit our website at [www.numf.org](http://www.numf.org) or call 402-323-8844. Thank you for allowing us to be Your Partner in Ministry.

### **Investment Services**

The Foundation provides Investment Services to help churches save and grow funds for ministry, capital needs, emergencies, and mission opportunities in the community and beyond. Our focus is to help Nebraska United Methodist churches and related organizations and ministries accomplish their goals and support their vision for the future.

### **An Endowment Fund & Legacy Giving Ministry for Your Church**

The Foundation is grateful to provide education, training and valuable resources to pastors and church committee members. We continue to develop new tools and resources to help sustain and grow your ministry. A favorite resource of churches is the Foundation's detailed program on how to create and grow an endowment fund and a legacy giving ministry within your church.

### **Estate Planning and Creative Giving for Church Members**

The Foundation assists individuals with their estate and gift planning at no cost and with no obligation on the part of the individual to make a charitable gift. While we recommend individuals visit with their attorney, accountant or other planning professional, the Foundation can often help individuals in the early planning stages of giving. Consider starting a Charitable Gift Annuity, creating a Named Endowment Fund to honor a family member, or consider a Donor-Advised Fund to regularly benefit your church or favorite ministry with no fuss. We are happy to meet with you to discuss in further detail how a little planning can make a big impact.

### **New Start/New Faith Community Grants & Ministry Grants**

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. Every fall, the Foundation accepts applications for its ministry grant program. NUMF has supported over 100 churches, camps and related organizations to create and grow new ministries and outreach.

### **Seminary Scholarships & Local Pastor Scholarships**

The Foundation manages over 20 scholarships for seminary students and continues to grow the new Local Pastor Scholarship Program. Four new scholarships have been created this past year to support the needs of a treasured, and growing, group of people: our local pastors.

### **Workshops, Seminars, and Stewardship Sermons**

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 educate and motivate your church to support the future and encourage legacy giving through stewardship workshops and Sunday sermons.