

VIII. REPORTS

A. CONFERENCE SUPPORT

1. COUNCIL ON FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

The purpose of the Council on Finance and Administration (CFA) is “to develop, maintain, and administer a comprehensive and coordinated plan of fiscal and administrative policies, procedures, and management services for the annual conference” (§ 612.1, 2016 *Discipline*). This mission statement drives the work of CFA.

CFA sees itself as a vessel for resource management of the Western North Carolina Conference. It is our role to wisely discern available and potential resources that match with the vision and implementation of the conference's ministry. It is the council's deepest hope to ensure funds and other resources are available for the Western North Carolina Conference to achieve its mission.

These past few years have brought substantial challenges to the work of all our churches and our conference. The pandemic, uncertainty economy, international conflicts and the future of The United Methodist Church continue to impact our ministries. Yet, our connectionalism remains strong and vibrant. CF&A continues to believe that apportionments are solid pathways to join together our resources resulting in fruitful engagements that achieve far more than we could ever accomplish alone. Yet, CF&A acknowledges that local congregations are engaged in vibrant ministries in their communities. CF&A, therefore, strives to balance the needs of the local congregations and the needs of the annual conference.

Rather than regurgitate what your apportionment funds are realizing, CF&A simply invites you to further explore and keenly discern what all the teams, committees, boards, agencies, institutions, and organizations are doing in the Book of Programs and Reports.

It almost goes without saying that CFA urges every local church to support the fair share asking's by paying 100% of its funds apportioned. We commend those churches in the conference who fully supported the connectional ministry of the church in 2022, sometimes at great sacrifice. In 2022, 77% of all congregations of our conference paid 100% of the total amount apportioned.

CFA resists a rigid pushing of the mandate for local congregations to follow the standards of *The Book of Discipline* that each congregation must pay 100% of the total monies apportioned through the district, conference, jurisdiction, and general church. CFA simply reminds clergy and lay members of the Annual Conference to interpret and promote 100% payment of apportionments. Churches and their leaders can access the WNC web site (www.wnccumc.org/administration) and review their local congregation's apportionment allocations, remittances, and descriptions of each of the funds. In the average congregation in our conference, based on 2022 statistical data, the total 2024 apportionment payment (District, Conference, and General Church) is about not quite 8% of the total expenditures of the annual conference churches. Adding District apportionments as a whole raises the amount another 1%. Congregations retain 91% of their expenses for use in the local church. In using the biblical language of the tithe, apportionments are less than a tithe and they do not represent the full 10% of the expenses of our congregations.

Until we have a new General Church budget approved by the General Conference in 2024, the General Council on Finance and Administration puts forth a variation of the 2016-2020 General Church Budget. For 2024, due to reports from many of our general agencies that they are reducing their budgets significantly, CFA is recommending the Western North Carolina Conference reduce said budget from GCFA by 8%. Many other annual conferences are adopting this approach. Furthermore, the Conference apportionment segment of the budget is almost 3% reduction from 2023.

It is anticipated that some 190 congregations will be disaffiliating with the Western North Carolina Conference and The United Methodist Church in 2023. Because of the requirements of ¶2553, one year's advanced payment of apportionments must be paid prior to disaffiliation. The total amount to be collected is approximately \$1,880,000. CFA believes this should be rightly applied to the 2024 proposed budget and thus reduced what is apportioned to the remaining WNC churches. Our calculations allow us to use 75% of the disaffiliated advanced payment and thus reserve 25% for use in 2025. It is anticipated that the General Conference, meeting in 2024, will bring a General Church 36% reduced budget for the quadrennium 2025-2029.

To these ends, CFA commends to the Annual Conference the 2024 budget which is focused on accomplishing the vision of the Conference, with the ultimate focus of developing vital disciples and vibrant churches. At a total of \$12,619,171 the 2024 conference apportioned budget represents a full decrease of 5.35% over 2023. Applying 75% of the disaffiliating collection further reduces the apportionment budget amount to \$11,209,171, an almost 16% reduction over 2023 for the remaining churches.

The 2024 Budget does include for a third of three years, the removal of the Jurisdictional Apportionment. In 2021, the decision was made by the Council on Finance and Administration of the Southeastern Jurisdiction to return a surplus of apportionment funds collected over the last eight years to the SE annual conferences. WNC will use that surplus in the years 2022, 2023, and 2024, as much as feasible, to pay the Jurisdictional apportionment. We now anticipate being able to extend this practice into 2025.

CFA is confident that we will be able to provide for growth in the ministries of the Conference. This budget represents the best efforts of the conference staff and ministry teams of the Western North Carolina Conference as a funding ministry plan to achieve the goal of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of our world.

a. 2024 Conference Funds and Financial Policies**(Petition 1a)** *Approved June 17, 2023*

The Council on Finance and Administration proposes:

1. That each of the funds described in the section of this report headed "Conference Funds for 2024" be approved.
For 2024, CFA is asking for a one-time setting-aside of the traditional decimal formula used in determining the apportionments for 2024 for each chartered church/charge for these funds. (New church starts will participate in the apportionments in a "phasing" period and churches deemed "mission churches" are excused from apportionments):

District Support Fund	Africa University Fund
Equitable Compensation Fund	Black College Fund
Conference Support Fund	Episcopal Fund
Connectional Support Fund	General Administration Fund
District Administration Fund	Interdenominational Coop. Fund
District Mission Engagement Fund	Ministerial Education Fund
District Benevolence Fund	World Service Fund
District Church Vitality Fund	

Instead, CFA is asking that the conference allocate the 2024 apportionment budget based on the 2023 totals for apportionments with a 2% reduction. The 2023 2% reduced amount along with the usage of the 75% of advanced payments from the 2023 disaffiliating churches should adequately fund all apportionments for 2024.
2. That the following policy be approved and observed: At the beginning of the calendar year, the Council on Finance and Administration shall determine which portions of the Conference Support Fund and the Mission and Ministry Fund are "fixed costs" (salaries, benefits, etc.) and shall be paid at 100% of the approved budget. The District Support Fund will be funded at 100% of the approved budget. Based on prior year receipts to these funds, CFA shall then determine a percentage of the approved budget to be authorized for expenditure of the remaining items of the budget, so that expenditures shall not exceed income.
 - a. Each church is expected to support all funds at 100% of the apportioned amount. (¶ 247.14 of the 2016 *Book of Discipline*)
 - b. The churches are requested to make payments thereon aggregately, with the understanding that the conference treasurer will allocate such payments according to the appropriate percentage due the fund according to the Conference Budget.
3. That an Unrestricted Fund Balance Account be maintained by the annual conference at a goal level of 30% of the current total of the Conference Funds and that any undesignated interest income plus unused balances in budget accounts be transferred to the undesignated fund balance at the end of the fiscal year.
4. That all apportioned funds, pension, and health benefits costs, both receipts and disbursements, be managed through the office of the conference treasurer and that all districts, boards, agencies, committees, and commissions use the conference treasurer as fiscal agent.
5. That the group medical insurance plan be continued and that all churches be required to participate, based on the eligibility requirements of the plan, through the payment of premiums to the office of the conference treasurer.
6. That local churches should be aware that, for apportioned funds for bishops (Episcopal Fund), district superintendents (District Support), and the Equitable Compensation Fund, the church has an obligation to observe the rule of proportional payment (¶¶ 622 and 639.4, 2016 *Discipline*), and that ¶ 639.4(c) be observed by the statistician in reporting these apportionments. The rule of proportional payment requires that each local church/charge makes payments for these apportioned funds in the same proportion as payment for the support for the clergy appointed to the charge, i.e., if a church pays their clergy monthly, then these apportioned funds are to be submitted monthly.
7. That, for 2012 and beyond, the Conference Staff Relations Committee (CSRC) set the salary and benefits (including clergy housing allowances) for district superintendents, and district and conference staff within the approved total salary budget. The salary of the District Superintendents for 2024, as recommended by CSRC, is to be set at \$122,035.
8. That Conference-related travel expenses of all members of conference boards, agencies, committees, and commissions and conference and district staff will be reimbursed per the Per Diem Reimbursement Policy approved by the Annual Conference. Church-related travel by local church clergy be paid by voucher on a mileage basis at the business mileage reimbursement rate allowed by the Internal Revenue Service. This will be considered as a church-related business item and will not be factored into any compensation package by the Cabinet.
9. That the amount of compensation designated as housing allowance for ordained staff members and district superintendents be set by an annual resolution of the conference Council on Finance and Administration after consideration of a statement of amounts to be used during the year.

10. That the governing boards of:

- Aldersgate United Methodist Retirement Community, Inc.
- Arbor Acres United Methodist Retirement Community, Inc.
- Givens Estates United Methodist Retirement Community, Inc.
- Crossnore School & Children’s Home
- UMAR-WNC, Inc.
- The United Methodist Foundation of Western North Carolina, Inc.
- Methodist Youth Camp of Western NC Conference, Inc. (Camp Tekoa)
- Guilrock United Methodist Camp, Inc.
- Mount Shepherd Retreat Center
- Bennett College
- Brevard College
- Greensboro College
- High Point University
- Pfeiffer University
- Western North Carolina Conference Brotherhood/Sisterhood
- Western North Carolina Conference Historical Society
- Sanctuary Counseling Group, Charlotte
- Chrysalis Counseling Center, Greensboro
- Disciple Bible Outreach Ministries of NC, Inc.
- NETworkX
- Methodist Home for Children
- New Faith Communities Fund, Congregational Vitality Team
- Campus Ministries to include Appalachian State University, UNC-Asheville, NC A&T, UNC-Charlotte, UNC-Greensboro, Western Carolina University, Winston-Salem Wesley Foundation, Common Ground Lees McRae College

be granted the privilege of soliciting and receiving funds from churches, individuals, and other sources (but not from conference-wide offerings except as indicated in the list which follows) in keeping with *The Book of Discipline*; no capital campaigns be approved for 2024; and that the following, and only the following, conference-wide offerings be approved for 2024:

Human Relations Day	General Conference
UMAR Sunday	Annual Conference
UMCOR Sunday	General Conference
Native American Awareness	General Conference
Mother’s Day (Aldersgate, Arbor Acres, Givens)	Annual Conference
Disciple Bible Outreach	Annual Conference
Project AGAPE	Annual Conference
Peace with Justice	General Conference
Crossnore School and Children’s Home Sunday	Annual Conference
World Communion	General Conference
United Methodist Student Day	General Conference

11. That clergy be reimbursed for moving expenses in the following manner, effective upon adjournment of the 2023 conference session:
 - a. IN-CONFERENCE MOVES: The conference shall pay a moving allowance, plus \$2.50 per mile, one way, on those moves which are required from one appointment to a new appointment. If an appointment requires a move from one parsonage/home into another parsonage/home, the moving allowance will be set at \$500. If the appointment does not require a move from a parsonage/home, the moving allowance will be set at \$150.
 - b. MOVES INTO THE CONFERENCE: The conference shall pay on the same basis as in item 11a above. The moving allowance will apply to the number of miles on the most direct route traveled from the conference boundary to the pastoral appointment.
 - c. MOVING AT RETIREMENT: Retiring clergy, surviving spouses of active clergy who died during the year, and clergy who go on medical leave during the year shall receive a moving allowance of \$750, plus \$2.50 per mile, from the pastoral appointment to the retirement residence or the conference boundary. A retiree who moves to a parsonage and serves a pastorate in retirement is eligible for an in-conference moving allowance upon approval of the district superintendent.
 - d. MOVES OUT OF THE CONFERENCE (moving to another conference, withdrawing from conference membership, leave of absence, or not receiving an appointment, etc.): No allowance will be paid.
 - e. SABBATICAL LEAVE: No allowance is granted when the leave begins; however, an allowance will be given when the leave is completed, and the clergy person is again available for appointment by the bishop. The amount will be consistent with items 11a and 11b above.
 - f. In many instances, the moving allowance will not cover the total expense of the move. This reimbursement is given to help with the over-the-road cost of the move. **Each church/charge receiving a new pastor is strongly urged to pay any out-of-pocket expenses incurred by the new pastor because of the move.** The district superintendent will negotiate the request with the church/charge well in advance of moving day.
 - g. The district superintendent is asked to make a very special appeal for each church/charge to be especially sensitive to both parsonage families during this stressful time. The appeal should include assistance with meals, packing, unpacking, loading, and unloading where helpful and appropriate for the parsonage family.
 - h. Due to the Federal Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017, clergy should continue to be aware of the provisions of moving reimbursements that may impact their tax situation and are urged to consult with their tax advisor
12. That each local church makes a very special effort to undergird the meal, transportation, and lodging expenses of annual conference members attending annual conference by adding a minimum of \$150 to the church budget for each lay and clergy delegate. The district superintendents are asked to encourage such support at each charge conference.
13. That the Council on Finance and Administration be authorized to appoint a conference auditor.
14. That the president, vice-president, and secretary of the conference Council on Finance and Administration, the chairpersons of the Audit Review Committee and the Investment Committee, the conference treasurer-director of administrative services, a Cabinet representative, and one lay member of the CFA constitute the executive committee of the Council on Finance and Administration. The principal duties of the Executive Committee include annual review, compensation and benefits of the Conference Treasurer, and review and recommendation to CFA all Statements of Relationship for ministries relating to the Conference.
15. That conference funds are not permitted to carry over unspent funds from one conference year to another unless specifically authorized by the Council on Finance and Administration. Agencies receiving funds from sources other than apportioned funds, such as fee-based events, may carry over such unspent funds into the next year.
16. That the Conference Council on Finance and Administration be authorized to grant amounts from the Conference Contingency Fund or Permanent Reserves to meet any individual emergency or unanticipated need.
17. That **3:00 p.m., Thursday, January 4, 2024**, be the cutoff time by which all payments from local churches must be in the office of the conference treasurer to be applied to the 2023 year. Apportionment payments must be in the conference or the district offices by this time to receive credit.
18. That each conference board, agency, or institution receiving, or disbursing funds not managed by the conference treasurer maintain adequate financial records and prepare and submit annual audit reports to the conference treasurer and the conference Council on Finance and Administration. All treasurers should be properly bonded.
19. That the conference fiscal year begins on January 1, 2024, and ends on December 31, 2024.
20. That the conference Council on Finance and Administration be responsible for designating depositories for conference funds.

Irish Gaymon-Spencer, President
R. Mark King, Treasurer

b. 2024 Budget

(Petition 1b) Approved June 17, 2023

Western North Carolina Conference Budget 2024								
Fund Name	2022 Approved	2022 Actual Receipts	2022 Actual Expenses	2023 Apportionment Budget	2024 Initial Proposed	Less 2024 Supplemental Sources/Grants	2024 Apportionment Budget	
Conference Funds								
District Support	\$ 1,872,120	\$ 1,597,219	\$ 1,792,220	\$ 1,854,935	\$ 1,956,240		\$ 1,816,240	-2.09%
District Superintendents Salaries	927,120		927,120	954,935	976,240		976,240	
Benefits and District Staff Costs	945,000		865,100	900,000	980,000	140,000	840,000	
Conference Support (Schedule 1)	4,186,985	3,557,536	3,476,121	4,098,835	4,135,150		4,047,150	-1.26%
Conference Services Support	618,635		238,593	596,635	451,150	-	451,150	
Conference Staff Support	2,646,400		2,561,862	2,655,700	2,775,000	-	2,775,000	
Conference Administrative Support	921,950		675,666	846,500	909,000	88,000	821,000	
Equitable Compensation Support	125,000	106,067	51,602	225,000	200,000		200,000	-11.11%
Connectional Ministries Support (Schedule 2)	2,550,000	2,157,814	1,767,726	2,104,240	2,362,154	430,674	1,931,480	-8.21%
Total Conference Funds	8,734,105	7,418,635	7,087,668	8,283,010	8,653,544	658,674	7,994,870	-3.48%
General Church Funds								
Africa University	94,322	84,541	84,541	81,362	71,725		71,725	
Black College	421,465	349,397	349,397	361,899	320,494		320,494	
Episcopal Fund	926,416	766,949	766,949	1,003,978	704,472		704,472	
General Administration	371,459	305,959	305,959	307,910	282,468		282,468	
Interdenominational Cooperation	82,633	64,908	64,908	10,825	62,837		62,837	
Jurisdictional Conference Administration	-	-	46,980	-	-		-	
Ministerial Education	1,056,593	856,407	856,407	783,110	803,463		803,463	
World Service Fund	3,128,295	2,540,460	2,540,460	2,500,336	2,378,843		2,378,843	
Total General Church Funds	6,081,183	4,968,621	5,015,601	5,049,420	4,624,301	-	4,624,301	-8.42%
Sub-Grand Total of all Conference- Apportioned Funds	\$ 14,815,288	\$ 12,387,256	\$ 12,103,269	\$ 13,332,430	\$ 13,277,845	\$ 658,674	\$ 12,619,171	-5.35%
Increase (decrease) in budget from 2022 to 2023; 2023 to 2024				\$ (1,482,858)			\$ (713,259)	
				-10.01%			-5.35%	
Less 2023 Disaffiliating Church Advanced Apportionment Payments for 2024							\$ (1,410,000.00)	
Grand Total of all Conference- Apportioned Funds	\$ 14,815,288	\$ 12,387,256	\$ 12,103,269	\$ 13,332,430	\$ 13,277,845	\$ 658,674	\$ 11,209,171	-15.93%
Increase (decrease) in budget from 2022 to 2023; 2023 to 2024							\$ (2,123,259)	
With 2024 Disaffiliation Amounts included							-15.93%	
District Apportioned Funds								
District Administiry	\$ 685,000	\$ 654,649	\$ 654,649	\$ 685,000	\$ 601,300		\$ 601,300	-12.22%
District Mission Engagement	409,000	381,618	381,618	409,000	357,900		357,900	-12.49%
District Benevolence Grants	584,000	552,289	552,289	584,000	505,500		505,500	-13.44%
District Church Vitality	564,000	516,612	516,612	564,000	452,300		452,300	-19.80%
Total District Funds	\$ 2,242,000	\$ 2,105,168	\$ 2,105,168	\$ 2,242,000	\$ 1,917,000	\$ -	\$ 1,917,000	-14.50%
Grand Total of all Conference & District Apportioned Funds	\$ 17,057,288	\$ 14,492,424	\$ 14,208,437	\$ 15,574,430	\$ 15,194,845	\$ 658,674	\$ 13,126,171	-15.72%

2024 Budget, Continued

Fund Name	2022	2022	2022	2023	2024	Less 2024	2024	
	Approved	Actual Receipts	Actual Expenses	Apportionment Budget	Initial Proposed	Supplemental Sources/Grants	Apportionment Budget	
Schedule One								
Conference Support								
Conference Services Support:								
Cabinet Support	55,000		31,407	55,000	50,000		50,000	
Archives and History	14,635		4,721	14,635	13,650		13,650	
Resource Center	52,000		38,475	52,000	48,500		48,500	
Committees Support	10,000		123	10,000	9,000		9,000	
Annual Conference								
Conference Sessions	102,000		87,186	105,000	105,000		105,000	
General & Jurisdictional delegate expenses	15,000		1,844	-	15,000		15,000	
Ministers Moving Fund	120,000		74,837	110,000	110,000		110,000	
Contingency	250,000		-	250,000	100,000		100,000	
Total Conference Services Support	618,635		238,593	596,635	451,150	-	451,150	-24.38%
Conference Staff Support:								
Salaries	1,865,625		1,570,236	1,865,700	1,900,000		1,900,000	
Related Benefits costs	780,775		991,626	790,000	875,000		875,000	
Total Conference Staff Support	2,646,400		2,561,862	2,655,700	2,775,000	-	2,775,000	4.49%
Conference Administrative Support:								
Office Operations								
Episcopal Office	85,000		27,932	45,000	110,000	75,000	35,000	
Assistant to Bishop	3,800		1,447	3,000	2,500		2,500	
Treasury Services	10,000		8,061	10,000	9,000		9,000	
Communications	91,000		65,599	91,000	85,000		85,000	
Ministerial Services/Conference Secretary	14,000		5,682	14,000	12,500		12,500	
Information Technology	318,150		264,752	268,500	255,000	3,000	252,000	
General Support								
Liability & Property Insurance	35,000		25,517	25,000	25,000		25,000	
Legal	75,000		106,680	85,000	125,000		125,000	
Audit	45,000		26,750	40,000	35,000		35,000	
Staff Travel/Education	125,000		40,457	100,000	75,000		75,000	
Episcopal Residence	20,000		10,000	15,000	25,000	10,000	15,000	
Conference Office	100,000		92,789	150,000	150,000	-	150,000	
Total Conference Administrative Support	921,950		675,666	846,500	909,000	88,000	821,000	-3.01%
Total Conference Support	\$ 4,186,985	\$ 3,557,536	\$ 3,476,121	\$ 4,098,835	\$ 4,135,150	\$ 88,000	\$ 4,047,150	-1.26%
Schedule Two								
Connectional Ministries Support								
Connectional Table								
Connectional Table	5,000		-	5,000	2,400		2,400	
Connectional Table Ministries	80,000		54,587	80,000	80,000		80,000	
Contingency	67,030		-	110,000	25,000		25,000	
Council on Camping & Retreat Ministries	83,300		78,900	83,300	83,300		83,300	
Board of Higher Education and Campus Ministries	518,039		467,205	518,040	518,040		518,040	
Ordained Ministry	233,417		76,067	171,000	171,000		171,000	
Board of Laity	6,665		949	25,400	22,800		22,800	
Total Connectional Table	993,451		677,708	992,740	902,540	-	902,540	
Church Vitality								
New Faith Communities Ministry and Grants	608,000		608,000	350,000	780,674	430,674	350,000	
Total Church Vitality	608,000		608,000	350,000	780,674	430,674	350,000	
Mission Engagement								
Ministry and Grants	386,500		139,456	216,500	155,700		155,700	
Mission Response Center	21,000		22,531	25,000	21,000		21,000	
Total Mission Engagement	407,500		161,987	241,500	176,700	-	176,700	
Leadership Development								
Ministry and Grants	281,000		162,633	200,000	197,000		197,000	
Total Leadership Development	281,000		162,633	200,000	197,000	-	197,000	
Equity and Justice								
Equity and Justice Ministry	-		-	110,000	105,000		105,000	
Justice and Reconciliation Ministry and Grants	160,049		67,398	110,000	105,240		105,240	
Total Equity and Justice	160,049		67,398	220,000	210,240	-	210,240	
Partnership Fund with WNCC-UMC Colleges, Retirement								
Communities, Crossnore and UMAR	100,000		90,000	100,000	95,000		95,000	
Total Partnership Grants	100,000		90,000	100,000	95,000	-	95,000	
Total Connectional Ministries Fund	\$ 2,550,000	\$ 2,157,814	\$ 1,767,726	\$ 2,104,240	\$ 2,362,154	\$ 430,674	\$ 1,931,480	-8.21%

2. BOARD OF PENSION AND HEALTH BENEFITS

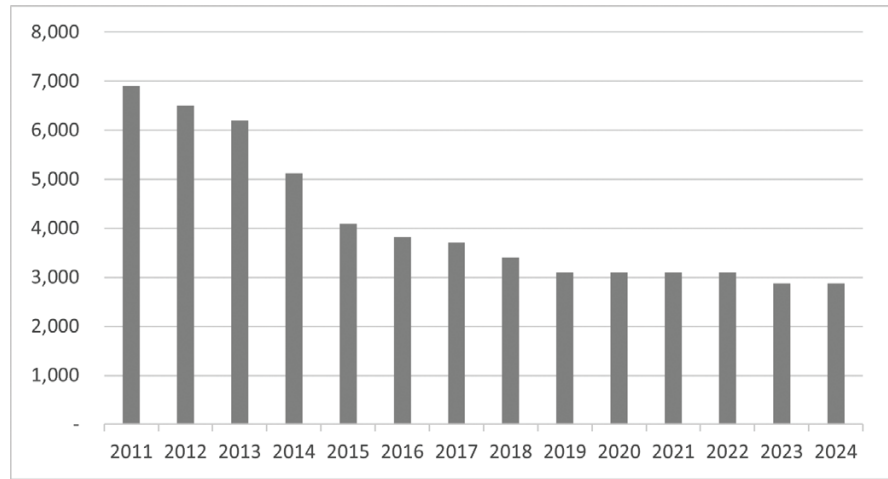
Pension Program and Policies

The Board of Pension and Health Benefits, Inc., Western North Carolina Conference, The United Methodist Church, acting as an auxiliary to Wespath Benefits | Investments, is charged with caring for the work of providing for and contributing to the support, relief, assistance, and pensioning of clergy and their families in the Western North Carolina Conference.

In 2024, the Conference Board of Pension and Health Benefits will send invoices monthly to the churches for clergy appointed in accordance with the Clergy Retirement Security Program (CRSP) adopted by The United Methodist Church.

Since the implementation of direct billing for pension and health benefits in 2007, the Conference Board of Pension and Health Benefits have been investing the net proceeds from these billings in various investment vehicles with the WNC United Methodist Foundation. Over the years, these investments have provided better than projected earnings for the Conference. As a result, the Board has approved the sharing of these resources with the local church by reducing the cost of pension benefits (**without reducing any pension benefits to the pastors**) by \$2,352 per full-time pastor in 2024, invoicing \$2,880 to the local church. The actual cost invoiced to the conference for the CRSP DB full-time benefit will be \$5,232. This is the tenth year of reductions in the WNCC’s CRSP defined benefit pension billings to each local church for each full-time pastor as shown in the table below:

2011	\$ 6,903
2012	\$ 6,504
2013	\$ 6,200
2014	\$ 5,118
2015	\$ 4,092
2016	\$ 3,824
2017	\$ 3,713
2018	\$ 3,402
2019	\$ 3,093
2020	\$ 3,093
2021	\$ 3,093
2022	\$ 3,093
2023	\$ 2,880
2024	\$ 2,880



The board rejoices in the ability to share these resources with the local church so that more of their resources may be used for ministry within their communities.

As published in Board of Pension and Health Benefits report in 2013, new provisions of the Clergy Retirement Security Program (CRSP), enacted at General Conference 2012, became effective January 1, 2014, as follows:

- *Eligibility:* Full-time clergy are eligible to participate and earn benefits. Annual Conferences may elect to cover clergy who are appointed as three-quarters or one-half time. Clergy who are appointed one-quarter time are no longer eligible to earn CRSP benefits. Any benefits already earned through December 31, 2013, remain in place.
- *Benefit Formulas:* The formula for determining the defined benefit (DB) component was reduced for the multiplier from 1.25% to 1.0% to be applied to Denominational Average Compensation (DAC) per year of service beginning January 1, 2014. Additionally, for the defined contribution (DC) component, the local Church will contribute 2% of the clergy’s compensation, reduced from 3% in 2013. If the clergy person contributes up to 1% of his/her plan compensation, the local Church will also contribute an additional 1% amount as a dollar-for-dollar match of the UMPIP contributions, up to 1%.
- *Surviving Spouse Benefits:* Beginning January 1, 2014, the initial dollar amount of the benefit paid to a married participant will be reduced to offset the value of spousal benefits.
- *Disabled Adult Child Benefits:* Beginning January 1, 2014, participants may designate a disabled adult child as a secondary contingent annuitant. After the participant and his or her spouse die, the disabled adult child would continue to receive DB benefits for life. The initial participant benefit would be reduced to pay for this extra benefit.

The Conference Board of Pension and Health Benefits, in consensus with the Cabinet of the Western North Carolina Conference, recommends that the Annual Conference approve the continuation of eligibility of those clergy who are appointed to three-quarter or half-time designations.

Based on the above, invoices will be prepared using the following criteria:

- A. Pension Plan Compensation (PPC) is the total annual compensation reported by the charge conference for 2024; included in the PPC is the housing component. The housing is either 25% of the aforementioned annual compensation, if a parsonage is provided, or the cash paid in lieu of a parsonage.
- B. Clergy Retirement Security Program – In 2024, the Core Defined Contribution Part (CRSP-DC) is 3% of PPC. Continuing from 2014 (the effective date of this change) CRSP-DC will continue to be invoiced at 3% of PPC, with 2% being an employer contribution and 1% as a matching contribution to the pastor’s United Methodist Personal Investment Plan (UMPIP).

- C. Clergy Retirement Security Program – Core Defined Benefit Part (CRSP-DB) is an actuarially determined normal cost provided by Wespath. For 2024, the cost is \$2,880 for each full-time clergy. For those clergy appointed $\frac{3}{4}$ and $\frac{1}{2}$ time (based on the eligibility approved by this session of the Annual Conference), the cost is that percentage times \$2,880. Wespath has provided that the conference actuarially determined normal cost contribution due December 31, 2024, will be \$3,423,315. Effective January 1, 2014, as approved by General Conference 2012, clergy appointed to $\frac{1}{4}$ time positions will not be eligible to earn benefits under the CRSP – DC plan and will **not** accrue benefits in the CRSP – DB plan after that date. (All previously earned benefits will remain in place.) The Conference Board of Pension and Health Benefits of Western North Carolina highly recommends that any local church which is served by a clergy person appointed to a $\frac{1}{4}$ time position sponsor the United Methodist Personal Investment Plan (UMPIP) and provide an employer contribution on behalf of the clergy person under appointment.
- D. Comprehensive Protection Plan (CPP) is the death and disability program administered through Wespath. In 2013 and prior years, premiums of 3% of PPC have been required to be paid for full time clergy. The premium is 3% of PPC to a maximum amount of 200% of Denominational Average Compensation (DAC). General Conference 2016 approved a change that would permit Annual Conference Boards of Pension to enroll clergy appointed to $\frac{3}{4}$ time and fulltime positions in the CPP. GC 2016 also changed the minimum compensation to 25% of DAC. For the year 2024, the CPP premium will be invoiced to the churches with full-time and $\frac{3}{4}$ time clergy at the rate of 2.50% of PPC, and the remaining 0.50% will be funded from Conference Board reserves.

The Clergy Retirement Security Program (CRSP) provides that the Past Service Annuity Rate (PSR) for service years prior to 1982 will increase 2% per annum. The conference board is proposing that the 2024 PSR be set at \$875.00 per service year, which represents a 2% increase and is greater than 1% of Conference Average Compensation as provided by Wespath for the Western North Carolina Annual Conference.

Paragraph 1506.6 of *The Book of Discipline*, 2016, requires each annual conference to develop, adopt and implement a formal comprehensive funding plan or plans for funding all its benefit obligations. Such funding plan must be submitted to Wespath Benefits | Investments for review to obtain a favorable written opinion from Wespath. Under this requirement, the Conference Board of Pension and Health Benefits has developed, adopted, and implemented such a formal comprehensive funding plan upon obtaining a favorable written opinion from Wespath. By approval of the Conference Board of Pension and Health Benefits and inclusion of a summary of the Comprehensive Funding Plan, with the favorable written opinion received, this Plan is deemed to be approved by the Annual Conference of Western North Carolina.

a. Pension Programs and Policies

(Petition 2a) *Approved June 17, 2023*

The conference Board of Pension and Health Benefits proposes:

1. That the basic cost of pastor's pension be invoiced to churches in 2024 as pension responsibility to support the Clergy Retirement Security Program.
2. That costs of the Clergy Retirement Security Program – Core Defined Benefit Part (CRSP-DB) for clergy appointed on medical leave be borne by the Board, and not included in the 2024 conference apportioned budget.
3. That the Past Service Annuity Rate for service years prior to 1982 be set at \$875.00 per service year, effective January 1, 2024, and that the eligibility for the Clergy Retirement Security Program be determined to include clergy appointed for full, $\frac{3}{4}$ and $\frac{1}{2}$ time positions. That the eligibility for the Comprehensive Protection Plan be determined to include clergy appointed for full and $\frac{3}{4}$ time positions earning a minimum of 25% of the DAC in pension plan compensation (PPC).
4. Response from Conference Board of Pension and Health Benefits regarding the referral of Annual Conference 2022 Petition 16 Revision to the “Ministerial Pension Plan” of the Clergy Retirement Security Program.

Resolved, that the Western North Carolina Conference petitions the General Conference to:

Revise the Clergy Retirement Security Program (“CRSP”), which is incorporated by reference in ¶1504.1 of *The Book of Discipline*, including any needed revisions to CRSP section numbering, formatting, pagination, or Table of Contents: The General Board of Pension and Health Benefits (Wespath) is directed by the General Conference to amend the Clergy Retirement Security Program such that all retired, retiring or active clergy participants who currently have an MPP account balance (not yet annuitized) shall each be eligible to rollover 100% of their account balance to the United Methodist Personal Investment Plan (or to another eligible retirement plan), for investment and distribution as determined by the clergy in accordance with federal minimum distribution requirements. The United Methodist Personal Investment Plan (UMPIP) is a voluntary defined contribution plan maintained by the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits (Wespath) under ¶1504.2. This amendment to the Ministerial Pension Plan eliminates the requirement that 65% of each accountholder's MPP balance must be annuitized as a single or joint lifetime benefit. Even if other MPP distribution options are proposed by Wespath or others, the 100% rollover or withdrawal option should be included, giving clergy maximum flexibility in the distribution of their MPP account balance.

The Conference Board of Pension and Health Benefits invited the petitioners to its scheduled meeting in November 2022. CBOPHB President Sarah Kalish asked the petitioners to present their reasons for bringing the petition to the annual conference. Members of the Board of Pension and Health Benefits had the opportunity to ask questions of the petitioners. After a thorough question and answer session, President Kalish thanked the petitioners for their willingness to come speak with the Board. After much discussion, with assistance from Wespath, the Conference Board of Pension and Health Benefits did not agree to the Petition. Therefore, the Conference Board of Pension and Health Benefits recommends that the Western North Carolina Conference not affirm Annual Conference 2022 Petition 16 that requests the General Conference to revise the Ministerial Pension Plan of the Clergy Retirement Security Program. Prior to this report, the petitioners were notified of the Board's decision.

5. That the following resolution be adopted for calendar year 2024:

Resolution Relating to Rental/Housing Allowances for Retired, Disabled, or Former Clergypersons of the Western North Carolina Conference

The Western North Carolina Conference (the “Conference”) adopts the following resolution relating to rental/housing allowances for active, retired, terminated, or disabled clergypersons of the conference:

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”); and

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; and

Whereas, pensions or other amounts paid to active, retired, terminated, and disabled Clergypersons are considered to be 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 the appropriate organization to designate a rental/housing allowance for Clergypersons who are or were members of this Conference and are eligible to receive such deferred compensation; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, that an amount equal to 100% of the pension or disability payments received from plans authorized under *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church* (the “*Discipline*”), which includes all such payments from Wespath, the United Methodist Foundation of Western North Carolina Conference Superannuate Endowment Fund, and The Duke Endowment during the period January 1, 2024 through December 31, 2024 by each active, retired, discontinued (with credited years of service) or disabled Clergyperson having served in the Western North Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church, or its predecessors, be and hereby is designated as a rental/housing allowance for each such Clergyperson; and, be it further

Resolved, that the pension, severance, or disability payments to which this rental/housing allowance designation applies will be any pension, severance or disability payments from plans, annuities, or funds authorized under the *Discipline*, including such payments from Wespath and from a commercial annuity company that provides an annuity arising from benefits accrued under a Wespath plan, annuity, or fund authorized under the *Discipline*, that result from any service a Clergyperson rendered to this Conference or that an active, a retired, a discontinued (with credited years of service) or a disabled Clergyperson of this Conference rendered to any local church, annual conference of the Church, general agency of the Church, other institution of the Church, former denomination that is now a part of The United Methodist Church, or any other employer that employed the Clergyperson to perform services related to the ministry of The United Methodist Church, or its predecessors, and that elected to make contributions to, or accrue a benefit under, such a plan, annuity, or fund, for such an active, a retired, a discontinued (with credited years of service) or a disabled Clergyperson’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 Clergyperson’s gross income in any year for federal income tax purposes is limited under Internal Revenue Code section 107(2) and regulations there under to the least of: (1) the amount of the rental/housing allowance designated by the Clergyperson’s employer or other appropriate body of the Church (such as this Conference in the foregoing resolution) for such year; (2) the amount actually expended by the Clergyperson to rent or provide a home in such year, or (3) the fair rental value of the home, including furnishings and appurtenances (such as a garage), plus the cost of utilities in such year. Retired Clergy are encouraged to consult their tax advisor concerning this resolution.

Clergy Debt Reduction Peer Program

The Conference Board of Pension and Health Benefits is working in partnership with the United Methodist Foundation of Western North Carolina, Inc. (the Foundation) on a Clergy Debt Reduction Peer Program. The program is sponsored and funded by the Conference Board of Pension and Health Benefits and administered by the Foundation. The board is excited about the impact the program is having already for participants, and about the possibilities the program will hold for improving general welfare and well-being of WNCCL clergy. As of December 31, 2022, loans outstanding for clergy debt reduction and refinancing totaled \$1,382,767.

Balances Due from Churches

Beginning in 2007, direct clergy benefit costs were invoiced to each local church. According to conference action, recorded in the 2004 journal, page 234, “Non-payment of direct clergy benefit costs (pension and health benefits) result in a default recorded against the church (see ¶639.4, *The Book of Discipline* 2016). While individual clergy will not lose benefits, the church will incur a liability to the conference Board of Pension and Health Benefits. The default will be reported by the conference benefits officer to the district superintendents, and the church will be led to correct this situation.

The following is the 2022 list of churches with balances greater than \$50.00 as of **May 10, 2023**, resulting from non-payment of direct clergy benefit costs:

District	Church	2022 Balance	District	Church	2022 Balance
Appalachian	Shiloh (Statesville).....	\$7,170.23	Yadkin Valley	Franklin Heights (Mount Airy)	\$111.16
Blue Ridge	Avery’s Creek (Arden)	\$4,983.80		Germanton (Walnut Cove).....	\$76.75
Metro	All Nations (Charlotte)	\$60.75		New Mount Vernon (WS)	\$2,275.20
	Hunter’s Chapel (Cornelius).....	\$4,806.90			
	North Davidson (Charlotte)	\$19,360.88	Total		\$ 45,070.98
	Sanctuary (Charlotte)	\$5,866.26			

Health Benefits Committee

The Health Benefits Committee serves as a sub-committee of the Board of Pension and Health Benefits (BOPHB), with responsibility in two specific areas: health benefits and group term life insurance.

The committee is composed of at least 12 members appointed by the board to quadrennial terms, as follows: three from BOPHB, one serving as chair of the committee, one being an officer of BOPHB, and one being the Cabinet representative to BOPHB; one from the conference Board of Ordained Ministry; one from the conference Council on Finance and Administration; two retired clergy persons; and five professional persons involved in the insurance industry. Typically, there are six lay members and six clergy members. The various agencies represented nominate their representatives to BOPHB for appointment.

Group Life Insurance

Wespath, through the Comprehensive Protection Plan, provides a death and disability benefit for eligible clergy, along with death benefits for members of clergy families. In addition to this coverage, the conference offers basic life insurance coverage of \$10,000 for active clergy enrolled in the conference group health plan, with premiums for this coverage collected through the invoice. Clergy members may elect to increase their coverage by enrolling in additional coverage in the amounts of \$25,000, \$50,000, \$75,000, \$100,000, \$125,000 or \$150,000. A new feature to the plan is critical illness and accident coverage. As an added benefit, a clergy member may elect to enroll his/her spouse and dependent children. This additional coverage is available from a group policy secured by the committee for a monthly premium to be collected by the insuring company. The continuation of this optional benefit is dependent on normal participation of those eligible. Newly eligible clergy will receive information about this coverage from the Treasury Services Office. To obtain coverage without evidence of insurability, enrollment must be made within 30 days of eligibility.

Enrollment Deadlines for Health and Life Insurance

Responsibility rests with the individual to make application in writing for the group health insurance and the group life insurance. In addition, any changes in dependents' status must also be submitted in writing. The effective date of coverage for new applicants is July 1 following the session of annual conference. Applications must be made within 30 days of appointment at annual conference. Anyone seeking to apply following the 30-day grace period will have a 12-month waiting period for all pre-existing conditions.

Health Benefits Continuation Policy

The conference benefits plan provides for group members and eligible beneficiaries to continue coverage if they become ineligible for the plan. The policy is available from the plan administrator.

Premium Collection Policy

Payment of the medical/health insurance premiums for pastors is the responsibility of the local church (es). This premium payment is invoiced monthly. For churches with more than one pastor on the staff, the church is responsible for the payment of the insurance premium for each eligible pastor. It is the responsibility of the pastor to pay the premium costs for dependents.

The Health Benefits Committee requires the conference treasurer to notify dependent accounts which are delinquent by sixty (60) days or more that their coverage is immediately subject to termination. If full payment is not made by thirty (30) days after the delinquency, coverage will be terminated.

2022 Financial Summary of Health Benefits Plans through December 31, 2022

	Active	Retirees
Sources of Funds		
Premiums -		
Active-Church Contributions	8,480,528	0
Active-Clergy/Dependent/Conf. Personnel	869,276	0
Medical Leave/Apportionments	1,835	0
Retiree Contributions	0	912,458
Cole Foundation	0	216,496
Other -		
Stop Loss Claims	0	0
Flexible Spending Account Direct Invoice	378,498	0
Drug rebates/Misc	50,803	0
Clodfelter Trust	0	0
Retiree Stabilization Fund	0	0
Total Sources	9,780,940	1,128,954
Uses of Funds		
Benefit Payments	10,689,725	1,068,772
Wellness program	25,117	0
Stop Loss Fees	371,924	0
Administrative Charges	409,939	18,800
HSA Seed Expense	9,500	0
Flexible Spending Claims	378,906	0
Life Insurance Premium	37,487	0
Operating Expenses	3,050	859
ACA Fees	3,912	0
Change in Claims Incurred but not received	-246,633	0
Miscellaneous	0	25,590
Bad Debt Expense	0	0
Total Uses	11,682,927	1,114,021
Sources less Uses	-1,901,987	14,933

Fund Balance, January 1	-4,075,037	4,042,324
Excess/Deficit	-1,901,987	14,933
Fund Balance Adjustment	0	0
Fund Balance, December 31	\$ -5,977,024	4,057,257
<i>Retiree Stabilization Fund</i>		
Beginning Balance, January 1	\$	11,703,691
Investment Income		-1,903,912
Grant Payment		0
Current Balance, December 31		9,799,799
Combined Total Fund Balance	\$	13,857,036

Conclusion

The board appreciates the fine spirit in which subscribers and local churches are supporting the work of the Health Benefits Committee. The committee seeks your continuing support as it makes every effort to provide a health benefits program that meets your needs. Members of the committee are Lori Wilson (chairperson), Frank A. Stith III, Marvin Melton, J. Zachery Christy, Phillip B. Cole, Andrea Conder, Ken Poe, Rennie Salata, Dave Ogden, Mark Key and Beverly Copley, Cabinet Representative, R. Mark King, Conference Treasurer, Dale C. Bryant, Benefits Administrator, and M. Lynne Gilbert, CBOPHB Treasurer.

b. Health Benefits Program and Policies

(Petition 2b) Approved June 17, 2023

The Health Benefits Committee proposes:

1. That the Board of Pension and Health Benefits be authorized to secure a hospital/medical insurance contract for 2024 that will be advantageous in terms of coverage, premium rates, and administrative costs.
2. That the hospital/medical insurance program be continued for all eligible persons working 30 hours or more per standard workweek.
3. That each local charge and eligible pastor be expected to participate in the conference program of hospital/medical insurance by contributing an amount equal to the pastor's coverage premium for each eligible pastor appointed to that charge and that these premium payments be remitted to the conference Treasury Services Office rather than to the pastor or other insurance carrier. The participant participation schedule should be used to calculate the eligible pastor's portion.
4. That premium cost information is made available to local churches and pastors immediately after the 2023 plan has been determined and rates established.
5. That a pastor may exclude himself/herself from coverage by signing a written waiver, releasing the conference and any local church from legal or moral responsibility for medical or accident claims.
6. That, in the discussion of salaries and benefits for 2024 and all succeeding years, local church committees on staff-parish relations consider designating a portion of compensation for dependents' health care coverage.
7. That medical/hospital coverage be provided for persons terminated from the plan for not more than a 12-month period, with the premium costs to be paid by the person terminated.
8. That continued endorsement be given to the optional life insurance program provided by a top-quality life insurance company as supplemental coverage for active clergy.
9. That the following Retired Clergy Medical Plan, which became effective on January 1, 2003, and was amended at the special session of the conference on February 2, 2008, be continued:
 - a. *Benefit Design:* The basic benefit design for all participants will be a comprehensive Medicare supplement. (complete benefit description available from the conference Treasury Services Office).
 - b. *Funding Design:*
 - (1) *Creation of the Retiree Security Supplement Fund*, which was created December 31, 2008. This Restricted Fund shall be vested with a minimum of \$5,000,000. Subsequently, additional contributions to this Fund (corpus or principal) shall be made of all free reserve available at year-end. Free reserve is defined as the fund balance in excess of the Claims Reserve required by the Plan. The Claims Reserve is 25% of the prior year's claims paid.
 - (2) The purpose of the Retiree Security Supplement Fund is to secure the retiree medical benefit by contributing 4% of the fund balance (which consists of corpus or principal and earnings from dividends, interest and appreciation) each year to the Retired Clergy Medical Plan. The Fund's contribution will reduce the Net Estimated Claims Cost of the Retired Clergy Medical Plan to the Base Estimated Claims Cost.
 - (3) Net Estimated Claims Cost is defined as Total Estimated Claims Costs (including administration, stop-loss insurance and other operating expenses), less all contributions from other charitable trusts, foundations or individuals, such as The Cole Foundation.
- c. *Premium Design:*
 - (1) Participants enrolled **prior to January 1, 2003** will contribute the Base Estimated Claims Cost.
 - (2) Participants enrolled in the retiree plan **on or after January 1, 2003**, will contribute based on "years enrolled in the Active Health Benefits Plan". The contribution will be based on a percentage of the plan year's Net Estimated Claims Cost, as follows:
 - (a) 1-10 Years: 100% of the Net Estimated Claims Cost.

- (b) Beginning in the 11th year, the contribution will decline approximately 1% per year to an amount equal to the Base Estimated Claims Cost.
 - (c) All of the years prior to 2003 that a clergyperson has been appointed to a local church or conference position will be considered “years enrolled in the Active Health Benefits Plan”.
 - (d) Participants must be enrolled in Medicare Parts A & B to be eligible for the Retired Clergy Medical Plan.
10. That each participant electing dependent coverage be required to remit premium payments in the method established by the Health Benefits Committee and that dependent coverage remain in effect only when premium payments are current.
 11. That each participating participant be required to remit premium payments in the method established by the Health Benefits Committee and approved by the 2009 Annual Conference and coverage remain in effect only when premium payments are current. The current participating participant method is a progressive scale percent of premium based on salary.
 12. That sufficient funds for hospital/medical coverage be included in the appropriate 2024 apportioned funds to pay premiums for district superintendents and administrative, program, and support staff members of the conference headquarters.
 13. That costs for insurance for clergy on medical leave shall be borne by the Board and not included in the 2024 conference apportioned budget.

Words of Appreciation

The board expresses its gratitude and that of the conference to Dale C. Bryant, benefits administrator since October 1998.

Questions dealing with pension, health insurance or group life insurance should be directed to Mr. Bryant at 704.714.2332 or e-mail dbryant@wnccumc.org.

Sarah B. Kalish, President
Lynne Gilbert, Treasurer
R. Mark King, Conference Benefits Officer

3. COMMISSION ON EQUITABLE COMPENSATION

Policies and Guidelines for Administering the Equitable Compensation Fund (Calendar Year 2024)

1. Policies Pertaining to the Commission on Equitable Compensation:

¶¶ 342 and 625 of *The Book of Discipline* (2016), direct the Commission on Equitable Compensation (CEC) to recommend a minimum level of pastoral compensation for clergy serving as local church pastors under episcopal appointment and to administer the Equitable Compensation Fund (ECF) as a source of funding of last resort for pastors-in-charge to maintain a living, equitable level of compensation for these itinerant ministers.

a. *Executive Committee:*

During each quadrennium, at its organizational meeting, the CEC shall elect an executive committee consisting of a chairperson, a vice-chairperson, a secretary, and additional members from the full commission as needed, so that the executive committee consists of an equal number of clergy and laypersons. The assistant to the bishop and a cabinet representative will serve as ex-officio members of the executive committee.

b. *Definition of Compensation:*

As used by the CEC, the term “compensation” includes the annual amount designated as cash salary for service rendered, additional insurance premiums over and above the conference-approved program of individual medical insurance for clergy, accountable professional expenses, household expenses paid by the local charge, and other fringe benefits. Compensation does not include housing allowance in lieu of parsonage to the extent of actual housing, fair market value of supplied parsonages, reimbursement for parish-related travel expenses paid by the local charge to the extent of actual travel expenses or use of an automobile for parish travel purposes, funds provided for continuing education to the extent they are used for that purpose, bona fide gifts or honoraria for special services, allowances for moving expenses paid by the annual conference or local church, or individual medical insurance premiums in the amount of the conference-approved program of insurance for clergy.

2. Types of Grants

Two categories of support are available from the ECF: emergency sustentation grants and regular grants.

- a. *Emergency sustentation* grants are available under the provisions of ¶626, which states that each church or charge has an obligation to pay in full compensation, as approved by the charge conference, to its pastor(s). If it becomes apparent that a church or charge will be unable to so provide the compensation approved by the charge conference, the church shall immediately notify the district superintendent and may request consideration for a short-term emergency grant from the Equitable Compensation Fund (cf. also ¶625).
- b. *Regular grants* are available for those churches or charges which, at their annual charge conferences, determine that they will be unable to provide compensation at the minimum level set by the annual conference. In cooperation with the bishop and cabinet, the CEC offers grants, on a declining schedule, totaling no more than 30 percent of the appropriate minimum pastoral compensation for a period of five or fewer years.
- c. In 2022, 9 churches received regular grants. A total of \$51,602 was allocated in grants.

3. Definitions and Classifications of Pastors

Subject to these policies and guidelines, pastors appointed to full-time service under ¶338.1 or ¶318.1 shall have a claim on the ECF and shall not receive less than the minimum compensation specified in the current schedule (¶342).

- a. *Pastors Serving Less Than Full-Time:* Subject to these policies and guidelines, elders and provisional members serving as pastors appointed to less than full-time service under the provisions of ¶338.2 shall have a claim upon the ECF if serving at least $\frac{3}{4}$ -time as negotiated by the district superintendent at the time of the appointment, receiving not less than this percentage of the minimum compensation specified in the current schedule. Local pastors serving $\frac{3}{4}$ -time shall also have a claim upon the ECF, receiving not less than this percentage of the minimum compensation specified in the current schedule.
- b. *Pastors Attending School:* Subject to these policies and guidelines, a pastor appointed to a church or charge who is enrolled in good standing in a college or seminary for a minimum of nine hours per semester or equivalent in fulfillment of the requirements for conference affiliation and who is not otherwise gainfully employed shall have a claim upon the ECF if serving at $\frac{3}{4}$ -time as negotiated by the district superintendent at the time of the appointment. In determining the compensation for a pastor attending school, grants received for education expenses shall not be considered as part of compensation. Pastors who discontinue or complete their studies and intend to be considered as serving full-time shall be compensated at that level only after certification by the CEC.
- c. *Part-Time Local Pastors and Retired Supply Pastors:* Since the ECF is designed to support those in full-time services as pastors of local churches, those charges utilizing part-time local pastors at $\frac{1}{2}$ -time or $\frac{1}{4}$ -time as negotiated by the district superintendent at the time of the appointment and retired supply pastors shall not have a claim upon the ECF.
- d. *Pastors Engaged in Continuing Education:* Inasmuch as continuing education is required of all ordained clergy, no pastor engaged in a program of continuing education under ¶351 shall by reason of such study leave be denied the minimum compensation support as specified in the current schedule, except that in cases of educational leave in excess of one month, the supplement shall be adjusted as negotiated by the district superintendent and the CEC.
- e. *Deacons in Full Connection:* As provided in ¶331.10b, deacons in full connection serving within the local church “shall receive salary from the local church, charge, or cooperative parish not less than the minimum salary established by the equitable compensation policy of the annual conference for full-time or part-time pastors,” although these entities should be reminded that they are fully responsible for the compensation of these individuals. If the bishop and cabinet appoint a deacon in full connection to a position as pastor-in-charge of a local church or charge, that individual shall have a claim upon the ECF and shall not receive less than the minimum compensation specified in the current schedule for elders in full connection.

4. Request Procedures

Regular grants from the CEC must be requested by a formal action of the charge conference, supported by an electronic grant application through the conference grant software. Requests must be completed in full and be accompanied by all required documentation in order to be processed by the CEC. Required documentation must include but is not limited to: a written plan for decreasing reliance on equitable compensation, letters of support from the pastor, church leadership, and district superintendent. The more information the CEC has about a local church situation, the better equipped the CEC is to provide support. For emergency sustentation grants, the district superintendent is responsible for submitting documentation to the cabinet and CEC executive committee for immediate processing, approval, and payment authorization.

5. Guidelines for Recommending Minimum Compensation

The CEC desires to recommend minimum pastoral compensation that is equitable for both churches and pastors. It is acknowledged that economic conditions vary across the annual conference. To be equitable, therefore, there must be awareness of the financial impact of these recommendations upon the local churches in order not to make pastoral support an excessive burden while providing clergy with fair, living, and equitable compensation.

In making these recommendations, the CEC segments the minimum compensation levels into the following categories:

- Elders and Deacons in Full Connection;
- Provisional/Associate Members;
- Local Pastors who have completed the Course of Study or Masters of Divinity;
- Local Pastors who have not completed the Course of Study.

Brad Treece, Chairperson, Commission on Equitable Compensation
Brandon Lazarus, Chairperson, Just Compensation Task Force

Proposal: Equitable Compensation Policies and Guidelines

(Petition 3) Approved June 16, 2023

The CEC proposes the adoption of these policies, definitions, and classifications for administering the ECF and these guidelines and schedules for recommending minimum compensation for 2024.

A. Allocation of Requested Equitable Compensation Fund Budget for 2024:

Regular Grants	\$172,000
Emergency Sustentation Grants	\$25,000
Expenses of the Commission	\$3,000
Total	\$200,000

B. Schedule of 2024 Minimum Compensation for Clergy Serving Full-Time Appointments:

Longevity Increases: Because of inflation costs, the CEC is recommending a 2% increase in base minimum compensation. The CEC is also recommending that the .75% longevity increase for each year of service for all clergy serving full-time appointments be continued. This longevity increase is effective after the clergy reaches 5 years of service and increases each January following each additional 5 years of service with a maximum increase achieved after 20 years of service.

January 1, 2024, proposed base minimum compensation with longevity increase:

0-5 years of service:

Elders and Deacons in Full Connection	\$44,125
Provisional/Associate Members	\$39,713
Local Pastors who have completed the Course of Study/M.Div.	\$36,955
Local Pastors before completion of Course of Study	\$35,300

After 5 years of service:

Elders and Deacons in Full Connection.....	\$45,805
Provisional/Associate Members	\$41,255
Local Pastors who have completed the Course of Study/M.Div.	\$38,362
Local Pastors before completion of Course of Study	\$36,444

After 10 years of service:

Elders and Deacons in Full Connection	\$47,548
Provisional/Associate Members	\$42,794
Local Pastors who have completed the Course of Study/M.Div.	\$39,822
Local Pastors before completion of Course of Study	\$38,039

After 15 years of service:

Elders and Deacons in Full Connection	\$49,358
Provisional/Associate Members	\$44,423
Local Pastors who have completed the Course of Study/M.Div.	\$41,338
Local Pastors before completion of Course of Study	\$39,487

After 20 years of service:

Elders and Deacons in Full Connection	\$51,237
Provisional/Associate Members	\$46,114
Local Pastors who have completed the Course of Study/M.Div.	\$42,912
Local Pastors before completion of Course of Study	\$40,990



JUST COMPENSATION TASK FORCE

The Just Compensation Task Force has been compiling data and stories on compensation differences between white clergy and clergy of color since 2021. Below is the most recent data on the salary gaps for women and black full elders.

We chose to focus on full elders (FEs) because we found that Licensed Local Pastors (LLPs) had a much smaller difference in salary based on race or gender. In fact, in 2022 female full-time local pastors made only \$7 less on average than male full-time local pastors and in 2023 they made, on average, \$665 more. Black full-time local pastors did make about \$2,500 less than their white counterparts in 2022 and 2023 but with only 9 black full-time local pastors in 2022 and 14 in 2023, the larger issue is around overall representation. Black, Latinx, and Asian clergy are far less likely than white clergy to be ordained (about 25% compared to 51%) and far more likely to be part-time than full time (46% compared to 32%).

Since the pay gap for LLPs is smaller than FEs, we decided to focus more on the breakdown of FEs. Again, because of lack of representation of Native, Latinx, and Asian FEs (1, 4, and 4) we chose to primarily focus on the pay gap, by years of service, of black FEs vs. white FEs and Male FEs vs Female FEs.

Below are the pay gaps based on years of service (YOS) for women and black FEs. The number in parenthesis is the total number in each category.

	2021	2022	2023
0-10 YOS			
Women	\$676 (22)	\$49 (24)	\$718 (21)
Black	\$5,475 (5)	\$5,371 (6)	\$6,583 (3)
11-20 YOS			
Women	\$2,420 (42)	\$1,668 (38)	\$2,417 (34)
Black	\$11,017 (9)	\$9,154 (6)	\$10,074 (7)
21-30 YOS			
Women	\$9,501 (37)	\$14,881 (36)	\$11,691 (36)
Black	\$13,456 (8)	\$15,873 (9)	\$9,193 (8)
31+ YOS			
Women	\$6,307 (7)	\$16,385 (7)	\$30,642 (7)
Black	\$6,091 (1)	-\$12,443 (1)	-\$10,471 (1)
Total Average Gap			
Women	\$9,109 (108)	\$11,655 (105)	\$11,482 (98)
Black	\$14,661 (23)	\$13,962 (22)	\$10,279 (19)
Total Average Gap Adjusting for YOS			
Women	\$4,742 (108)	\$6,809 (105)	\$7,475 (98)
Black	\$10,446 (23)	\$9,889 (22)	\$6,969 (19)

As you can see from these numbers, the salary gap for women and black elders with under 21 years of service shrank from 2021-22 but then increased from 2022-23. Those with 21-30 years of service saw the reverse where the gap grew from 2021-22 but then shrank from 21-30. The most jarring difference happened among women with over 30 years of service. The gap grew by over \$10,000 from 2021-22 and by an additional \$14,000 from 2022-23 leading to a gap in 2023 salaries of \$30,642 between men and women. Each of the seven women with over 30 years of service are white. There is only one black full elder serving in a local church in the WNCC and that one person makes more than the average white full elder with over 30 years of service.

While it was not the main purview of the task force, we also looked at representation of people of color. This data shows the Western North Carolina Conference clergy are overwhelmingly white. White clergy make up 86% of clergy serving in a local church but only 70% of North Carolinians according to the most recent census data. This is, however, better than the lay representation which is 94% white according to 2022 statistics. The white clergy are also more likely to be FEs than any other status, have more average years of service remaining than the people of color, and have a large proportion of women. In fact, there are only four black women who are FEs serving a local church. Two of those elders are retiring at this year's annual conference and the two remaining are already eligible for retirement. This data is based on the salaries set at the previous year's charge conference so this does not reflect changes in appointments that will be happening at this year's annual conference, nor do they reflect clergy and churches who will be disaffiliating.

Brandon Lazarus, Chairperson

4. CONFERENCE BOARD OF TRUSTEES, INC.

The Board of Trustees, Western North Carolina Conference, United Methodist Church, Inc., is a nonprofit corporation incorporated under North Carolina law, in accordance with *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church*, and is subject to the authority of the *Discipline*. The current class of the Board of Trustees held an organizational meeting on August 13, 2020, and has been meeting monthly since then.

The primary responsibilities of the Board of Trustees are to hold title to, manage, sell, lease, and operate WNCC real property, including closed churches, and hold and invest other securities and funds on behalf of the WNCC. The Board of Trustees, per the *Discipline*, has the authority to legally protect the rights of the WNCC in a wide variety of legal settings, including litigation. For clarification, the Board of Trustees play no role in the management or investments of monies in the denominational pension for clergy.

Investments

A. The Jesse Spencer Bell Fund, under trustee management, is invested through the United Methodist Foundation of Western North Carolina, Inc.

B. Earnings during 2023 were distributed to the following designated beneficiaries:

Western North Carolina Conference Board of Pensions	\$4,708.06
Western North Carolina Conference United Women in Faith.....	\$2,656.50
Brevard College	\$5,786.44
Total Distribution.....	\$13,151.00

Conference Center

Property Management

All conference property management and broker services are handled by Wesley Community Development Corporation, a nonprofit that helps North Carolina churches develop or repurpose real estate to best meet church and community needs. The board is pleased to share the installation of Electric Vehicle Charging stations were added to the property in 2023. This further exemplifies the stewardship of the Conference's environmental witness.

Leasing

The lease with NVR, Inc. (parent company of Ryan Homes and NVR Mortgage) for occupation of 80% of the first floor Conference Center building in Huntersville continues for the third of seven years. The total yearly lease payments will cover most, if not all, of the operational expenses of the Conference Center building.

Episcopal Residence

The Episcopal Residence Committee cares for the conference-owned Episcopal Residence, constituted according to the provisions of the *Discipline*. The Trustees send a representative to this committee. Bishop Ken Carter and Pam Carter live in the Episcopal Residence located at 3416 Maryhurst Lane, Charlotte, N.C. 28226.

Discontinued Churches

Please note that ¶2548.4 of *The Book of Discipline* specifies that all deeds, records, and official and legal papers of a discontinued church shall be deposited for permanent safekeeping with the Commission of Archives and History of the Annual Conference. The central repository is currently housed at Pfeiffer University in Misenheimer, NC. A list of the local churches that have been discontinued since the last annual conference can be found in the Cabinet Resolutions of the Daily Proceedings of the Annual Conference.

Heritage Cemetery Association, LLC

The Heritage Cemetery Association was established to hold, manage, and maintain certain cemeteries belonging to closed, abandoned, or discontinued churches in The Western North Carolina Conference. Funds for this Association are managed by the United Methodist Foundation of Western North Carolina, Inc., and the properties are managed by Wesley Community Development Corporation. As of December 31, 2022, the Association was comprised of 20 cemetery properties.

Disaffiliated Churches

At the Special Session of General Conference in February 2019, a pathway for a local church to disaffiliate from The United Methodist Church was adopted. Paragraph 2553 of the *Discipline* is now effective and will be in effect through December 31, 2023.

This provision allows a local church to leave the denomination, i.e., disaffiliate, under certain circumstances and subject to a series of agreements and required approvals of other denominational bodies along with payment of 24 months of apportionments and a pro rata share of aggregate unfunded pension obligations. Under this provision, the main body of decision making and negotiating on behalf of the conference is the annual conference board of trustees. At a special called session of the Western North Carolina Conference on May 6, 2023, the conference was asked to approve the disaffiliation agreements reached with 192 local churches. Those churches are listed in the official records and proceedings of that called session. The Board is especially appreciative of the work Chancellor Greg Huffman and Assistant to Bishop Carter, Rev. Amy Coles as well as each of the District Superintendents, undertook in preparing for this action.

Lawsuit

On November 10, 2022, the Board of Trustees, along with the annual conference and Bishop Ken Carter, were named in a lawsuit by 38 local churches of the conference. The complaint was filed with the Superior Court in Iredell County. Several churches subsequently dropped out of the lawsuit.

The complaint sought to invalidate the trust clause and use restrictions set out in the *Discipline*, claimed various actors within the church had departed from church doctrine, claimed breaches of fiduciary duty and constructive fraud regarding the pension and treatment of the plaintiff churches, ultimately seeking to allow these congregation to disaffiliate without any requirements of ¶2553 and without any costs associated.

The churches in the lawsuit were: Minneapolis (Newland); Mountain View (Statesville); Pisgah (Hiddenite); Wesley Chapel (Hamptonville); Kistler's Chapel (Rutherfordton); Lebanon (Mill Spring); New Hope (Rutherfordton); Arneys Fairview (Morganton); Boiling Springs (Boiling Springs); Concord (Catawba); Crossroads (Concord); Good Shepherd (Charlotte); Mill Grove (Midland); Mount Mitchell (Kannapolis); Vanderburg (Mooresville); Weddington (Weddington); Fairfield (High Point); Groometown (Greensboro); Mitchell's Grove (High Point); St. Andrews (Greensboro); Vickrey (Greensboro); Bethel (New London); Central (Asheboro); Central Falls (Asheboro); Ebenezer (Mount Ulla); Gold Hill (Gold Hill); Gray's Chapel (Franklinville); Liberty (Gold Hill); Palestine (Albemarle); Rockwell (Rockwell); West Bend (Asheboro); Bethesda (Lexington); Chestnut Grove (King); Delta (Sandy Ridge); Mount Carmel (Winston Salem); Shady Grove (Winston-Salem).

The Board of Trustees, along with Bishop Carter, retained counsel to represent the defending parties. Motions to dismiss the lawsuit as barred by the First Amendment and other dispositive motions were filed with the court. On Monday, March 20, 2023, North Carolina Superior Court Judge Richard L. Doughton issued a ruling granting the motions to dismiss. The board and conference leadership continue to work with these 36 congregations, with the desire that they choose to disaffiliate through the established and affirmed processes as laid out in ¶2553 of *The Book of Discipline*.

Vehicles

In order to steward the conference's resources more effectively, the Trustees moved to purchase vehicles rather than lease. Currently the conference fleet includes 11 Subarus (seven Outbacks, two Foresters, and two Crosstreks) with a plan to keep these vehicles in service for at least five years. These vehicles are used by the District Superintendents, Bishop, Bishop's Assistant, and Director of Church Development.

Boy Scouts

As previously reported, in 2020, The Boy Scouts of America filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection in Delaware.

In 2021, the Conference Trustees engaged with the United Methodist denomination in a coordinated effort across conferences to present a unified legal position. The UMC legal position was directed by a committee of conference chancellors who coordinated with the Council of Bishops, GCFA, and other conference chancellors and treasurers. The effort was designed to protect certain rights of local churches and annual conferences to indemnification and insurance under chartered organization agreements with the Boy Scouts.

In December 2021, United Methodist leaders reached a settlement with the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) in their pending bankruptcy proceedings as to the treatment of sexual abuse claims related to the UMC and other chartered organizations. United Methodists across the United States agreed to contribute \$30 million over three years to youth harmed in Boy Scout programs, as well as committing to prayers and a willingness to listen to the experiences of abuse. Upon final court approval of the BSA bankruptcy reorganization plan, through the BSA victims fund, UMC churches and organizations would be released from claims of sexual abuse that may have occurred in congregation-sponsored Scouting programs. In March of 2022, the bankruptcy court held hearings regarding the confirmation of the plan. On July 29, 2022, Judge Laurie S. Silverstein approved most of the Bankruptcy motions, including the United Methodist component of a \$30 Million offering to settle claims against UMC congregations. On March 28, 2023, a federal district court judge confirmed the Boy Scout Chapter 11 plan, but certain interested parties have indicated they plan to appeal the confirmation to the United States Third Circuit Court of Appeals. It is unclear at this time if any part of the plan will be implemented pending appeal.

A number of local churches in the WNCC and the Conference itself were sued in state court under the SAFE Child Act (a state law which allowed alleged victims of sexual abuse to pursue time barred claims through December 31, 2021). These cases continue to be subject to the automatic stay imposed by the BSA bankruptcy case until the plan is fully implemented. The constitutionality of the SAFE Child Act is currently being challenged in the North Carolina Supreme Court (by non-UMC parties), the results of which may dispose of these cases.

Work continues to proceed to reach a final and just conclusion to this tragic situation. The board's greatest concern is for the affected boy scouts and their families who were victims of horrible abuse.

At this time, the Board believes the settlement is proceeding as approved. The board asked the Council on Finance and Administration, and CFA approved, that the Western North Carolina Conference share of the settlement, valued at \$1,065,004 which comprises of the aggregate share of named Western North Carolina congregations' obligation, be set aside from reserves. The board waits for final word to make the distribution.

Insurance Matters

The Book of Discipline requires local church trustees to annually review and report on the adequacy of local church property and liability insurance coverage "to ensure that the church, its properties, and its personnel are properly protected against risks." To assist local church trustees with this requirement, GCFA guidelines for minimum insurance policies and coverage limits are available on the conference website (wnccumc.org) under Administration/Forms, Documents, and Publications and are recommended for comparison with existing local church policies. A copy of the minimum requirements is a part of this report.

Liability coverage for sexual misconduct has been eliminated, altered, or only provided under separate policies by many insurance companies. The Trustees continue to admonish all churches to confirm that required Safe Sanctuaries policies and procedures are in place, and to reevaluate all insurance programs with their insurance agents. Such coverage is typically purchased through a Property and Casualty Insurance provider.

The Board of Trustees works with the conference insurance provider, Church Mutual Insurance Company, a nationally recognized and specialized provider of property and casualty insurance to churches and religious organizations, to provide a new cost-effective program for Worker's Compensation for WNCC churches. WNCC congregations now have the option to participate in the Church Mutual program at a reduced rate as well as to save on the Expense Constant Fee.

Eric Lane, President



United Methodist Church Minimum Insurance Requirements

Rev. December, 2021

The Book of Discipline requires local church trustees to annually review and report on the adequacy of local church property and liability insurance coverage “to ensure that the church, its properties, and its personnel are properly protected against risks.” Since 1797, the *Book of Discipline* has provided that the property and assets of local churches are held in trust for the benefit of the denomination. Inadequate insurance puts local church property and assets at risk, including the denomination’s trust interest therein. Therefore, in representing the denomination’s trust interest, the following minimum insurance requirements are adopted for local churches:

COMMERCIAL PROPERTY & LIABILITY PACKAGE POLICY, to include the following minimum limits:

Property

- ✓ Buildings, Pipe Organs & Contents - Insured to Replacement Value, “Special Risk” Coverage
- ✓ All Church buildings should have an updated replacement cost valuation every five (5) years.
- ✓ The replacement cost valuation must be updated within 180 days if additional square footage is added.
- ✓ A Church building may be insured on an actual cash value basis where replacement cost valuation is not an option available to the Church. The Church should understand that it is being insured on an actual cash value basis and use its best efforts to complete the necessary upgrades and renovations required to qualify for replacement cost valuation coverage.
- ✓ A church building may be insured on a functional replacement valuation basis where it is a desired option on the part of the church or conference. **The church should understand it may only do so with the written approval of the conference.**

Liability

• Commercial General Liability	Occurrence	\$1,000,000	Aggregate	\$3,000,000
• Pastoral Counseling Liability	Occurrence	\$1,000,000	Aggregate	\$3,000,000
• Hired & Non-Owned Auto Liability	Occurrence	\$1,000,000	Aggregate	\$3,000,000
• Employee Benefits Liability (EBL)	Occurrence	\$1,000,000	Aggregate	\$1,000,000
• Medical Payments	\$10,000			
• Sexual Misconduct Liability*				
Church Membership of 500+	Occurrence	\$1,000,000	Aggregate	\$2,000,000
Church Membership under 500	Occurrence	\$250,000	Aggregate	\$500,000

*A lower limit of liability may be selected in the event that a state or other jurisdiction places a legally binding limit on the damage awards for sexual misconduct that is lower than the above referenced per occurrence limit. The limit selected may not be lower than the maximum damage award set by the state or other applicable jurisdiction.

- Crime / Employee Dishonesty Occurrence \$25,000

DIRECTORS' & OFFICERS / EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES LIABILITY, to include the following minimum limits:

- Directors' & Officers \$1,000,000
- Employment Practices Liability – Option 1 \$1,000,000 (including Sexual Harassment)
 - Required for churches with 500 or more members or any church with a preschool, school, or camp
- Employment Practices Liability – Option 2 \$250,000 (including Sexual Harassment)
 - For churches with fewer than 500 members that do not have a preschool, school, or camp

UMBRELLA / EXCESS LIABILITY An Umbrella / Excess Liability policy is suggested for all churches and required for those with a membership of five-hundred (500) or more.

If applicable, this excess policy must extend over Commercial General Liability, Pastoral Counseling, Employee Benefits Liability, Owned Auto, Hired & Non-Owned Auto and Workers Compensation. A higher per occurrence limit may be appropriate based on specific risk characteristics such as church size and/or scope of operations and ministries.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION / EMPLOYERS LIABILITY INSURANCE, as required by state law:

- Bodily Injury by Accident Each Accident \$1,000,000
- Bodily Injury by Disease Policy Limit \$1,000,000
- Bodily Injury by Disease Each Employee \$1,000,000

COMMERCIAL AUTOMOBILE LIABILITY, applicable only if the church owns an automobile; to include the following minimum limits:

- Limit of Liability \$1,000,000

SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION FOR CONGREGATIONS WITH FEWER THAN 250 MEMBERS***Employee Benefits Liability***

This coverage **may not be required** if any of the following are true:

- The church does not administer any health, life, and accident benefits, or
- The church uses a third party to administer its benefits.

Directors and Officers

Lower limits of coverage may be purchased if the combined value of the church's property value and its annual revenues do not exceed \$1,000,000. The limits can be decreased to (\$100,000 per occurrence and \$300,000 aggregate).

Employment Practices Liability

Lower limits of coverage (\$100,000 per occurrence and \$300,000 aggregate) may be purchased if:

- The church has fewer than three volunteers or employees,
- Has not terminated an employee in the past year, and
- Has no plans to terminate an employee in the next year.

5. CONFERENCE RESOURCE CENTER

The WNCC Resource Center is proud to be a free lending library for all churches in the Western North Carolina Conference. The mission of the Resource Center is to provide a deep well of engaging, relevant books and media supporting the mission of the local church in making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

The Resource Center is dedicated to providing current, relevant resources. So, staff completed a deep cleaning of the library this year, which included purging more than 2,000 resources that were no longer circulating with regular use. Individuals and groups from local churches throughout the conference came to the Conference Center in Huntersville to shop, adding these free resources to their personal and church libraries. This process made more room available for new resources to be added to the Resource Center catalog. It also made it possible for seasonal resources that were in storage to be moved to the main library space.

Circulation increased 20 percent from 2021 to 2022. As of March 2023, the Resource Center boasts 4,333 resources on its shelves, including books, small group study kits, DVDs, vacation Bible school starter kits, stewardship campaign programs, Caring Congregation and grief program support, and curriculum for all ages and stages of life. Additionally, congregations continue to enjoy borrowing the Resource Center's two 24-foot portable canvas labyrinths, especially during Lent.

What's ahead for the Resource Center? The Resource Center will continue to innovate and look for new ways to support our local churches. For example, in 2023, the Resource Center is partnering with Hinton Rural Life Center to provide their digital confirmation curriculum, *Theotokos Connections*, for free to WNCC churches. Learn more at <https://www.wnccumc.org/theotokos> and keep up with all new partnerships at <https://www.wnccumc.org/resourcecenter>.

Another example for the year ahead is a partnership with Upper Room Books. Through this partnership, the Resource Center is providing the brand-new *Safer Sanctuaries* book at a deeply discounted price for WNCC churches. After the book release in spring 2023, Discipleship Ministries staff will provide multiple Safer Sanctuaries training opportunities for WNCC churches.

In addition to amazing partnerships, the Resource Center also maintains an online learning platform for the conference. As of the writing of this report, online training opportunities include Walking Your Neighborhood Way, Lighthouse Congregations, Safe Sanctuaries, Laity Sexual Misconduct, Residence in Ordained Ministry (RIOM), Orientation to Ministry, and recordings from Winter Leadership Training conferences. The conference's online learning platform is powered by Cornerstone and you can learn more at <https://www.wnccumc.org/onlinelearning>.

The Resource Center continues to purchase new resources recommended by staff, clergy, and laity for use by churches and individuals for the education, leadership training and spiritual formation of children, youth, and adults. Clergy and laity alike can turn to the Resource Center staff for help and guidance in selecting resources that fit their needs. Contact the Resource Center at resourcecenter@wnccumc.org or 704-535-2260 with any questions or to set up a free patron account, update contact information, or rent one of the labyrinths.

Resource Center materials are managed and supported by Surpass software. The online catalog, <https://wncc.library.site>, is open to all for browsing, but you must have a patron account to make reservations.

Havaleh Havelka, Training and Resource Specialist

6. COMMISSION ON ARCHIVES AND HISTORY

In this year of challenge and change, the Commission on Archives and History continues its work of collecting, recording and preserving the story of the people called Methodists in the Western North Carolina Conference. The commission takes seriously its work as a "Ministry of Memory," so that all the constituencies of the church may continue to learn from the past and anticipate the future.

While the COVID-19 pandemic conditions abated during 2022, the commission continued to meet virtually via Zoom in February and September of 2022 and February of 2023. It also continued to oversee the work of the Conference Archives, located in the G. A. Pfeiffer Library at Pfeiffer University in Misenheimer, N.C. Highlights this year include:

- Rev. James Pyatt continues as the part-time Conference Archivist. He supervises the work of an archival assistant, Mrs. Sonja Clough, who works in the archives on a part-time basis.
- The archives houses documents and information available to those wishing to conduct research and/or to explore United Methodist history. The number of research requests in 2022 was the second highest since the Archives began keeping such records, with information being sought by district offices, the Church Legacy Initiative, conference staff, conference trustees, the conference chancellor, local church historians, genealogists and others. This healthy and active archives expects activity to be even higher in 2023, with requests for information exceeding all previous records.
- The commission commends Archivist Pyatt for writing a series of articles for the conference that recognizes leaders from the past for Black History, Women's History, Asian American, Hispanic/Latino History, and Native American History months. The response to these articles has been positive. These stories are told and remembered as the commission lifts up and celebrates the diversity of leadership we have had and continue to experience in this conference.
- The commission continues to desire the digitization of archival records during this quadrennium, but the project has stalled. When the Duke Divinity School library closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the project was put on hold. The commission anticipates moving forward with digitization as soon as possible.
- Now that Pfeiffer University has reopened to outside visitors, the conference archives has also been reopened to the public. However, most research requests and other queries have been handled mainly by phone and online. The archives is also very busy receiving and processing records being forwarded from disaffiliating churches. That number currently approaches 100.

Grave Markers: The commission continues to provide a clergy grave marker upon the passing of any clergy member of the conference. During this conference year, markers have been presented to nearly two dozen affected families. It anticipates continuing this ministry on behalf of the conference.

Training Videos: The series of six training videos which were produced last year by the commission are now available on the website of the General Commission on Archives and History (GCAH). They are also being used in their entirety in a GCAH course to train conference and local church historians. Topics include an introduction to the historian's task, how to set up an archive (two parts), working with pastors to preserve church records, resources available from the conference archives, and how to write a church history. The videos are also available through a link on the conference website.

Historic Site: In December of 2022, The General Conference Commission and Archives certified and registered the Shook House/Louisa Chapel as a UMC historic site for the conference. The GCAH provided one marker for this newly designated site and the conference commission has voted to provide a second one so that each building will bear this identification. The annual conference of 2021 approved the site for the Western North Carolina Conference.

Anniversary Churches: The Commission on Archives and History continues its tradition of recognizing those churches within the conference who are celebrating significant anniversaries this year.

- Those churches identified as celebrating sesquicentennial anniversaries in 2023 include Level Cross (Randolph County), Linville (Burke County), Pilot View (Surry County), St. Paul (Kernersville), and Trinity (King).
- Smethport in Ashe County is celebrating its centennial anniversary this year.
- The commission also recognizes Rocky Springs (Alexander County) who was inadvertently omitted from the list of churches celebrating their bicentennial in 2022.
- A more complete list of churches celebrating significant anniversaries will appear in the conference journal.

The Southeastern Jurisdiction (SEJ) Commission on Archives and History met at Lake Junaluska, November 13-14, 2022. Sandra Williamson, chairperson of the conference commission, serves as a member.

- The SEJ has approved the moving of the SEJ Archives from Lake Junaluska to Emory University in Atlanta Ga. The move will take place by the end of May 2023. Only the SEJ materials are being transferred and the materials related to Lake Junaluska will remain there. SEJ Archivist Nancy Watkins will retire at the end of May, but will remain in Western North Carolina and will remain on this conference commission for the remainder of the quadrennium.
- The Western North Carolina Conference will host the SEJ Historical Society in Greensboro, July 18-21, 2023. The theme of this annual meeting will be "The Methodist Church and Civil Rights." The meeting will be held primarily on the campus of historic Bennett College, which will be celebrating its 150th anniversary during 2023. The meeting is open to all interested persons and we invite and welcome all who can attend. St. Matthews and West Market Street, both historic churches in Greensboro, have also agreed to host events during the meeting.

God is at work in and through the people called United Methodist in Western North Carolina. This commission pledges to continue to collect the documents, preserve the materials, equip local historians, and tell the story.

Sandra Williamson, Chairperson
Charles Curtis, Vice Chairperson

7. COMMISSION ON COMMUNICATIONS

The primary work of the Commission is to support and communicate the annual conference's mission of "Follow Jesus, Make Disciples, Transform the World." The commission strives to do this by "Building relationships through communication; the commission will help create space for people to interact and have conversation in safe spaces. It will share the stories of how God is at work among us as United Methodists in Western North Carolina that in turn shares the Good News of Jesus Christ."

Traditionally, the Commission on Communications provides leadership for the Western North Carolina Conference in communications, public relations, social media, and promotional awareness of the programs of the conference. The commission assists with managing the image of the conference, as well as working to provide resources for local churches. Whether in the form of training, sharing news, or crisis management, the commission exists to equip and encourage the ministry efforts of local churches, districts, and the annual conference to achieve identified goals.

In many ways, 2022 was a rebuilding and repurposing year for the Commission on Communications as it has experienced new leadership on several levels. Aimee Yeager became the Director of Communications in May 2022 and Shonnie Streder stepped into the role of chairperson. In August, Lindsay Hampton was welcomed as the Associate Director of Communications. In October, the commission met for a day of strategic planning, outlining the practical vision and strategic directions for 2023.

Stories of Faith, the annual conference magazine was released in December 2022 as a fully digital, multimedia publication, featuring not only written articles, but video and audio clips, hyperlinks, and more. The theme of the magazine was #BeUMC, and each article spoke to the heart of who the conference is as United Methodists. The issue featured highlights from the annual and jurisdictional conferences, stories of United Methodists' responses to social issues, a reflection on the disaster relief efforts in Haywood County, and uplifting stories of the good and faithful work of United Methodists in Western North Carolina.

The Means of Grace podcast continues to equip church leaders through expertise and examples with 31,398 listener downloads. This collaborative project includes a wide variety range of topics from ministry leaders around the conference. The most listened to episodes of the past year included reflections on the hopeful future of The United Methodist Church, conversations on equity and justice ministries, and inspirational stories of innovative ministries.

Also in 2022, Aimee Yeager was elected to the Leadership Team of the United Methodist Association of Communicators. Through this role, and in a wide variety of ways, the WNCC Office of Communications continues to network and partner with communications offices in other conferences, United Methodist agencies, and across the connection.

In 2023, the commission hopes to begin connecting with local church communicators across the conference through missional network communications liaisons, conference-wide trainings and professional development offerings, and the creation of district-wide communicators and writers cohorts. The commission remains excited about the future of The United Methodist Church in Western North Carolina and beyond and it is honored to have the privilege of sharing your stories.

Aimee Yeager, Conference Director of Communications

8. COMMITTEE ON CONFERENCE STAFF RELATIONS

The role of the Conference Staff Relations Committee (CSRC) is to provide support for conference office staff and staff in the district offices.

In November 2022, at the recommendation of the Rev. Dr. Mark King, Conference Treasurer and Director of Administrative Services, the committee approved raises for conference staff in 2023 based on performance measurements and salary bands that were approved in November 2021.

The committee met remotely on March 16, 2023 and voted to recommend to the Annual Conference a salary increase of \$2,400 for District Superintendents for 2024, a two percent increase. A two percent increase will also be budgeted for conference staff for 2024. At this meeting the CSRC voted to begin, as of April 1, 2023, providing housing allowances to Deacons appointed to serve on the conference staff.

The committee has created an updated draft personnel and policy handbook and will work to refine the document over the coming year with special focus on Diversity, Inclusion and Equity.

As the Western North Carolina Conference continues its ministry to Follow Jesus, Makes Disciples, Transform the World, the CSRC deeply appreciates our conference and district staff who have been flexible, creative, and faithful in their leadership and ministry.

The Rev. Amy Coles, Assistant to Bishop Carter, and the Rev. Dr. Mark King continue in their responsibilities with Human Relations for the conference staff. The committee is grateful for the work they do on behalf of CSRC.

Nancy Miller Campbell, Chairperson

9. COMMITTEE ON THE EPISCOPACY

On the evening of November 3, 2022, a crowd gathered in the Terrace Hotel during the Southeastern Jurisdictional Conference to greet whoever would be assigned as bishop for the remainder of the quadrennium. They waited for the announcement. Finally the word came that, since there was still another bishop to be elected, there would be no assignments announced until the following morning. On the morning of November 4, the final bishop was elected, assignments were announced, and Bishop Ken Carter's name was read as bishop. *Relief. Gratitude. Joy!*

The relief, gratitude, and joy because, in just over a year, even as Bishop Carter served as WNCC's bishop and continued to serve also as bishop of the Florida Conference, the committee learned what kind of bishop—and what kind of person—he is. The conference wanted, and needed, his kind of leadership to help navigate it through these turbulent years toward a positive future.

From September 2021 through December 2022, Bishop Carter sacrificially served both conferences, never complaining, making effective use of technology and jet travel to make the connections and provide the leadership necessary for his office. A fall and broken shoulder shortly after annual conference in 2022 slowed him down and required a time of recuperation, but the committee is grateful that many prayers and excellent medical care have led to a full recovery. It seems that he is everywhere, preaching in numerous churches, speaking in conferences, teaching seminary classes, hosting webinars and dialogues and much more. He gave great leadership in the Florida Conference in the aftermath of Hurricane Ian. No longer serving two conferences, and now with responsibilities beyond, the WNCC completed, he is giving his full time and energy to his ministries within this conference.

Bishop Carter is engaged with the needs of both clergy and laity. The committee has learned that Bishop Carter loves God and loves God's people. He is a warm caring shepherd. He is intentional about being present for all, spending two days in each district this winter and spring meeting with many varied and diverse groups, making sure that he is accessible to all people.

During a difficult time of disaffiliations and lawsuits, he has practiced empathetic listening without judgment or agenda, making sure that all feel as if they have been heard and have a voice. He does not get consumed with the drama or minutia and keeps "the main thing the main thing," as we seek to "Follow Jesus, Make Disciples, Transform the World."

Bishop Carter has his finger on the pulse of what is essential for fruitful ministry in Western North Carolina in local churches, in The United Methodist Church, and in the world. WNCC looks forward to serving with him as he continues to lead us in contributing to that pulse getting stronger and more indelible.

As the conference moves forward in the ebbs and flows of this season, the committee does so with the knowledge that The United Methodist Church remains steadfast in its relational spirit, and has full confidence in the denomination and its future. The committee choose hope, leans into love, and embraces God. As the conference stands alongside Bishop Carter, it urges all persons related to the Western North Carolina Conference to pray regularly for Bishop Carter, for his wife, Rev. Pam Carter, and for their daughters and families. May the God of hope fill everyone with all joy and peace that overflows with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Sandy Giles, Chairperson
Hank Dozier, Vice-Chairperson
Linda Linfors, Secretary

10. EPISCOPAL RESIDENCE COMMITTEE

The Episcopal Residence Committee is pleased to report that Bishop and Mrs. Kenneth H. Carter have been comfortably using and enjoying the residence provided by the Western North Carolina Conference. The Episcopal Residence Investment Fund stands at \$42,713.62, as of December 31, 2022. For 2024, the amount of \$10,000 will be included in the apportioned conference budget. The committee, in consultation with Bishop and Mrs. Carter, will continue to monitor expenses and request funding as is appropriate and necessary.

Shirley Canty, Chairperson

11. NOMINATIONS REPORT: 2020-24 AD INTERIM CHANGES

Board of Higher Education and Campus Ministry

Russell Darnall
Thomas Little
Zachary Park

Board of Laity

Kim Burns
Sandra Crews

Board of Ordained Ministry

Nicole Baten
Kelly Broman-Fulks
Myer Dahn
Lee Eggers
Mary Hatley
Lisa Marshall
Holly McKim
Cheryl Skinner

Commission on Archives & History

C. Anne Wray

Commission on Communications

Kara Chamberlin
Alison Haile

Committee on Episcopacy

Tiffany Little

Conference Board of Trustees

Margaret Dabbs

Council on Camp & Retreat Ministry

Katie Robinson

Council on Finance & Administration

Cassandra Rawls

Leadership Development Team

Leesa Sluder

B. CONFERENCE MISSION & MINISTRY

1. CONNECTIONAL TABLE

The Connectional Table (CT) exists to “connect the ministry and resources of the annual conference to increase and strengthen the number of vital congregations and conference entities and to coordinate, promote, and encourage the development of faithful disciples and fruitful leaders across the conference so that the power of God transforms lives and communities” (Plan of Organization and Rules of Order and Procedure of the Western NC Conference, Section C.2).

In 2022, the CT fulfilled its mission through the work of the Conference Mission and Ministry teams that constitute the body, highlighted in each team’s report. Important progress was made in each focus area, and we are grateful for the faithful commitment to building the Body of Christ shared by those who serve on each mission and ministry team.

Our CT remains committed to developing and implementing mission and ministry programs and initiatives that align with the framework for ministry provided by Bishop Ken Carter, which focuses on four key “pathways”:

- Creating vital, sustainable local congregations
- Dismantling racism
- Increasing the well-being of clergy and spiritual leaders
- Living into the vision of the continuing United Methodist Church.

In 2023, the CT looks forward to engaging more directly with Bishop Carter to explore the collective role of the CT more fully in realizing meaningful results in each pathway and to collaborating with him on any updates or clarifications to these pathways that may be needed given our current ministry context. In addition, the CT will continue our work to make the link between the conference program and ministry budgets and missional priorities more intentional and transparent.

Jae Lee and John Crane, Co-Chairpersons

2. CONNECTIONAL MINISTRIES

The Connectional Ministries supported adult-focused laity ministries, including planning, and conducting the Winter Leadership Training event and the continued development and execution of the Laity Engagement & Transformation initiative, including hosting several online forums related to various topics deemed helpful to the growth and development of local church laity leaders. Further, Connectional Ministries has partnered closely with the Board of Laity and the Conference Committee on Lay Servant Ministries to enhance Lay Servant Ministry curriculum options and data management processes. These focus areas will continue in 2023; these groups are committed to providing meaningful and diverse opportunities for equipping and engaging the laity for service in the local church and communities. Connectional Ministries strengthened the conference’s relationships with the Lake Junaluska Assembly and the Foundation for Evangelism, emphasizing Wesleyan tradition. Beyond the conference boundary, Connectional Ministries initiated a partnership with the Korean Methodist Church to build and cultivate a ministry partnership based on Methodist ecumenical movements

Jae Lee, Director of Connectional Ministries

3. COUNCIL ON CAMP AND RETREAT MINISTRY

The three Camping Ministries of Western North Carolina, Camp Guilrock, Camp Tekoa (with two sites-Camp Tekoa in Hendersonville and Tekoa Foothills in Casar) and Mount Shepherd Camp and Retreat Center, continue to thrive and grow! All three ministries have continued to make disciples as they have implemented traditional camps as well as innovative programming.

The Council on Camping and Retreat Ministry (CCRM) recognizes the wonderful ministry the conference camps provided this past year. Combined the WNCC Camps hosted 31 weeks of day camps reaching 635 campers. They hosted 43 weeks of resident camps reaching over 2,000 campers! The four camp sites hired almost 200 seasonal staff members and offered almost \$100,000 in scholarship monies. The CCRM supplied \$30,000 of that scholarship money. In addition, the camps were supported with monies for continuing education for the directors and assistant directors, capital improvements, board development and more, directly from the Western North Carolina Conference through the endowment and apportionment monies.

The CCRM seeks to be advocates for the camps and to help resource, support and encourage the camping ministries, their boards of directors and staff. This has primarily occurred through the distribution of apportionment monies and 4% of the camping endowment proceeds annually. As volunteers, the CCRM has struggled to find footing as effective liaisons between the camps and the conference.

The CCRM hopes to better position their assets and resources for the purpose of helping each camp fulfill their mission as a part of the great work of the Western North Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church. The council looks forward to another incredible year of ministry and a strengthened partnership between the conference and the camps.

Tresca McSwain, Council Member

a. Camp Directors' Reports

i. Camp GuilRock

The mission statement of Camp GuilRock is to guide visitors to "Discover Creation, Experience God, and Grow in Faith." Camp GuilRock does this by providing intentionally crafted programs for day campers, appropriate hospitality for retreaters and visitors, and a beautiful and kept campground for all to enjoy. This camp hosts a variety of events, including weddings, campouts, youth retreats, birthday parties, family reunions, and of course, Day Camp! Each group is given the opportunity to begin or grow their relationships with Christ, each other, and Camp GuilRock itself.

Camp GuilRock held their annual golf tournament at Bryan Park. Despite a hurricane forcing a change in date and venue, this was their most successful tournament yet! The Board worked hard to spread the word and advertise the changes, which resulted in sponsors and golfers coming together to support Camp GuilRock! The camp has also welcomed a new Director and has increased their board numbers from 12 to 15.

The Asbury Lodge at GuilRock has had its renovations completed and business and compliments have increased. The number of retreat groups and campers leading up to 2022 has grown steadily and is looking even more positive for 2023! With three new in-ground charcoal grills located beside a few of the facilities, new kayaks being ordered, and a new floating dock that will be installed before camp starts this summer, the quality of life at camp and therefore, its value in the eyes of consumers, continues to grow.

Jaylen Harrison, Director
director@campguilrock.org • www.campguilrock.org

ii. Mount Shepherd Retreat Center

The mission of Mount Shepherd is restoring souls, strengthening hearts, and transforming lives. Mount Shepherd achieves this mission primarily through Christian camp and retreat programs. This organization was thankful in 2022 to serve 557 children through its summer camp. Additionally, Mount Shepherd served thousands of guests through its retreat ministry. One notable retreat was the Connect Retreat, which hosted youth groups from six WNCC congregations.

The past year saw a transition in staff for Mount Shepherd. Mount Shepherd is grateful for the work of Assistant Director Christina Gibbs, who moved on to be the executive director of Camp Overlook in the Virginia Conference. This transition presented an opportunity to redesign the staff structure to meet strategic objectives. In addition to hiring a program director who will be designing environmental education programming for public schools, Mount Shepherd hired student ministry workers as year-round staff to supplement its discipleship programming.

Mount Shepherd remains attentive and responsive to disturbing trends among youth. Concurrent with declining church attendance among young people is an alarming rise in mental health concerns. The CDC's latest report reveals that 42% of high school students experienced "persistent feelings of hopelessness or sadness" in 2021. Furthermore, 22% of high schoolers "seriously considered suicide" that same year. This is a crisis that must be addressed by the Church, and camp is one of the solutions. Mounting evidence-based research confirms that camp consistently yields positive youth mental health outcomes. Further, Christian camps offer students the hope that is only found in Jesus.

Mount Shepherd is grateful for the ongoing support of the WNCC, which supplied \$20,825 through apportionments. This represents nearly four percent of Mount Shepherd's operational expenses. These resources are critical to the ongoing vitality and success of the ministry. In 2022, Mount Shepherd disbursed more than \$46,000 in financial support for campers to experience its summer ministry. Without WNCC support, Mount Shepherd would less effectively be able to offer its ministry to a diverse population of students.

Mount Shepherd is grateful for the rich diversity of its participants. In 2022, the camp proudly served congregations and ministries of immigrants from East Asia, Africa, South America, Latin America, and Europe—including refugees from the war in Ukraine. Its summer ministry, through the support of the WNCC, was able to reach children from disparate backgrounds. This includes 10 children in foster care, nearly 50 children of incarcerated parents, dozens of students from economically-disadvantaged areas, and children from parents economically impacted by the pandemic.

The staff and leadership of Mount Shepherd is excited about its future. As camp programs increasingly reach capacity limits and waitlists grow, the organization is taking steps to grow its site to accommodate more guests. The organization asks for prayers for God's blessing as it engages in yet another season of fruitful ministry. To God be the glory.

Joshua Britton, Executive Director
www.mtshepherd.org

iii. Camp Tekoa

Camp Tekoa had a wonderful year of ministry in 2022. It was an exciting time of renewal and growth. Tekoa continues to extend the mission of: Touching Hearts. Changing Lives. Sharing the Light of Christ.

- Camp Tekoa offered a summer camp experience to 2365 campers. This season was the first time camp was at full capacity since 2019.
- Donors continued to support the work and ministry of Camp Tekoa with donations that totaled \$273,530.51. This includes a \$75,000 Master Planning Grant from the United Methodist Camp and Retreat Ministries and a \$31,000 donation to the Brian Scholarship Endowment.
- Camp Tekoa began a new relationship with Angel Tree Camping which allows access to camp for children of incarcerated parents. It welcomed 13 children through this program in 2022 and plans to increase this in future seasons.
- Tekoa is currently finishing its new Master Plan which will be a multi-site plan inclusive of Camp Tekoa and Tekoa Foothills. This was made possible by the \$75,000 grant from UMCRM.
- Camp Tekoa is being visited the summer of 2023 by the American Camping Association as a part of its commitment to a quality camping experience.
- 2024 marks the 75th Anniversary of Camp Tekoa. Please consider making a gift in honor of someone or attend the weekend celebration in April of 2024.

John Isley, Executive Director
www.camptekoa.org

iv. Tekoa Foothills

Foothills Summer Program continues to develop with each summer season while the rental season expands its footprint to new user groups and retreats. Tekoa Foothills has a diverse summer season planned in 2023 as programs continue to evolve with each new calendar year; two major offerings are Tekoa Missions (June) and Summer Camp (July).

Tekoa Missions is a turn-key youth missions program where middle and high school aged youth groups register together for a shared mission experience in June. Days are spent on worksites while evenings are spent recreating on the Foothills property and worship. Every group works with homeowners to ensure the felt needs of neighbors in and around Upper Cleveland County are cleaner, safer and dryer. In addition to homeowners, Foothills will once again partner with Habitat for Humanity, Keep NC Beautiful, and Fostering Hope NC to expand the missional reach of participants and do all the good possible. Projects include home repair, home improvements, community outreach and works of mercy.

Foothills Summer Camp runs through the month of July welcoming resident and day campers from elementary to middle school aged participants. In 2023, some of the most popular offerings will be repeated: Into the Wild, Horseback Riding, Paddle Palloza, Splash Zone! and Bullseye Blitz are all skill-based education sessions in which resident campers can explore and develop a new passion over the course of the week. More than a "taste-and-see" adventure opportunity, campers revisit program areas hosted by local experts affording them the opportunity to strengthen capability and competence.

Day Camp is offered to the youngest campers in an effort to plant seeds for future resident campers and offer an option for local students to enjoy outdoor recreation and discipleship. In August, Foothills will host their second annual, Camp Gemma: (Jeh.muh). This session is a residential camp experience for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities; similar to Hendersonville's "Barnabas" experience, Gemma is the Foothills version where adaptive camp activities offer greater inclusivity for campers.

New in 2023 is the garden and greenhouse facilities, made possible by a local Girl Scout whose Gold Award project oversaw the refurbishment and installation of a greenhouse on Foothills property. This generous gift has expanded the growing season for the teaching garden and production of fresh vegetables offered to the surrounding community. Partnering with Missional Network #13 of the Catawba Valley, Tekoa Missions participants and Foothills Campers get to assist with garden production and harvesting for mobile food pantry deliveries.

Honoring the scouting history of Loy White, Tekoa Foothills continues to discern new skills programming each year, to invest in discipling youth and young adults, while developing life skills and positive recreational outlets.

Jennifer Bingham Hampton, Director
www.tekoafoothills.org

b. Proposed Camp Boards of Directors*(Petition 4) Approved June 16, 2023***Camp GuilRock**

President: Rhonda Lee
 Secretary: Lenora Graves
 Doug Berlin
 Marc Cobb
 Bobby Jones
 Brad Quesinberry

Lori Buck
 Todd Freeland
 Suzanne Massey
 Mike Shelton

Vice President: Stan Hollis
 Treasurer: Kriss Lassiter

Jen Carter
 Geoffrey Haigler
 Hil Peel

Mount Shepherd Camp Retreat Center

Class of 2023
 Gifford Del Grande
 Charlie Lyons

Class of 2024
 Carla Freemyer
 Celia Harris
 Katie Lineberger
 Ryan Nunn

Class of 2025
 Jessica Cashatt
 Bryan Cone
 Nikki Domally
 Rhonda Hammond
 William Henderson
 Angie Kern
 Frances Pariz
 Brandon Price
 Christopher Smith
 Michael Smith

Camp Tekoa/Tekoa Foothills

Chair: David Mitchell (2023)
 Treasurer: Jimmy New (2025)
 Courtney Sanders (2024)
 Whitney Jacobs (2024)

Vice Chair: Brad Cunningham (2025)
 Karen Kurtz (2023)
 Carl King (2024)
 Mike Pruett (2025)

Secretary: Candis Walker (2023)
 William Van Wieren (2023)
 Bill Porter (2024)
 Mike Watson (2025)

4. CHURCH VITALITY TEAM**Core Mission and Vision of Congregational Vitality**

The core mission of Congregational Vitality is to educate, facilitate, and foster healthy and innovative local congregations throughout the Western North Carolina Conference. Our vision is to “Prayerfully **notice** the Holy Spirit’s creative Sparks, **nurture** existing congregations to vibrant renewed life, and create **new** faith communities that are all producing vital and sustainable congregations. We **strengthen existing** and **create new** faith communities that are continually evolving in order to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

As our team engages in this work, we know that discerning, naming, and claiming what vital and healthy local congregations look like in today’s evolving culture is part of our responsibility. Since the Gospel calls us to a transformed life, the existing church must pay attention to the ways the Spirit is moving our Conference into the future! This hopeful, confident expectation centers us on what God has promised. Romans 8:24-25 says, “For in this hope, we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.”

For us, there is a hopeful expectation as we move forward from both the pandemic impact and this season of disaffiliation. These challenges present us with tremendous opportunities to listen, learn, re-gear, and re-position ourselves for faithful and effective ministry. As we move forward, we know that there will be more “Networked” expressions of church community that will become more interdependent. We will embrace collaborative partnerships and integrate ourselves into our local communities in ways that make our churches integral to the survival of the entire community. Along the way, Congregational Vitality will focus on **Resourcing, Equipping, Connecting, and Coaching** as we come alongside District Superintendents who will be reclaiming their original purpose of being the Chief Missional Strategists for each District.

New Church Starts

The Western North Carolina Conference continues to create new places for new people through church planting. This process continues to be the most effective way to reach and disciple unchurched persons. As we emerge from the pandemic, we are beginning to understand its impact on the process of healthy and effective planting. So, we are shifting our processes, equipping, development, and funding structure accordingly. Most importantly, we are considering a wider scope that is framed through “Networking” models instead of just looking at individual projects. Our structure is already hard-wired for this seismic shift in our planting process.

- **Word On the Street** – (Assurance Campus) - Charles Dirico: A network of Fresh Expressions of church that is committed to listening and loving for the Word of God, who is Jesus, on the streets of our communities.
- **Central East Campus** (Central, Asheville) - JP Bolick:
- **Brazos Abiertos** (Guilford College UMC Campus) - Andrés Pérez González: An hispanic/bilingual community that strives to be the open arms of Jesus to the people of Greensboro who identify as Latinas/os. It is a safe haven to wrestle with faith, grow in community, and share stories while experiencing the transforming love of Jesus’ story.

- **Fiesta Church** (Christ UMC, Drexel) - Raymundo Villanueva and Cindy Wechter: A bi-lingual, multi-cultural, and multi-generational ministry designed to offer something different and more casual than traditional Sunday morning worship that is fun, interactive, and inspirational!

The Conference's other active church plants are **Checkpoint Church** (Nathan Webb), **As It Is** (Vince Ross), **Hope Fellowship** (Ben Gattton), **The Place** (Charlie Riven), **Wellspring** (Ashley Crowder Stanley), **With All** (Rob Parsons), and **Growth Co.** (Lexi Hernandez).

As we continue to pursue best practices for church planting, our intentional strategy continues to move towards new faith communities being rooted in "Anchor" churches. We are developing recruiting and equipping processes that will stimulate more church plants from this model.

Fresh Expressions

It has been a year of growth for Fresh Expressions and Innovation in Western NC. New fresh expressions of church include a social/emotional learning group for children and their families, a trivia night, a bilingual dinner church, a worship and wellness gathering, a lunch community for seniors, and many more. We continue to invest in raising up lay and clergy FX leaders by cultivating District centered FX teams and hosting various trainings such as Messy Church, the second round of the Fresh Expressions Adventurer Leadership Academy, and dinner church immersions. Fresh Expressions will continue to be an integral part of developing new faith communities as we meet the world in their spaces and places. This year, Luke Edwards was asked to cultivate innovation in the conference in addition to fresh expressions of church. As a part of this we recently launched the first Innovators Greenhouse, a community of practice for lay and clergy who are engaging in innovative forms of ministry.

As we look towards the coming year, plans are under way for a Hispanic/Latino Fresh Expressions Initiative in partnership with the WNCC Hispanic/Latino Ministries. Several districts are working on strengthening their fresh expressions strategies. There is growing energy around social entrepreneurship and alternative church economics that will be a major focus of ours over the coming year. The future of WNCC is bright as new forms of church and innovative ministries continue to emerge across the conference.

Transformation Journey

The Church Vitality Team is blessed with an ever-evolving church leadership equipping framework that seeks to strengthen existing congregations with an ongoing initiative called Transformation Journey. Thanks to initial grants from ministry partners at the United Methodist Foundation of Western North Carolina and the Reynolds Endowment Fund, The Transformation Journey is a three-year process of partnering with congregations to discern and live into God's future for the church. This initiative continues under the faithful leadership of the Rev. Dr. Nancy Rankin. Fifteen churches are currently actively engaged in the Transformation Journey process. This is a process rather than a program so that as the Guides work with their churches their outcomes are uniquely suited to their context of ministry. More than eighty-five guides and two new Discovery Team Members have been trained in this process to partner with churches to help them fulfill their recommendations. Two Transformation Journey churches will be recognized at Annual Conference for the successful completion of their work with their Guides on their recommendations.

A new, open application process is available online through the Conference Website under Church Development. The Transformation Journey Team has adapted to a hybrid process offering the convenience of on-line and in-person interactions with churches. They are also involved in new models of partnering with a church that was formerly on a two-point charge and using a team of Guides to work with a church simultaneously. Strengthening existing congregations is part of their calling as a team, and they will continue to explore new ways to help the local church as the process of the Transformation Journey will adapt to meet the changing needs that continue to arise in our local churches every day.

Equity and Justice Ministries Partnerships

Congregational Vitality and the Office of Equity and Justice Ministries have several natural intersections. We have made a commitment to be a funding partner with EJM as well as to share our planning and equipping resources with them. Church vitality has always been contextual, and we will continue to commit resources in ways that will not be a "One size or One Way fits all." We have adapted the processes for Transformation Journey, sought input and leadership for approaching Fresh Expressions differently, are investing in intentional associate appointments with young clergy of Color, and remain focused on planting more intentional multicultural churches – all with culture and context in mind.

Frank Ramos, Chairperson
Rob Hutchinson, Director of Church Development

5. BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND CAMPUS MINISTRY

The purpose of the Western North Carolina Conference Board of Higher Education and Campus Ministry is to empower those responsible for ministries on the college campuses so that students will become "disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world."

At annual conference in 2022, the board awarded the Francis Asbury Award to Annalee Allen for her five years of service as the Conference Staff Liaison to the board. She was instrumental in restructuring the board so that it could be more effective, advocating for the establishment of a new campus ministry on the campus of Lees-McRae College in Banner Elk, NC, and for acquiring grants to help campus ministries during the pandemic.

The board celebrates that in January of 2023 Joanna Capps was hired as the Campus Minister of the Wesley Foundation at UNC-Asheville. The board also wishes to thank Jeff McCumber for his four years of ministry at UNC-Asheville and for all the lives he has touched.

The Board of Higher Education and Campus Ministry is excited to announce the establishment of the WNCC Campus Ministry Endowment! This endowment will support campus ministry in the conference for generations to come as the light and love of Jesus

to college students all over Western North Carolina is shared. Donations to the endowment can be made directly on the WNCC-UMC Foundation website. The board will be working hard to promote this endowment so that it can become a powerful tool for campus ministry in the years to come. It will be encouraging individuals to donate in honor of the role that campus ministry has played in their lives and to invest in future generations.

The board wishes to express its gratitude to the eight campus ministers and five college chaplains for the work they do to minister to the students in their unique contexts. They work tirelessly to shepherd students even in the most difficult times.

The board appreciates the financial support of the conference to fund these ministries. Even in times of change and uncertainty in the world and denomination, campus ministry is still a strong and vital ministry of the conference. The board is committed to its mission and looks forward to what God has in store for the future of campus ministry in the Western North Carolina Conference.

Cindy Turner, Chairperson

a. Campus Ministry Reports

i. Appalachian Wesley Foundation

The Appalachian Wesley Foundation has had a remarkable 2022-2023 school year. App Wesley lived into a 2021-2022 theme of, "Fan into Flame, the Gift of God Which is in You." This theme is based on 2 Timothy 1:6, "For this reason I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands" (NRSV). The student leadership team asked the question when planning any event, "How will this rekindle the gift of God?" This keeps the focus of ministry on God and the building of the kingdom within the App State community, and not just all about 'fun' events. Because of this, App Wesley has continued to be in ministry through the using of everyone's gifts in unique and varying ways. Read some of the awesome ways in which students are being the hands and feet of Christ.

During the 2022 summer months, thanks to a grant from the Appalachian District Congregational Vitality Team, App Wesley was able to travel the state to reach out to alumni, share student stories, and engage with incoming students. It was a great opportunity to rekindle the flame of those who may have lost touch with their campus ministry, and to kindle a spark for those who have yet to connect with campus ministry.

App Wesley continues to reach out to neighboring churches, who have been receptive and have stepped up to help foster greater community between the campus ministry and the local church. This continues through free Monday night meals for students, as well as, fostering new ways of doing small groups. In the fall, App Wesley and Boone UMC tested a college small group following their free meal on Thursday evenings. The foundation learned from this endeavor, and seeks to make it even better this upcoming academic year. App Wesley continued a tradition of an Advent Festival before winter break. The festival is a time when students can relax and enjoy shopping at student vendor booths, eat homemade Christmas snacks, enjoy a gingerbread house competition, and worship together celebrating the beginning of Advent with a Moravian Love Feast. During the winter break, 12 students and Juston participated in a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. This 10-day experience was instrumental to the lives of the students, who are still sharing their experience with local churches and their communities. As the spring semester began, the women's and men's small groups began planning winter retreats. The groups enjoyed a weekend away to foster community, learn more about one another, and enjoy being present. The spring break mission trip to Washington, D.C., was a great opportunity to visit the Nation's Capital, learn more about Wesley Theological Seminary, and work together at Martha's Tables. As the semester is coming to a close (at the time of the writing of this report), students are preparing for upcoming final exams. They are thankful to members at Boone UMC who are providing a Therapy Dog Day to help calm students' nerves before the exams and papers become due. Also, the App Wesley student intern (Ethan Butler) is working alongside other campus ministries to create a night of worship, held on April 23rd. And, all of the students are looking forward to the annual beach retreat following commencement ceremonies in May. The theme this year was, "Waves of Life," held at Trinity Center in Pine Knoll Shores. This year was also highlighted by two successful fundraising efforts: Giving Tuesday, and Venmo Bingo. In November, App Wesley held a live Giving Tuesday event, raising around \$1700 in one day, and increasing new and recurring givers to the ministry! In March, students led, marketed, and played Venmo Bingo, raising almost \$500 in 5 days. Those that 'won' bingo were rewarded with an App Wesley swag bag.

App Wesley's building has been an integral part of the App State community since 1963. Appalachian Wesley Foundation is thankful that the physical space can be used by many different ministries, clubs, and volunteering organizations at App State. It continues to grow the connection with App Builds A Home (App State's Habitat for Humanity organization) by giving them office space, meeting space, and a place to store all of their promotional and office materials. In addition, Appalachian Wesley has grown even more the connection with Sanctuary Counseling, by having rooms available for therapists and counselors to have office hours three times a month. This helps to fulfil the task from the Dean of Students, as the foundation was told there were limited counseling services for students through the App State health services. Appalachian Wesley also has ramped-up the student food pantry, through a connection with Food Donation Connection, receiving fresh foods from the local Starbucks three times a week - and this is not only for App Wesley students, but for any student that walks by and needs food!

The App Wesley Foundation is blessed with an active board who have been a source of encouragement to Juston, and most importantly, the students. The App Wesley Foundation is blessed with active students who take leadership seriously, and actively participate in the ministries of App Wesley. The foundation is always grateful for all alumni, parents, local churches, and friends for their support; and the foundation would be remiss if not to thank the WNCC for their support of this vital extension ministry. The foundation would love for everyone to stay in touch with App Wesley at the always updated website, www.appwesley.org.

Juston Smith, Director

ii. Asheville Wesley Foundation

The Asheville Wesley Foundation has had a year of exciting opportunity and change. The ministry has found ways to help college students connect with God, with each other, as well as the local church. There has been a wonderful connection forged between Asbury Memorial United Methodist Church congregation and the Asheville Wesley students. Several students attend church services and activities regularly and some have joined the congregation in membership. A group of students had the opportunity to go on a mission trip to Canton, North Carolina to do flood repair work during their Spring Break in 2022. The Asheville Wesley Foundation is very proud that two of the 2022 graduates are in seminary seeking ordination in the United Methodist church and another 2022 graduate is in full time youth ministry. The ministry continues to be fruitful in encouraging students to pursue a calling in ministry. The Board of the Asheville Wesley Foundation hired Joanna Capps to begin working as the director in January of 2023 as Jeff McCumber has stepped down to begin working full time at Asbury Memorial UMC.

Asheville Wesley strives to be a campus ministry that seeks to be an authentic community that is accepting, affirming, and open to all of God's children. The foundation would like to thank both its old and new friends for their support of the campus ministry. Thank you all for continuing to help make Asheville Wesley a place where students can be known, seen, and loved as individuals of sacred worth.

Joanna Capps, Director

iii. Common Ground at Lees-McRae College

2022 continued to unfold as a year of transformation and growth for Common Ground, Lees-McRae College, and the associated student organizations. The school year began with renewed enthusiasm as attendance at the Thursday gatherings of Common Ground and Sunday worship services on campus grew. The average attendance on Thursday was twenty-four, and Sunday evening worship (LMC555) averaged 18.

This year non-profits like Hospitality House and Feeding Avery Families began to allow volunteers back on location. The student leadership of Common Ground took advantage of the chance to serve. One student leader shared his experience with other groups and students on campus and established a schedule of service opportunities during the remainder of the school year. Twice during the year Common Ground held events to connect with other students on campus. The most successful were iced coffee and doughnut and hot chocolate giveaways between morning classes. In addition, student leaders oversee the stocking and maintenance of the campus food pantry.

The campus minister, Rev. Ted Henry, serves in extension ministry as the chaplain at Lees-McRae College. The combined roles have allowed a unique opportunity for collaborative efforts between the campus ministry, the college counseling and wellness center, and athletic coaches.

Chairperson Susan Staton shared her enthusiasm for adding another student to the Common Ground board, as well as optimism for the future and the ongoing spiritual growth opportunities offered through Common Ground's efforts. The continued financial support provided by the Western North Carolina Conference, the Appalachian District, Banner Elk United Methodist Church, parents, and alums is needed and greatly appreciated.

Ted Henry, Campus Minister

iv. Niner United at UNC Charlotte

With over 30,000 students, UNC Charlotte is a crucial population to reach and serve, and Niner United is proud to offer an incredibly comprehensive and dynamic ministry program and presence. Our team of 15 student leaders work closely with the staff and board of directors to plan and oversee ministry activities such as worship, Christian formation, outreach and service, and music ministry. At Niner United, we believe in the power of community and provide a welcoming and inclusive environment for all students to explore and grow in their faith. Our two weekly worship services allow students to connect with God and each other and experience the transformative power of worship. Niner United also engages in various service projects and outreach events yearly. We partner with local organizations to provide student volunteer opportunities and serve the surrounding community. We also offer hospitality events, such as dinners, game nights, and other social activities, to build community and provide opportunities for students to connect. Niner United also offers a unique vocational discernment program, the Faith and Leadership Experience, funded by the Lilly Endowment, the Young Clergy Initiative, and other organizations and foundations. This program provides students with the tools and resources to discern their calling and pursue their passion for service and leadership. Last year, we went to Jamaica for a spring break mission working with microfinance and social justice ministries, and we took students to Italy, Greece, Malta, and France for a spiritual pilgrimage. These trips allowed students to deepen their faith, experience different cultures, and build relationships with each other. At Niner United, we are committed to creating a space where all students are valued and can share God's love.

Steve Cheyney, Campus Minister

v. Wesley Foundation at East Market

Wesley Foundation at East Market (WFEM) is the Wesley Foundation to North Carolina A&T State University. The past year for WFEM has seen our focus shift to mental health concerns for the students of NC A&T. Student suicides and tragic deaths in 2022 and 2023 made us aware of the importance of offering mental health services to the student body. We have begun a partnership with Sanctuary Counseling Group (SCG) to offer mental health help to our students. We are anticipating having SCG within our facility in the Summer of 2023. We have increased our partnerships with multiple A&T student organizations which has allowed us to increase our contact with students.

We also have more collaboration with NC A&T faculty, which has enabled us to partner with students looking for internship opportunities. We also have our first student post-pandemic who will begin exploring the ministry with WFEM. Finally, our ministry is beginning the conversations with the AME church to see if they would potentially develop an ecumenical campus ministry, like the work Bishop Carter led at FAMU, while he was in the Florida Conference.

Diron Chloe, Director

vi. Wesley-Luther Foundation at UNC Greensboro

Wesley-Luther serves the students, staff, faculty, and alums of UNC Greensboro, providing space for community, worship, service, faith development, and vocational discernment.

Recognizing the changing nature of student needs and higher education, Wesley-Luther runs the Spartan Open Pantry (SOP), which provides food for staff and students who are struggling to afford food. Each semester, one in three students will experience food insecurity, and one in four will go without regular food access. During 2022, the SOP provided 49,260 pounds of food, a 15,000-pound increase from 2021. Wesley-Luther staff and volunteers also provided more than 4,038 hot meals for students and their dependents, along with 2,349 dozen eggs and 2,097 half gallons of milk. Our largest meal of the year, the Meal of Thanksgiving, served 117 students and was hosted as an in-person meal for the first time since the beginning of the pandemic. This year, Wesley-Luther also welcomed our first student to the emergency housing designed to create a safe bridge for unhoused students while our staff and volunteers work to find long-term solutions for struggling students.

Mental health remains another priority as rates of anxiety and depression continue to increase on campus. This year, more than 250 students participated in “Light the Night,” our annual luminary and vigil project, by making luminaries with prayers, stories, or words of hope or by attending the service. In addition to the “Light the Night” luminary project and Wesley-Luther’s suicide prevention work, Wesley-Luther is also providing space for students to express themselves with art through a Free Expressions group overseen by a counselor from Student Health Services.

Wesley-Luther hosts a communion service in partnership with Greensboro College each Sunday night during the semester. This contemporary worship provides a space created for students who may be wary of the Christian faith or who have experienced religious trauma. This year, two UNC Greensboro students were baptized into The United Methodist Church, with a third student due to be baptized before the end of the semester. Two attendees of this Sunday night worship have also begun the process of candidacy with the hope of eventual ordination.

Wesley-Luther is grateful for the support of the Western North Carolina Conference, The Northern Piedmont District, and local churches that partner in this vital work. Wesley-Luther is grateful to serve the UNC Greensboro community on behalf of The United Methodist Church and nurture radical disciples of Christ who are committed to transforming this world with the love of God.

Andrew Mails-Saine, Executive Director

vii. Wesley Foundation at Western Carolina University

The Wesley Foundation at Western Carolina University is grateful for all of the support it received from the WNC Annual Conference, The Smoky Mountain District, local churches, its Board of Directors, and all the friends and alumni. This academic year the ministry helped college students connect with each other and the world around them in many creative and new ways. Students spend time with each other daily and participated in thousands of hours of service work over the year including splitting and delivering over 100 loads of firewood to local residents and delivering meals weekly via the Department on Aging Meals on Wheels program. Students continue this year with cooking class, helping at the local food pantry, and roadside liter clean up with a local veterans group. The Wesley Foundation held their annual Haunted House in October 2022 and the Wesley Golf Classic in the spring. Each week during the school year the student worship team and Wesley staff plan and hold worship for college students. Wesley staff help college students learn how to plan and give a sermon almost every week of the school year. The Wesley staff led a group of students and non-student adults to the Holy Land in December 2022 – January 2023. As is always the case with constant turn over, the staff plan to maintain focus on in depth student leader development, board development, student involvement, increased intentional student outreach, and student worship leadership training.

Jay Hinton, Campus Minister

viii. Winston-Salem Wesley Foundation

The Winston-Salem Wesley Foundation serves the campuses of Wake Forest University (WFU), Salem College, and the University of North Carolina School of the Arts, with the largest group of students comprising the Wake Forest Wesley Foundation. After 17 years of faithful and fruitful service, Rev. Larry Jones officially retired as the campus minister of the Winston-Salem Wesley Foundation, and Rev. Oliver Helsabeck became campus minister and director in May 2022. Students were thrilled in the 2022-2023 academic year to have fully in-person meetings after the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Coordinating Council (CoCo) of the Wesley Foundation, even with busy class schedules and course loads, are joy-filled and enthusiastic about participating in and leading the ministries and programs of the Wesley Foundation and sharing the love of Christ on campus through fellowship, worship, and service.

At Wake Forest, students meet weekly on Thursdays for a fellowship meal and a worship service, led by student musicians with a message by the campus minister. First year students participated in a weekly Bible study led by a senior student, and other students engaged in a weekly small group meeting for Scripture study, discussion, and mutual support led by students from the Coordinating Council. The availability of a dedicated ministry space in the Wesley Lounge at Wake Forest allowed students to have a place for meetings, worship services, fellowship activities, and a quiet place for study. Students participated in retreats away from campus to explore topics such as “Loving Like Jesus” and intentionally focused on how to live life faithfully in a modern world often punctuated by negativity and polarization.

In addition to weekly worship, Bible study, and fellowship activities, students were also involved in service opportunities in the community and for support of important causes. For example, students worked with Samaritan Ministries and Habitat for Humanity builds, they supported cancer research with Hit the Bricks and Wake ‘n Shake at WFU, and they worked with children from the community in Project Pumpkin.

Looking ahead, Rev. Helsabeck has engaged in conversations with other campus ministers about collaborative, ecumenical programs on the campuses of Wake Forest and Salem College, which will maintain commitment to inclusivity and welcome for all students. Participation at UNC’s weekly “Listening Post” will also help to engage students with resources for encouragement and faith support.

The Board of Directors of the Winston-Salem Wesley Foundation expresses deep appreciation and thanks for Roger Echols, who will finish his tenure as Chairperson of the board in spring 2023 after many years of faithful service to the work of the board and the ministries of the Wesley Foundation.

Ask. Grow. Serve. Belong. This is the motto for the Winston-Salem Wesley Foundation – and their hope is that students have opportunities to ask the questions they need to ask to deepen their faith, to grow in their commitment to Christ, to serve the world and share Christ’s love, and to know that they belong, they matter, and they are never alone. The Winston-Salem Wesley Foundation is grateful for the financial support of the Western North Carolina Conference, the churches of the Yadkin Valley District, and faithful friends and alumni. These partnerships with the Wesley Foundation will help to ensure vital ministry to college students and young adults continues into the future!

Oliver W. Helsabeck, Campus Minister and Director
Cell: (336) 408-9041 • Instagram: [wakeforestwesley](https://www.instagram.com/wakeforestwesley)
P.O. Box 7433 • Winston-Salem, NC 27109

b. Proposed Campus Ministry Boards

(Petition 5) Approved June 16, 2023

Appalachian Wesley Foundation

Class of 2024: Ben Caviness (alumnus), Rachael Gossett (alumna), Aaron Prillaman (alumnus)

Class of 2025: John Cope (West Jefferson UMC), Ben Fitzgerald (alumnus), Dodie Glowa (Boone UMC)

Class of 2026: Remy Styers (alum), Fred Fonville (Boone UMC), Gus Glover (alumnus)

Student Members Fall 2023: Stratton Collins, Jackson Hager, Aleya Hunnell

Student Members Spring 2024: Jackson Hager, Kennan Mottershead

Pastor of Local United Methodist Church: Tracy Love (Mount Hermon UMC, Cedar Valley UMC, pastor)

Ex officio: Lory Beth Huffman (Appalachian District Superintendent) *Emeritus:* Marshall Boyer (West Jefferson UMC)

Campus Minister: Juston Smith

Asheville Wesley Foundation

Andrea McCumber (chair), John McCullough (treasurer), Suzanne Dittenber, Beverly Parris, Kathy Robinson, Lindsay Rosson, John Smith

Ex officio: Mark Ralls (Blue Ridge District Superintendent)

Campus Minister: Joanna Capps

Common Ground at Lees-McRae College

Susan Staton (Chair), Gina Phenneger (Finance Treasurer), Jim Hart (Chaplain), Gracie Brindle (Student), Makena Vosburg (Student), Jana Greer, Vicki Lott, Michelle Scott, Lou McLean

Campus Minister: Ted Henry

Niner United at UNC Charlotte

Ian Binns, Anne Brown, Jesse Caldwell, Olanda Carr, Beth Hardin, Mike Hoffman, Lyn Holt (Chairperson), Sonya MacAuley-Allen, John Richards, Taylor Simmons, Ethan Smith, Beth Whitaker

Ex officio: Cailee Franklin, Stephen Cheyney (Campus Pastor)

Wesley Foundation at East Market (North Carolina A&T State University)

William Waddell (Chair), John Henry (Secretary), Dottie Troxler (Treasurer), Sharon Adams, Vernita Alvord, Melanie Burnett, TJ Exford, Drew McIntyre, Brandon Wrencher

NC A&T Students: Jaylon Allen, Sydnie Lemons, Phillip Omo-Taiga, Ebony Sams

Ex Officio: Beverly Copley (Northern Piedmont District Superintendent)

Executive Director of the Campus Ministries: Diron Chloe

Wesley Luther at UNC Greensboro

Jill Alventosa-Brown (West Market UMC, Board of Higher Education and Ministry), Brett Carter (Associate Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs and Dean of Students, UNC Greensboro), Paul Freeman (College Place UMC), Jessica Gregory (College Place UMC), Tom Herin (Elder, Retired), Jay Hilbinger (Pastor, First Lutheran Church), Paul Leslie (Former Vice President, Greensboro College), William Parish (St. Timothy UMC, Director of Elliott University Center), Mark Smith (Elder, Retired)

Students: Kellie Finley-Call, Beth Hall

Ex Officio: Beverly Copley (Northern Piedmont District Superintendent)

Director of Wesley-Luther Campus Ministries: Andrew Mails-Saine (College Place UMC)

Wesley Foundation at Western Carolina University

Nathan Borchelt, Liz Davis, Bryan Jarvis, Jenna Kranz, Abby Lawrence, Madison Lovingood, Sam McCarter, Adam Mottershead, Ryan Pless, Mike Poston, Jay Ruebel

Ex-Officio: Jae Lee (Smoky Mountain District Superintendent), Mitchell Boughman (Senior Pastor, Cullowhee UMC), Jay Hinton (Director of the Wesley Foundation at WCU), Hannah Van Hooser (Associate Director), Scarlett Pless (Associate Director)

Winston-Salem Wesley Foundation

Nick Ashburn (Chair), Zac Kearns (Vice-Chair), Sara Miller (Treasurer), Kate Berry (Secretary), Ryan Angi, Sam Bishop, Christy Buchanan, Steve Felts, Heather Phillips, Jonathan Philpot, Alexandra Stefanis

Students: Kiyō Takahashi, Jayne Flynn, Leah Cabiness

Ex Officio: Sam Moore (Yadkin Valley District Superintendent), Oliver Helsabeck (Campus Minister and Director)

6. JUSTICE AND RECONCILIATION TEAM

The Western North Carolina Conference (WNCC) J&R Team is fully engaged in the ministry of Jesus Christ, in order to make Christian Disciples for the transformation of the world. Their ministry impacts many areas of the WNCC, and varied communities throughout western North Carolina. They are organized for mission and ministry within a framework of ten key areas:

Social Justice - Church and Society	Peace with Justice
Matters of Religion and Race (CORR)	Native American Ethnic Caucus Ministries
North Carolina Council of Churches (NCCOC)	Hispanic/Latino American Ministries
Commission on the Status and Role of Women (COSROW)	African American Ministries
Christian Unity and Interreligious Relationships (CUIR)	Asian-American Ministries

Now that we are reengaging in in-person gatherings post COVID-19 we are able to meet the challenge of mission and ministry in new ways. The primary work of serving Jesus Christ is invigorated with a new vitality. The work of the J&R Team is evolving to meet the challenges of a new reality. Team members continue to envision and plan for mission and ministry. The J&R Team works collaboratively with partners within both The United Methodist Church and in the greater community of faith. Leaning into the vision of making disciples for the transformation of the world, the J&R Team faithfully implements ministries of justice, mercy and love in hurting, and often overlooked communities. Through the loving grace of God, the redemptive presence of Jesus Christ, and the healing power of the Holy Spirit, the J&R Team continues to seek opportunities to witness the redemptive power of Jesus Christ. This redemptive emphasis motivates the J&R Team to focus on ministries of equity and justice for those who have been excluded so that, standing on common ground, all may experience the grace of God.

With their vision, “Empowered by Christ,” the J&R Team exists to repair that which has been broken. Their mission is to listen, evaluate, initiate, advocate, train, educate, offer grants, and celebrate through acts of God’s love, so that the whole church reflects the diversity of each community which reveals our unity in Christ Jesus. Through intentional effort to honor the dignity of all constituencies the J&R Team seeks to help the WNCC more fully reflect the *Imago Dei* (The Image of God). Their core values are to practice genuine listening and mindfulness, to encourage others to lean into discomfort, to serve as a catalyst for equity in change by holding itself, as well as others, accountable in ways that mirror Jesus’ redemptive love. The near-term objective/top-level goal of the J&R Team is to work to build a voice, influence, access, resources, and spirit among caucuses and conveners so that the WNCC will offer the world an alternative to the divides that keep us locked into cycles of degradation, misunderstanding, and schism.

The J&R Team continues to partner with the Dismantling Racism Taskforce in developing and implementing opportunities for laity and clergy to challenge the systemic racism that plagues our church. These workshops have had a profound impact on those who participated. Last year, Working with African American Ministries and key stakeholders, the J&R Team helped facilitate the new part-time conference position, African American/Black Church Growth and Vitality. Working closely with the Director of Equity and Justice this position will execute elements of the African American Ministries’ Action Plan related to Black Church growth. The J&R Team also coordinates with leadership in the South Carolina and North Carolina Conferences of The United Methodist Church to fund and develop the annual Black Clergy Retreat.

The J&R Team supports the work of Native American Ministries as they address issues of domestic abuse, bullying, and suicide in the context of Christian Mission and disciplined living. Likewise, the J&R Team supports the work of Hispanic/ Latino Ministries as they gather in worship and develop ministries aimed at leadership development and empowerment within their constituent communities. The J&R Team works alongside COSROW as they fulfill their mission to work alongside the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women advocating for full participation in the total life of The United Methodist Church by helping the church to recognize every person – clergy and lay, women and men, adults and children – as full and equal parts of God’s human family. It is anticipated that a fully engaged and empowered membership is vital to The United Methodist Church’s mission to “Follow Jesus, Make Disciples, Transform the World.”

Working with CORR The J&R Team supported the work of the committee as they organized and planned for the 2023 WNCC Martin Luther King Jr. Commemoration. This event was co-sponsored with Black Methodists for Church Renewal (BMCR). The commission will continue its work of diversity monitoring so that the WNCC may have an accurate understanding of the vision of God’s Kingdom in the world. The goal is to ensure that their words and actions are in alignment with the call of Jesus Christ.

The J&R Team gives yearly financial support to the North Carolina Council of Churches (NC COC) which is a statewide ecumenical organization promoting Christian unity and working towards a more just society with the motto: Strength in Unity, Peace through Justice. The council enables denominations, congregations, and people of faith to impact the state individually and collectively on issues such as economic justice and development, human well-being, equality, compassion, and peace, following the example and mission of Jesus Christ. NC COC addresses social justice issues through a faith lens to include immigration and the Sanctuary Coalition, the Opioid Crisis, North Carolina Interfaith Power and Light (NCIPL) and Partners in Health and Wholeness (PHW). The council’s priority areas continue to be Gun Violence Prevention, Raising Wages Campaign, Money Bail Eradication, and Public Education Advocacy.

May God bless the work of the whole J&R Team as they seek to witness to faith in Jesus Christ and make disciples for the transformation of local communities and the world.

Donnell FitzJefferies, Chairperson
 Renee Hayes, Vice-Chairperson
 Nikki Raye Rice, Secretary
 Samuel Moore, Cabinet Representative

7. BOARD OF LAITY

The Conference Board of Laity continued moving forward in 2022 with the work in support of the three focus areas that are guiding the board for this quadrennium:

- **Spiritual Formation:** Discerning, developing, and deploying opportunities that help laity grow in their own spiritual practices and/or engage and equip laity to be more effective disciples.
- **Faith in Action:** Discerning, developing, and deploying opportunities that help laity more effectively live into their faith through active ministry participation within and through their local church, district, and conference in ways that positively impact their community and the broader world.
- **Communications:** Enhancing the practices, tools, and technology associated with laity communications to ensure laity are engaged and informed regarding the work of the church, resources that are available to support them, and how to access those resources.

As the restrictions related to COVID-19 diminished, it was exciting to resume offering in-person training options for laity, even as the board continued to provide and expand the online training opportunities. Moving forward, it anticipates continuing this hybrid approach and hope that offering courses in various formats will make training more accessible to laity throughout the conference.

With the support of Conference Communications staff, the Laity Ministries section of the conference website was updated, wnccumc.org, to improve the usability of the site and make it easier for laity to find the information they need. This work will continue in 2023 as the board continues its efforts to improve the communication tools and resources available for laity.

The Board of Laity was pleased to continue its sponsorship of the Laity Service Award program, which allows local congregations to recognize members who have demonstrated outstanding commitment and dedication to serving within their church and making a difference in the community the church serves. It encourages all local congregations to participate in this program to celebrate the contributions of those whose service stands as an example of faithful discipleship to others.

Several key initiatives and programs are planned for 2023, including beginning to develop on-demand Lay Servant Ministry courses, improving the Lay Servant Ministry data management processes, and offering scholarships to help defray the cost for those pursuing Certified Lay Minister certification. The board also will be intentional in pursuing opportunities for enhanced collaboration and support of laity ministries across and between districts, and will seek meaningful ways to support laity who are dealing with grief and loss as a result of their church choosing to disaffiliate.

The Board of Laity remains committed to its vision to see growing numbers of committed United Methodist laity who are maturing in their faith, discipling others, and transforming the church, community, and world in measurable ways. The board is excited by the opportunity for engaging, equipping, and encouraging laity to be faithful disciples of Jesus Christ and beacons of light and hope and love to the world.

On behalf of the Board of Laity, thank you to the laity of the Western North Carolina Conference for all you do each day to follow Jesus, make disciples, and transform the world..

John D. Crane, Conference Lay Leader

a. Conference Council on Youth Ministries (CCYM)

The Conference Council on Youth Ministries (CCYM) is a leadership team of youth and adults from around the conference who plan, develop, and implement ministries for youth across the Western North Carolina Conference. The mission of CCYM is to find ways to encourage young people to follow Jesus, become leaders, make disciples, and transform the world. The 2022-2023 executive committee consisted of Kayla Stewart (President), Kaleb Thornton (Vice President), Taylor Meister (Secretary), and Harrison Cadwallader (Treasurer). Nine new youth were welcomed to serve on the council this year and their fresh perspective, work ethic, and insight proved to be vital to the program.

Further, CCYM was supervised and led by a team of great leadership, including Shannon LeMaster-Smith, Carlyn Bell, and Randy Wall. These leaders helped guide the CCYM youth on the best paths for them both spiritually and logistically, leading to the success of this group.

The CCYM receives Youth Service Fund grant applications and awards Youth Service Funds each year. The Youth Service Fund is money raised by youth, through local churches and different events run by CCYM, and are distributed by grants administered by the CCYM. "Of the funds given, 70% is given back within the Western North Carolina Conference. The remaining 30% is donated to the General Council on Finance and Administration, and this amount is used to fund projects that a team of youth from around the world select. Most importantly, the projects supported are designed and led by youth, for the benefit of their peers." (*The Book of Discipline* 2016) This year was a rebuilding year for funds since the usual events to raise funds were unable to be held for multiple years.

Each year, CCYM is in charge of putting on a conference-wide youth retreat for middle school youth, known as IgniteUS. This year, high schoolers were still invited to attend as well as having better outreach, leading to our attendance numbers doubling. The overnight retreat was held from Friday, March 24, to Sunday, March 26 at Camp Hanes in King, NC, and had over 200 participants, including middle schoolers and high schoolers who were invited to attend. Having elected not to have a speaker this year, CCYM members planned many ways to portray the message of "seeking God," with Matthew 7:7 being the point of focus. These included an escape room skit written by CCYM members; and station rotations with music, a scavenger hunt, scripture, a mission project decorating pillowcases for A Bed and A Book, and a game of hide and seek in which participants found pieces of a flashlight and put it back together. Additionally, there was a call story panel consisting of four CCYM members sharing their story about God and a reading of the "Seek and Find Board," where participants put sticky notes detailing times they saw God throughout the weekend.

The First UMC Newton praise band was able to come back and lead youth in worship through music. The staff and leaders planning this event, along with the Camp Hanes staff, helped to make this an extremely successful weekend, bringing the youth closer to God and one another.

CCYM is grateful to the Western North Carolina Conference for the continuous support through these challenging times. CCYM is a growing organization full of leaders who are eager to improve and transform the church into followers of Christ who accept and love all of God's children.

Kayla Stewart, President
www.wnccumc.org/ccym

b. United Methodist Men

Vision: Every man has a clear and direct vision that every man is an effective disciple of Jesus Christ.

Mission: That every male who is United Methodist has a credible opportunity to meet, know and serve Jesus Christ, so he can become and be an effective disciple for his family, his church, his community, his relationships in the world.

Values: United Methodist Men will accomplish this through non-negotiable values delivered through these two pathways – Servant Leadership and Personal Spiritual Growth.

Goals: That every man has three sequential goals for the coming year.

1. A facilitated meeting between all the WNCC District Superintendents, General Commission on United Methodist Men senior staff (hereafter GCUMM), and WNCC UMM Executive Committee.
2. With the help of each District Superintendent, UMM will begin the process of scheduling equipping workshops and seminars with the district superintendent, their clergy, GCUMM staff and WNCCUMM executive team members.
3. Communicate and share resources with every church in the annual conference and invite them to join the new movement of Men's and Scouting Ministries in the UMC.

The GCUMM has developed well researched modern resources for the men of The United Methodist Church. While UMM will continue to offer the traditional "chartering" model of connection, the Agency for Men's and Scouting Ministries has brought forward new resources to help reach all men of The United Methodist Church that fall under the "UNITED" banner.

Destination:

1. EVERY UMC CHURCH CONNECTED.
2. EVERY MAN DISCIPLED.

Walter Vaughan Jr., President
www.wnccumm.org

c. United Women in Faith

2022 was a year of great change in the lives of United Women in Faith members due to the continuation of the pandemic and also a name change. Two conference events, Spiritual Growth Retreat and Annual Celebration were held in person with live streaming also offered. Mission U was changed at the last moment to virtual when it was obvious there would not be the number of attendees required to meet on the Pfeiffer campus.

The National office continues to fund programs all over the world with regional missionaries carrying on the work of this organization. The Bethlehem Center in Winston-Salem and the Alliance Center for Education in Charlotte were coming back from the pandemic cautiously. Brooks-Howell Home in Asheville continued to experience shutdowns due to COVID-19 cases. Lack of staff was a common problem in the National Institutions in this conference.

One of the highlights of 2022 was the assembly held in May in Orlando, Florida. The theme was "Turn It Up" and indeed that is what happened when, from the speakers to the children who graced us one evening with their enthusiasm and just being children, the theme held true. The National President, 'Ainise 'Isama'u born in Tonga, now living in California gave encouragement to all by reminding everyone that "Things change. People change. But God remains the same and that continues to be the purpose behind everything done in this organization." Assembly was offered virtually to the members who could not make the trip.

The June Spiritual Growth Retreat was held at Lake Junaluska. Requirements of up-to-date covid vaccinations, mask wearing, and safe distancing were adhered to. Rev. Tammy Ingram led the retreat with powerful messages. The theme of the retreat was "Come to the Water." Breakout sessions included the United Women in Faith Choir, Boat Trip, Knitting Together for God's Good Work, Trolley Garden Tour, Book Talk, Krystal Handbells, Overview of Reading Program Books, Walk Around the Lake, and New Wineskins Overview. In July a virtual Mission u was held with a new format of combining the spiritual growth and issue studies into one study "We Can Be Together: A biblical Exploration of Luke 13." Annual Celebration was held in September with the theme of "Turn It Up" and the keynote speaker was Tamara Clark, National United Women in Faith Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer. Tamara shared how to turn it up – in souls, in faith, and deeds. Workshops were offered in music, with the Women in Choir; New Wineskins (a discussion explaining how this organization is changing, available resources, and how the membership is being reached out to); Jazzercising 4 Jesus featuring exercising with laughter; and Flexibility in the Midst of Change. The conference leadership team provided training for district officers on Leadership Development Day and sponsored a conference-wide Leadership Development Day for all local officers.

Many units were not meeting and as a result the giving went down. \$410,967.63 was sent to the United Women in Faith National Office, a drop of \$94,175 from 2021. This conference giving to the Legacy Fund was \$44,576.26 in 2022 bringing the cumulative giving to \$473,554.31, second in the nation as they work toward the \$60 Million national goal.

Even though this organization's new name, United Women in Faith has not been easy to remember, they continue as a community of women who share the love of Christ and look at the world and see all the mission work to be done. At this time of disaffiliation in some of the churches, United Women in Faith members seek to remain in community by being peaceful, remaining resilient, knowing all are valued, and continuing to be inclusive. They learn from the past, remain in the present, and are forward-looking in their plans for the future. They are intentional about caring for women, children, and youth in their own backyard, across the nation and around the world.

United Women in Faith members believe love in action can change the world. No age group is left behind; seasoned members bring their wisdom to this organization and younger members bring an energy that challenges all to look at new ways of gathering and supporting one another. As the largest women's organization in the world, the members remain committed to training through education and providing opportunities for service and advocacy and especially endeavors that advocate justice for all.

Joanie Strohm, President
www.wnccumw.org

8. LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT TEAM

The great American Football coach Vince Lombardi said that "Leaders are made, they are not born." So is the thinking and discussion of the WNCC Leadership Development Team (LDT).

LDT is prepared to enrich the ministry of our leaders in our ongoing commitment to our values and priorities: collegial relationships and peer listening, sustained learning over time and continue meeting to identify needs of clergy and ministry professionals. We want to ensure that no need is too small to address.

With the struggles of serving during the COVID-19 pandemic and the disaffiliation of churches, our clergy and ministry professionals are the priority. We must develop and provide resources to help leaders to address what they are experiencing. "You hear opposition to the disaffiliation... everywhere." LDT encouraged deliberate reflections of our mission to ensure that available resources will support strong leaders. One of our great strengths has always been to think of ways to encourage self-care and meaningful partners in health and wholeness. Because we recognize our diversity, the team is listening and working alongside the Black Church Initiative to continue to hear stories across racial divides.

The WNCC Leadership Development Team resources leaders in a variety of ways:

- Five clergy leaders attended the Beyond Conference to St. Louis in February, hosted by The Gathering UMC. Our leaders returned re-energized with new ideas, and hope for the church and for their congregations. They discovered that a church that celebrates and shares our core theology by being invitational, relational, and inclusive will thrive now and into the future and best reflect who Jesus Christ is. Our team is working on providing leaders the tools needed to move beyond hope to become the church people around us to be.
- LDT encouraged leaders to care for oneself through *rest, sabbath, vacation, renewal*.
- *Opportunities* to address relevant leadership needs include:
 - *eLEAD*
 - Partnership with Hood Seminary Spiritual Director Program
 - Other leaders training in partnership with the Neighborhood Seminary: Spiritual Renewal and Formation, Staying in Jerusalem, Waiting for the Spirit
 - Preaching Cohorts: *Preparation to Proclamation: Refining the weekly Habits of Laboring Preachers* with Rob Blackburn and Brian Bombs; and others such as *Can You Tell THE Story?*, led by Otto Harris, and the *Laity Preaching Cohort*, led by Robert Brewer
 - Engagement and empowerment through *Mentoring Pew Sitters into Servant Leaders*
 - *Preferred Provider scholarships* for highlighted training programs outside of WNCC, including:
 - Lombard Mennonite resources on conflict and peace
 - The Art of Leadership Academy With Carey Nieuwhof
 - Seminary Now Annual Subscription, and more!
 - Spiritual renewal funds
 - Adaptive Leadership cohort coming this fall
- Available *just-in-time* resources are:
 - *Western North Carolina Conference Leadership Development Facebook Page*
 - *Leadership Engagement Live Webinar Series*
 - *Means of Grace Podcast*

LDT also supports the First Church Initiative, offered by Bishop Ken Carter, and *Flourish 2.0*, sponsored by the Board of Ordained Ministry.

In the coming conference year, to build strong leaders in following the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19), a focus of the LDT will be to facilitate and nurture relationships among clergy and ministry professional colleagues. The team would love to hear from you how to serve you in these ways. Find all these resources and more at www.LEADwncc.org.

Shirley Canty, Chairperson

9. MISSION ENGAGEMENT TEAM

The **Creation Care Ministry Team** (CCMT) raised awareness, educated, and engaged clergy, congregations, and staff to help them more fully live into an ethic of creation care and justice. They discussed a variety of topics on their monthly online Ideas Exchange gatherings in 2022; reached out to districts and local churches to provide guidance on establishing or expanding a local CCMT; and mentored two churches participating in the Green Church Initiative, one which finished and earned the “Green Church” award. Resulting from the summer, 2022, the Eco-Focused Youth Mission Trip pilot curriculum was improved and was expanded to college, adult, and mixed generational mission groups, and is working towards a curriculum for camps and retreats. Working in partnership with others from the UM Creation Justice Movement, they developed and filed to present two petitions at the June 2023 annual conference and created informational brochures for future planned resolutions. They added three newly commissioned UM EarthKeepers to the conference totals, sponsored an art contest with a theme of “Caring for God’s Creation,” created a video highlighting CCM actions, and prepared a special event for annual conference related to local church CCMTs.

See www.wnccumc.org/wncc-creation-care-ministry; contact CreationCareWNCC@gmail.com.

Kim Richmond, Convener

Disaster Ministries had a busy year. Relief work in Haywood County from the August 17, 2021, flooding of the Pigeon River transitioned to rebuild projects. In addition to rebuild projects, and through established relationships with the NC Baptist on Mission, teams have assisted in the construction of several new homes in the area. Since January of 2022, Disaster Ministries of WNCCUMC have hosted 68 teams from churches and organizations across North Carolina, Virginia, and Pennsylvania. These teams have combined to complete over 16,000 hours of volunteer service.

An “Early Response Team: Train the Trainer” training was held by UMCOR at the WNCC Office in Huntersville on September 8th - 10th where five individuals from the Western North Carolina Conference and four individuals from the North Carolina Conference were trained. All five WNCC participants have since been evaluated and approved to lead ERT Trainings across the conference. ERTs are trained and deployed to respond to natural disasters, providing a caring Christian presence while working in the early stages of disaster relief. With the addition of new trainers, Disaster Ministries will be able to hold regularly scheduled quarterly trainings, as well as trainings by request.

Working with district leadership, Disaster Ministries are working on asset mapping of the WNCC. Doing this allows for strategic planning and response in the event of a natural disaster and limits the delay between disaster and an appropriate response. This process is the first step in updating the WNCC Disaster Response Plan and the Local Church Disaster Response Plan template.

Ben Rogers, WNCC Mission Response Associate
brogers@wnccumc.org

In 2022 the Western North Carolina Conference continued partnership with **The Missional Collective** by hosting a 5-retreat, immersive learning journey in experiential neighboring. Participating clergy and laity partnered the experience of WNC communities with the wisdom of leading organizations to undertake research and conversations that bring about renewal in service to God’s mission. The retreats are marked with themes of:

- Centering in the *Missio Dei*
- Asset-based community development as Hearing Humanity
- Discernment through organizational life cycles and values
- Overlapping insights with equity and justice
- Bridging divides

Ongoing learning has come through partner organizations including the Learning Tree in Indiana, QC Family Tree in Charlotte, Haywood Street Congregation, Faith for Justice Asheville, the Beloved Community Center of Greensboro and a recent addition of Hood Huggers International out of Asheville. The Collective also engaged nearly 100 students in a short-term mission experience that arose out of a collaboration with the disaster response team and creation care ministries. This set the groundwork for further, specialized offerings for all ages. Thanks to partnership development, the Collective is committed to offering personal retreats, online curriculum, and short-term missions.

Erin Burleson, Missional Collective Facilitator
eburleson@wnccumc.net

The **Northern Haiti Mission Initiative** works through Partners 4 New Hope, Inc. to support the Cap Haitian Ministry Center, the work of Dr. Maklin Eugene and New Hope Hospital in Plaine du Nord, Haiti. In the past year, through financial support from donors and the combined ministries of the Cap Haitian Ministry Center partners, the work has been centered on feeding programs and supporting health initiatives through New Hope Hospital. Many feeding programs have been carried out at the hospital providing food for patients and families in the surrounding towns. The initiative has also partnered with a local school in the city of Cap Haitian to feed students and families in that area. Working together it was able to provide food to over 900+ prisoners who are not being fed on a regular basis. Two new micro-finance programs have been started and ten clean water wells have been provided in rural areas of Northern Haiti. The focus going forward will continue to be on food insecurity, fighting the resurgence of Cholera through clean water and addressing the continuing health concerns for the people of Haiti.

Wanda Musgrave
wandafm@bellsouth.net

In 2022, **Project AGAPE** continued to address the humanitarian needs of the displaced families from Kashatagh region of Artsakh. The humanitarian aid distribution project has gained new importance, especially with more displaced people coming from the eastern borders of Armenia. In 2022, 631 refugee families were provided with basic supplies. There are still over 500 families from Kashatagh region who have registered to receive aid. Project AGAPE also continues to implement the development project to help the people served by the Project become self-sufficient. In July of 2022, a vocational school was launched at the new Project AGAPE Center in Vayk. Nine young adults from different refugee families graduated the school becoming specialists in nail, skin, and hair care. Many of them have started their own businesses, receiving equipment, tools, and supplies from Project AGAPE while others have been hired by beauty salons. There are four students now at the Vocational School and, with additional funds, more students and training areas will be available in nail, skin, hair care, electrical, plumbing, carpentry, and masonry. Finally, there will be a 30th Anniversary Celebration of Project AGAPE on October 21, 2023, at Mount Pleasant UMC in Greensboro. Bishop Carter and Bishop Shelton along with Nara Melkonyan, the in-country director, will be attending as the mission and ministry of Project AGAPE is celebrating 30 years of ministry.

Allan Van Meter, Project AGAPE Chairperson
allandiv@aol.com

Advance Specials

(Petition 6) *Approved June 16, 2023*

The following ministries have been vetted and are approved as Annual Conference Mission Specials:

Carolina Cross Connection	Youth Service Fund	VIM Mission Connection Teams
Congregations 4 Children	Mission Response Center	WNCC Committee on Relief
Open Arms Community	Northern Haiti Mission Connection Team	Project AGAPE

Churches are at liberty to support Advance Specials according to the wishes of the individual churches.

10. BOARD OF ORDAINED MINISTRY

The Board of Ordained Ministry supports the mission of the Western North Carolina Conference by developing, overseeing, and evaluating programs that focus on recruiting, training, certifying, examining, recommending, and supporting clergy leadership for the Conference and The United Methodist Church. The Board is a diverse group of clergy and laity from across the conference. The Director of Ministerial Services and the Associate Director of Ministerial Services serve as staff to the Board, along with one District Superintendent who serves as the cabinet representative.

The members of the Board serve on working teams to care for specific aspects of the board's work and on discernment teams to interview candidates. Following two years of virtual interviews, we are glad that we returned to in-person interviews for this conference year. Each member volunteers many hours to the important work of the Board of Ordained Ministry.

The Executive Committee of the Board of Ordained Ministry has been working on several important items related to process and operational procedures for the Board of Ordained Ministry. Most importantly, we continue to implement the Fair and Equitable Interview Process, which ensures fair and equitable treatment of each candidate that comes before the Board. We have experienced a significant culture change while maintaining the high standards required for ordination and clergy effectiveness. A Common Covenant used by DCOMs and the BOM was approved and implemented as well. We have engaged in significant grace-filled work regarding clergy and candidates who have chosen to disaffiliate from the UMC.

Board members met with ordination candidates in February and provisional candidates in March. The Board is recommending seven Elders and two Deacons for full connection and ordination and 10 persons for commissioning at the 2023 session of the Western North Carolina Annual Conference. In addition to provisional and full connection interviews, the Board conducted continuance interviews of 34 provisional candidates.

Our work is critical for the future United Methodist Church. The members of the Board of Ordained Ministry are honored to serve Christ in this very important way.

Lynda Ferguson, Chairperson

a. Local Pastors Completing Course of Study

The Board of Ordained Ministry wishes to recognize those local pastors who have completed the Course of Study since the last annual conference session:

Name, Appointment, District, COS—School Name

- **Kyle Dean McCain Sr.**, Harrison (Pineville), Metro, COS – Candler School of Theology, Emory University
- **Keith McLelland Sherrill**, Hills Chapel (Stanley), Catawba Valley, COS – The Divinity School, Duke University

b. Sexual and Professional Misconduct Policy for Ministerial Leadership

The current policy is published online at <https://www.wnccumc.org/misconduct-policy>.

C. WNCC DISTRICTS

1. APPALACHIAN DISTRICT

The Appalachian District looks forward to a new conference year focused less on those churches choosing to disaffiliate and investing in what God is doing in and through The United Methodist Church across the district. And, there are exciting initiatives taking place.

In a continued effort to meet the churches and clergy where they are by empowering and equipping them to both discover the God-given passion and apply it to Kingdom work in their piece of the kingdom, the district embarked on a cohort with eight pastors serving rural mountain churches as they explore new metrics for understanding vitality in this unique but critical ministry setting. The hope is to share what is learned with other sister mountain rural churches across the conference.

The district has also been working on a pilot to help train pastors and church leaders clear that they are remaining United Methodist, how to be prepared for new persons visiting churches who are coming from a traumatic church experience (both from disaffiliation and LGBTQ persons exploring The United Methodist Church in this new era).

There are 18 churches currently exploring being or are a Lighthouse Church or are a #BeUMC Church. The passion and commitment of these churches to be a United Methodist witness in their communities is inspiring.

The District Lay Leader, Penny Ledbetter, and her team of Lay Associates, continue their work connecting the ministry of the laity with their pastors as well as connecting lay leaders across each county in the district.

The Appalachian District Strategy Team did work to help guide and align the district's energy and resources for the coming year. The district will strive to nurture and multiply God's Kingdom work by building strong relationships, bringing healing to the hurt or traumatized, and focusing on the mission to make disciples for Jesus Christ. Three goals include:

1. Align tools, resources, and available opportunities to create fruitful discipleship pathways. This will include reducing complexity of current systems and processes (simplify) and making the mission the focus (amplify).
2. Mobilize and equip older adults as a valuable asset for ministry in the Appalachian District. While churches long for families with children to join the church, this district recognizes that the churches have older adults in abundance. By reinvesting and inspiring this asset, churches can bring new life and energy into the faith communities that will become a witness and that all ages will want to be a part.
3. Initiate new faith communities in various strategic locations across the district utilizing a wide range of forms and strategies: (Fresh Expressions, satellite campuses, house church, cooperative parishes, etc.) There are at least three to four new initiatives targeted for the district.

The Appalachian District looks forward to continuing its commitment to caring for the clergy, empowering the laity, being a spiritual presence in each community, and challenging churches to creatively reach new people with the love and grace of Jesus Christ.

Gloria Hughes, District Vitality Associate
Lory Beth Huffman, District Superintendent

2. BLUE RIDGE DISTRICT

From June 2022 through May 2023, the Blue Ridge District continued to take steps toward equipping, engaging, and empowering congregational leaders, both clergy and lay, for the mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. Over this year, our work has been focused on: Training and equipping leaders with tools and a framework for guiding congregations toward shared understanding, agreement, and action using the Technology of Participation (ToP) Methods; Engaging in pilgrimage and conversation surrounding Civil Rights by offering a guided experience through impactful sites in Montgomery, AL; Encouraging and strengthening enhanced partnership of Clergy and Lay Leaders by providing a pathway for mutual learning, communication, and evaluation; and inviting leaders to share in the Smoky Mountain District's grassroots evangelism efforts. Below is more information on each area of focus.

Tools & Framework for Shared Understanding, Agreement, and Action

Over the past year, the ToP methodology and tools (which help groups think, talk, and work together toward shared understanding, agreement, and action) were utilized (among other ways) to: Help congregations share in conversation surrounding: spiritual formation and pastoral appointments; finding consensus for next steps in ministry; updating ministry focus areas; discerning underlying contradictions that stall forward movement; and uncovering spiritual and connectional needs of groups of parishioners. After seeing the life-giving impact this framework can make, time and resources were invested into empowering congregational leaders through offering ToP Facilitative Methods training. In addition to the 20 clergy who were trained in 2021/22, eight additional congregational leaders, both clergy and lay, have been trained to facilitate conversations using these methods. Plans are underway to host two more training sessions in June and September of 2023, and a Community of Practice has been established to help ToP trained leaders grow and learn from each other.

Pilgrimage to Montgomery

In November 2022, 12 pastors and 12 lay persons shared a Civil Rights Pilgrimage to Montgomery, Alabama. Prior to our departure we read and discussed *The Cross and the Lynching Tree* by James Cone. Upon arrival we toured the parsonage of Martin Luther King, Jr and Dexter Avenue Baptist Church. We visited the Legacy Museum tracing the history and legacy of racial injustice in America from enslavement to mass incarceration along with the Peace and Justice Memorial commemorating the more than 4000 children and adults who lost their lives to racial terror. Together these sites provided sacred space for prayerful reflection and holy conversation on "America's original sin." Plans are underway for a second trip in October 2023.

Practicing Partnership

Motivated by previous years' research in the Blue Ridge District surrounding understanding the role of the Lay Leader, a six-phase pathway for mutual learning, communication, and evaluation between Lay Leaders and Appointed Clergy was developed. Collective Renewal Resource, in collaboration with District Superintendent Rev. Dr. Mark Ralls, Russ Darnall (then District Lay Leader), and Coach Suzanne Schilling, developed a discussion guide, interactive training, and online resource library, as well as facilitated events that led appointed clergy and their partnering lay leader to: Understand the role of the Lay Leader; Celebrate their unique and shared values; Gain clarity of the mission, vision, values, and goals of the church; Become aware of each other's leadership and conflict management styles; clarify expectations of the relationship; and finalize a relational covenant with the feedback of a facilitator.

Smoky Mountain District's Grassroots Evangelism

Thanks to the generous hospitality of the Smoky Mountain District, four of our pastors have received training in grassroots evangelism over the course of ten months. Facilitated by missiologist, Dr. Kale Yu, we learned how to engender passionate evangelistic efforts that are spontaneous, unexpected, individualized and bottom-up. After placing this grassroots model into practice, our pastors discovered how to connect the Gospel to the highest concern of their unchurched neighbors.

Along with these experiences, we were overjoyed to round out the year by welcoming Bishop Carter as he visited the Blue Ridge District in May. He shared meals with the Haywood Street Congregation, those who took part in the Montgomery pilgrimage, 25 ToP trained facilitators, residents of Brooks Howell Home and Givens Estates, as well as eighteen remarkable congregational leaders nominated by their pastors. During his time here Bishop Carter also shared conversation with pastors of churches with emerging and highly innovative community ministries as well as pastors whose churches have recently adopted statements of intentional hospitality and inclusion.

We are overwhelmed with gratitude for the connection and shared ministry continuing and rising up in the Blue Ridge District and are excited to bear witness in the present and future to God's amazing guidance and grace.

Mark Ralls, District Superintendent

3. CATAWBA VALLEY DISTRICT

The ministry of the Catawba Valley District expanded and grew throughout the conference year. Missional Networks continued to "rebound" from the times of COVID, and provided hope to their communities. In this district of over 100 churches, there are 14 different missional networks that provide food, clothing, worship, and witness to their communities.

The district celebrated missional network charge conferences and enjoyed being able to gather to worship. It was a blessing to give God thanks for the valuable witness of clergy and laity through their contextual ministry. For some, these charge conferences were the first time to be gathered since 2020, and even provided a chance to plan for future ministry.

One important highlight was Bishop Carter's visit to the district. He met with laity, attended a clergy meeting, and took time to meet with women clergy, clergy of color, young clergy, local pastors, and clergy of large membership churches. Even in the midst of so much change, the district senses God doing a new thing through the connection of United Methodists in the five counties of the Catawba Valley District.

The district has regular celebrations of the churches and clergy on the webpage that is called "Terrific Tuesdays." These quick vignettes are intended to be fun and give an insight into the amazing things God is doing through the people of the Catawba Valley. One unique aspect about ministry in our five counties (Gaston, Cleveland, Lincoln, Catawba, and Burke) is that many of the churches are located in rural places. The churches have enjoyed having special "Rural Ministry Days Apart" in the district. The district is grateful for the Tekoa Foothills Camp being willing to host these gatherings and to Dr. Jonathan LeMaster-Smith for facilitating them.

It has been a joy to welcome Mrs. Caroline Wood to the team this year as District Vitality Associate. She joins Mrs. Jana Alexander, District Administrator, in the office. The district is blessed to get to serve in the picturesque Catawba Valley.

David Christy, District Superintendent

4. METRO DISTRICT

The Metro District is made up of 118 churches across five counties and includes a diverse geographical area that spans from urban metropolis to rural farmland. In a year filled with challenges that could have distracted the church from its mission, Metro District churches have held steadfast, and continued to put love into action. Churches of the district provided more than 150,000 sandwiches or meals to members of the community last year, assisted several refugee families, made significant donations to those affected by the war in Ukraine and a hurricane in Florida. The district supported three churches on a "Deep South Pilgrimage" to learn more about the history of racial injustice in our country and the acts of brave persons who changed the course of American history. Eleven churches have become lighthouse churches to acknowledge that they are a safe harbor for all people. Several other churches are in the process of becoming lighthouse churches.

As churches rebound from the pandemic, they are establishing a new normal while making intentional changes to live into the future. Six churches are participating in Transformation Journey which is an initiative to help churches discern and implement whatever God is calling them to do next. At least nine churches are in the process of building or redeveloping their property, with many of those exploring how their property can generate revenue to support ministry.

Laity continue to be called and equipped for ministry. In October, 73 lay persons from across the district were recognized for extraordinary service to their church as Laity Service Award recipients. Lay Servant Ministry Training was held in the spring of 2023 with nearly 100 participants combined in basic and advanced courses, including 14 who took the basic course in Spanish.

The Metro District continued to offer sacred space online through Advent and Lenten devotionals this year. Clergy and laity of the district led 841 participants in these special times. Participants gathered from all eight districts of the conference as well as from other conferences and denominations around the world. Thank you to all laity and clergy who led the Advent and Lenten Video Series.

Missional Network leaders journeyed with the leadership team of the Metro District to discover how we could support the areas in greatest need in the Smoky Mountain District to rebuild after the devastating flood. Because of this visit, the district staff is working in collaboration with conference staff to develop an Emergency Plan of Action for the district.

A special thank you to the district staff, Stephanie Hand, Jatana Royster, and Ravonda Britt for their support of the Metro District.

Dan Pezet, District Superintendent

5. NORTHERN PIEDMONT DISTRICT

Like all faithful Western North Carolina United Methodists, the Northern Piedmont District continues faithfully in its mission is to “Follow Jesus, Make Disciples, Transform the World.” This district endeavors to fulfill the mission by emphasizing spiritual maturity and life in the beloved community. It supports long-term relationships within expanding, localized missional networks, confident that neighborhood relationships drive authentic and sustainable discipleship. Strong ministry coming out of the COVID-19 pandemic has been possible in part due to strong established relationships between churches, which help each another with worship, technology, food-related ministries, and critical partnerships with children and schools. The district has added innovative platforms for its diverse communities to share their specific concerns, and teams under the leadership of Rev. Maria King have continued their work on trauma-informed ministry. In 2023, the district began a sixth year of intentional work to understand trauma through the lens of discipleship. Trauma-Informed Ministry was included in the expansion of the District’s Lay Servant Training curriculum in 2022 and experienced an overwhelming response of affirmation. The district is grateful to the gifted faculty of its Lay Servant Training School and to its director, Bonnie Burkett.

Cohorts of churches of similar sizes regularly discuss their specific needs as the church moves forward from pandemic to endemic. The district continues to award proceeds from a \$30,000 technology grant to resource small and medium-sized churches in worship technology and best practices for live-streaming worship. Trainers and consultants are helping churches to take their technology to the next level to meet the needs of the future. The district continues to give thanks to The United Methodist Foundation for its partnership in this important work. The connection is such a blessing for local churches.

Northern Piedmont continues to lead both North Carolina conferences in cross-cultural appointments. It supports cross-cultural appointments with truth and reconciliation dialogues and the care of souls in transition. Its partnerships with local and regional community leaders and resources allow the district to live into God’s vision for all. The relationship with Greensboro’s Beloved Community Center continues.

The Northern Piedmont School of Spiritual Direction, now in partnership with Hood Theological Seminary, supports the district’s goals of spiritual maturity and beloved community, including laity and clergy from all over the conference. Trained directors are mobilized for both personal spiritual direction and group direction for churches in discernment. The district continues to resource congregations, missional networks, and neighborhoods with team development, executive coaching, and teaching cultural intelligence.

District grants support discipleship initiatives in all the counties in which the district does ministry. Recent Missional Engagement grants, totaling \$94,015, have been awarded for affordable housing, neighborhood ministries, feeding programs at three churches in two counties, and Spanish-language fellowship programs. Congregational Vitality grants, totaling \$8,000, were awarded to two churches working on new worship and music initiatives. Benevolence grants continue to support UMAR, Anchor Hope, Carolina Cross Connection, campus ministries across the district, and the Chrysalis Counseling Center.

The Northern Piedmont District begins the 2023-2024 conference year with 116 churches. At the time of this report, the Northern Piedmont District has eight certified candidates for ministry, 24 appointed local pastors, and 10 clergy from other conferences or denominations appointed in the district. One certified lay minister.

Bev Coppley, District Superintendent

Maria King, District Vitality Associate

Landa Wallace and Lynne Gilbert, District Administrators

Kim Eller, District Lay Leader

6. SMOKY MOUNTAIN DISTRICT

This year Smoky Mountain District Vitality Team launched Vitality Through Storytelling Project. The VTS Project joins churches to amplify their local community stories of hope and renewal in a season of disaffiliations, conflict, and divisiveness. The VTS Project dives into how the story of God’s Kingdom embodies local churches today, what stories shape the present and future in ways that can transform a community, and how people cultivate storytellers of the Christian faith who shape communities in ways that can change their lives. Three short films were curated: Connecting Across Race, Invitation, and When Disaster Strikes.

The Vitality Team also initiated “Rediscovering Wesleyan Evangelism,” a spiritual movement for the district churches to share their faith based on grassroots evangelism. The district lay and clergy will continue to gather and be equipped through the “Re-Evangelism Conferences” in 2023. To revitalize local churches, the district vitality team deeply engages with the selected churches and collaborates with the local church’s leadership team to bring renewal and growth.

Groups across the Smoky Mountain District continue to engage their communities, confronting generational poverty through early childhood literacy. The faith-guiding teams work with other community agencies and organizations to reduce the duplication of services, foster great communication among service providers, and collaborate on holistic care for the community’s families. The

Great by Eight faith guiding team created a new action network this year to increase the number of providers represented. Additionally, the cohort model that pairs contemplative prayer and empowerment ministries is in the process of relaunching for 2023.

The Smoky Mountain District and the WNCC have played a vital role in support of the Cruso Community following the devastating flooding of 2021. The Canton Missional Network continues to be a critical source of community engagement and ecumenical partnerships. The summer of 2022 included the pilot of a new Eco-focused Mission Journey in Cruso that incorporated various elements of creation care and community building. The Canton Missional Network continues to be responsive to the community's needs in light of the projected mill closure.

The district communication team endeavored to inform, inspire, and invite. The primary tasks are to: 1) inform district audiences with relevant information, 2) inspire them through words and pictures, and 3) invite all to engage diverse perspectives. The communion team used various platforms to keep audiences informed and engaged. The team will continue the basics, such as sharing conference news and district happenings within the district; however, the communication strategy is to follow and engage beyond the church circle. The SMD also implemented an initiative where small member churches can have support in building a website. Churches in the district can contact the communications coordinator for support and implementation of building a website. The church websites will reflect the warmth and welcome that should be inherent in the local church. Churches can either be coached or have the website built. Four churches have had a consultation and are having their site built.

The district also relaunched the District Laity Engagement Team in 2022. The newly elected District Lay Leader, Dr. Pati Graham, coordinates the lay ministry and leads training events for Lay Servants and Certified Lay Ministers. The team will host an "Empowering Laity" event to strengthen the district lay ministry on September 9, 2023.

Jae Lee, District Superintendent
Nicole Jones, District Vitality Associate
D'Andre Ash, District Communications Coordinator

7. UWHARRIE DISTRICT

The themes of BeUMC have shaped the work and thinking of the district staff in conference year 2022-2023: Experiencing God, Disciple Making, Belonging, and Connection. Furthermore, the missional understanding of the Uwharrie District is to equip laity and clergy to create and lead vital congregations, of all sizes and in every location, who follow Jesus, make disciples, and transform the world. Much of the work of mentoring and supporting clergy, resourcing churches and clergy, and communicating opportunities fulfill this mission and point to the themes of BeUMC. The district staff supports the work of churches who are a part of the Transformation Journey for the purposes of congregational vitality. Coaching and visioning processes are opportunities available to clergy and congregations. Churches in the district have hosted anti-racism trainings that are required for all clergy. Fresh Expressions Exploration Days have offered ideas and encouragement for churches and clergy who want to "think outside the box" in how they can share the gospel of Jesus Christ with people in their community. The District Ministry Council continues to oversee the work of district committees and help with communication throughout the district. The following district committees have led ably and provide many important and helpful tasks: the Disaster Response Team, the Committee on Ministry, the Grants and Resources Team, the Clergy Care Team, the Superintendency Team, the Nominations Team, and the District Board of Church Building and Location. Significant conversation and resourcing have happened for churches who have self-identified as Lighthouse Churches and safe places for others who want to remain United Methodist, but who have experienced disaffiliation in their own local church. Several laity listening sessions have been held to help those remaining United Methodist navigate the experience of disaffiliation. All of this is engaged with much hope and promise for the ongoing United Methodist Church. Even in a season of disaffiliation, the spirit of connection between churches and the work between partner congregations and missional networks has not been diminished. Churches across the district give witness to the love of Christ through the many and varied ministries of proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ, caring for the sick and troubled, feeding the hungry, caring for the addicted, and supporting schools and community service agencies. Thank you to all who work and serve so faithfully in the Uwharrie District.

Laura Auten, District Superintendent

8. YADKIN VALLEY DISTRICT

The Yadkin Valley District used the charge conference season as the launch for the initiative for the district, "God Cares." District Leadership met in the Missional Networks with pastors and leaders. Missional Networks worshipped using the scripture Mark 4:35-41, and celebrated Communion. This theme is being used to help our leaders to remember that as disciples of Jesus, it is vital to care about the needs of others. Our caring must lead to actions.

Yadkin Valley celebrates the ministries that are occurring within many of the Missional Networks. Literacy ministries are occurring within the towns of Boonville, East Bend, and Thomasville. The South Surry Missional Network presented the outdoor drama, "No Ordinary Wine." The North Surry Missional Network continues its ministries addressing the opioid epidemic in their communities. Other Missional Networks continue their ministries of feeding, and partnerships with schools.

Other servant ministry offerings include churches that have an intentional ministry with special needs children, UMAR partnerships, collaboration with Crossnore Communities for Children; English as a Second Language classes, and provision of car seats and other infant necessities to new parents in the community. The Yadkin Valley District is also home to the Open Arms Community Center, which strives to connect with urban children and youth in their neighborhood to provide healthy mentoring relationships, ongoing tutoring along with meals and a community gathering space.

The Yadkin Valley District has been intentional about providing opportunities to better equip the laity and the clergy. The Justice and Reconciliation Team continued its work. This team continues with monthly conversations. The books which have undergirded our

work have been Heather McGhee's *The Sum of Us* and Nikole Hannah-Jones' *The 1619 Project: A New American Origin Story*. The Justice and Reconciliation Team participated in two outings. The first was the rental of the AMC theatre and viewing of the movie **Till**. The team's second outing was to the **International Civil Rights Museum** in Greensboro, NC. The Justice and Reconciliation Team has a continuing partnership with the Reverend Dr. Jim Melson of the Cornelius Corps, and the Neighborhood Seminary.

Additionally, The Yadkin Valley District has attempted to better equip the laity and clergy by sponsoring opportunities for growth. Along with the Annual Conference, the District sponsored a **Both/And Worship** Cohort. The District worked with the District Laity to provide Lay Servant Training. The District is working to enhance and provide additional training and support for feeding ministries. The District anticipates supporting a missional effort in the city of Cooleemee.

Finally, the Yadkin Valley District has attempted to offer some ministries of health, healing, and wholeness to the clergy and clergy families. We began quarterly worship for the clergy. The preacher for the quarterly worship are from our colleges and seminaries. The Yadkin Valley Clergy have worshipped God together and communed. The District sponsored a weekend retreat during the Memorial Day weekend. The retreat was held at St. Simon's Island in Georgia. During that weekend, presentations addressed trauma and ways to move towards healing. The weekend retreat was led by a counselor, a ministry coach, and a spiritual director. As a retreat, the weekend also included free time and worship.

Samuel H. Moore Jr., District Superintendent

D. AFFILIATED MINISTRIES

1. HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

a. Aldersgate Life Plan Community

Aldersgate is now in its 74th year of serving elders. It is located in the most diverse segment of Charlotte and continues to spearhead diversity, inclusion and equity for residents, team members, board members, and community partners. The first three words of the Aldersgate mission statement, "We honor elders," establishes their inclusive nature of serving all elders. Comprised of 231 acres in east Charlotte, Aldersgate is one of the largest employers in the area, representing over 30 different nationalities in its team members. Aldersgate continues to hold SAGE certification at a platinum level as part of the intentional journey to become the inclusive flagship of the life plan community sector. Aldersgate's core values of living in faith, practicing stewardship, serving with compassion, striving for excellence, respecting independence, embracing diversity and inclusion, and building meaningful connections are reflected and modeled, starting with the board of directors and executive team. Aldersgate partners with 161 local, diverse organizations and minority-owned businesses as a continued part of diversity, inclusion, and engagement. Aldersgate once again won *The Charlotte Observer's* Best Of contest in Independent Living; Assisted Living; Skilled Nursing; and Best Place To Work. Aldersgate at Home won Charlotte's Best of for Home Care as well. Aldersgate At Home has continued to serve clients who live both on- and off-campus in Mecklenburg County, expanding to approximately 300 additional lives touched. Aldersgate continues to actively advocate for the rights, treatment, and legislation for elders. Aldersgate works closely with LeadingAge in their legislative advocacy, including meeting with legislators in order to ensure elders' concerns are included in their conversations. Aldersgate has a senior leadership team member that serves on the state legislative review board, to help monitor and advise legislative actions.

Aldersgate has encountered some challenges with the timely and accurate reporting of its financials. The prior CFO, who was in the role in 2021-2022, is no longer with the organization and a new core team is in place while the organization awaits the arrival of the new CFO in mid-July. The prior CFO inaccurately recorded various financial transactions and Aldersgate had to investigate and correct its financial records. Likewise, this lack of organization and inaccurate reporting also led to the discovery of challenges in accounts payables and receivables. The Board chose to have a forensic audit performed which indicated no malfeasance, and through personnel changes and improved internal controls, Aldersgate is confident that financial operations are steadily strengthening.

Aldersgate also experienced loss when a proposed satellite campus, Generations at Shalom Park had to be dissolved for several reasons related to external financial factors, including the impact of the pandemic, rising interest rates, inflation on wages and goods and significant construction escalation. Aldersgate also received market feedback through 2022 indicating the rise of antisemitic activity and ensuing violence across the U.S. was a factor in the decision-making of seniors who were previously interested in the senior living community development.

Aldersgate's Boards of Directors are highly engaged and, together with the Leadership team, are providing regular updates to the resident members, keeping them informed. Aldersgate is confident the organization is on a path toward resolution and continue to maintain strong sales and occupancy across the campus on Shamrock Drive.

Aldersgate is anticipating a 2024 launch of Lifegevity by Aldersgate, a CCRC without walls amenity that will give elders yet another option for engagement and service. Lifegevity enables elders to reside in their current homes off campus while still partaking in the activities, engagements, and amenities Aldersgate has to offer. Lifegevity members will have priority access to care options in the future in addition to an aging services navigator to assist them as they plan and organize for their future.

Aldersgate has been through many milestones in the vision and formation of a mixed-use and mixed-income community on a portion of its 231 acres. The development, in partnership with Laurel Street Residential, will include 236 residences, 200 of which are restricted to seniors of lower and middle income and 36 homes for working families. This neighborhood on the campus expands the Aldersgate mission to serve elders that our traditional model has not served. Aldersgate is enthusiastic to see this community come to fruition after years in the planning.

Brooks Shelley, Chief Branding and Community Engagement Officer, Aldersgate Life Plan Services

**Proposal: Boards of Directors of
Aldersgate Life Plan Services, Inc.,
Aldersgate United Methodist Retirement Community, Inc.,
and Aldersgate At Home, Inc.**

(Petition 7) *Approved June 16, 2023*

The board of directors of Aldersgate United Methodist Retirement Community, Inc., proposes that the following persons be confirmed as members of that board. Note the addition of the Board of Directors for Aldersgate Life Plan Services, Inc. is due to the addition of the parent company as its own entity.

*Class of 2023 (*denotes resident member):*

(7a) Board of Directors of Aldersgate Life Plan Services, Inc.

Mary E. Wilson, Thomas R. Lawing Jr., William K. Springs, Patricia Garrett, Stanley Watkins, Robert Dee Vaughn Jr., Fred Longiette, Holly Levinson, Billy Maddalon, Otto Harris, Kevin McKane, Irene Vogelsong, Tom Warshauer, Amanda Grimes, Jean Gossett.

(7b) Board of Directors of Aldersgate United Methodist Retirement Community, Inc.

Thomas R. Lawing Jr., Patricia Garrett, Stanley Watkins, Robert Dee Vaughn Jr., Fred Longiette, Otto Harris, Billy Maddalon, Kevin McKane, Irene Vogelsong, Eugene Robbins*, Judy Wiesner*, Amanda Grimes, Jean Gossett, Bill Jones.

(7c) Board of Directors of Aldersgate at Home, Inc.

Thomas R. Lawing Jr., Patricia Garrett, Stanley Watkins, Robert Dee Vaughn Jr., Fred Longiette, Otto Harris, Billy Maddalon, Kevin McKane, Irene Vogelsong, Eugene Robbins*, Judy Wiesner*, Amanda Grimes, Jean Gossett, Bill Jones.

b. Arbor Acres United Methodist Retirement Community, Inc.

Through excellence innovation, caring and beauty, Arbor Acres cultivates community, comfort, and well-being for Senior Adults.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, its 534 residents and 430 staff members, Arbor Acres is pleased to continue its partnership with the Western North Carolina Conference in its common call to ministry.

At the end of 2022 Arbor Acres was well on the way to completing its latest expansion. Aldersgate Square will add 56 apartment homes to the existing campus and enable Arbor Acres to extend its ministry to 88 new residents starting in April of 2023. This expansion is the first step in a multi-year process of revitalizing the original core of the now 43-year-old campus. While the next project has yet to be scheduled, work is currently underway on designing the next phase of construction.

Two additional key initiatives of the Board of Directors are Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and Strategic Business Development. Arbor Acres has partnered with the North Carolina Center for Justice (NCCJ) of Greensboro to guide the organization in its efforts to live out the Wesleyan values in ways that reflects God's love for the people we are called to serve. Education and training are planned to begin in early 2023, guided by a task force of the Board of Directors with the support of NCCJ.

The Strategic Business Development Task Force was set up by the board to investigate ways in which Arbor Acres can expand the reach of its mission and calling beyond the current campus. The task force has been engaged in education and discussion, focusing on the development of criteria to evaluate new opportunities, and developing organization structures that would enable the community to achieve its goals while preserving the strong financial position with which it has been blessed.

The Resident Assistance Fund continues to be one of the most tangible expressions of Arbor Acres' mission. Through this fund Arbor Acres raised \$361,746 to meet the needs of residents who, through no fault of their own, ran out of resources. Additionally, this fund enabled applications who would not otherwise qualify financially to move into Arbor Acres and call this community home. In support of this important work, Arbor Acres initiated the Anniversary Society to recognize donors who commit through donations or planned giving a minimum of \$500,000.00 toward Arbor Acres' Resident Assistance Endowment. Eleven donors joined this society at the outset, and we currently have nine living members. The two members who are deceased each left over \$1.2 million.

Arbor Acres continues to exercise strong financial discipline in the stewarding of the resources with which it has been entrusted. Fitch ratings reaffirmed its BBB+ bond rating; its financial reserves have continued to grow, and in spite of increased wage pressures and inflations, it continues to meet its immediate and long-term financial goals.

Arbor Acres is grateful for the opportunity to serve its community in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Andrew W. Applegate, President/CEO
John Willingham, Chairperson, Board of Directors

Proposal: Board of Directors of Arbor Acres

(Petition 8) *Approved June 16, 2023*

Class of 2023

LaTanya D. Afolayan, Samuel M. Black, Courtney H. Douglas, Christin M.D. Dunn, John R. Earle, Susan C. Elster, Donald F. Eppert, David Hinton, William Hollan, III, Vincent W. Howell, John E. Lauer, Carroll L. McCullough, Drewry H. Nostitz, Christopher Y. Pearce, Richard E. Shore, J. Hill Stockton, Wendy Walker-Fox, John W. Willingham

Ex Officio: Pam Ball, Ken Carter, Samuel Moore, Bill Sayers, Andrew Applegate

c. Chrysalis Counseling and Consultation Center

For 43 years, Chrysalis has been helping ministers, congregations, and families deal with change and complexity. With its staff of licensed clinicians and faith-based counselors, the center provides confidential, professional, affordable psychological care as a ministry of the church. Chrysalis is the Methodist counseling and consultation resource serving all the districts of the eastern part of the conference. The center is a non-profit, 501(c)(3), fee-based center.

The center has one mission: to provide individuals and couples and families with the tools to overcome the effects of trauma, depression, anxiety, and related mental health conditions as a part of a comprehensive treatment process.

The center believes that healing and wholeness is a fundamental part of serving God both as pastoral professionals, caregivers, and disciples. It provides quality confidential counseling for ministers and their families. It also serves clergy as a referral source for persons experiencing a range of emotional problems including anxiety disorders, addiction, depression, marital conflict, relationship issues, and issues related to healing and growth.

Of note:

- The center serves the eastern regions of WNCC: Greensboro, High Point, Winston-Salem, Reidsville, Burlington, Mayodan, Gibsonville, Stokesdale, Lexington, Asheboro, Summerfield, Colfax, Eden, Yadkinville, Clemmons, Mocksville, Thomasville, Kernersville
- 45% of current clients are active clergy. Counseling at Chrysalis is covered by an affordable co-pay for UMC clergy who carry the conference insurance plan.
- It offers Samaritan Fund grants to clients who are unemployed and/or have lost their insurance coverage. These clients pay a very reduced rate for up to 10 sessions.
- The center now has staff certified for trauma care.
- Consultation is provided for ministers and families affected by recent changes in the status of the congregations.

In this time of considerable stress and change, the center attempts to be faith-oriented.

In 2022 Chrysalis reduced service fees by \$28,568.70 for its clients. The center also maintains the Chrysalis Samaritan Fund for those with limited income and are without mental health insurance coverage. It invites local churches to help financially support the Samaritan Fund ministry. Please be in prayer that you may be able to contribute to the growth of Chrysalis Counseling and Consultation Center.

Appreciation goes out to the 2022 Board members: Amanda Kirby (Vice President), Mary Lu Harmon (Secretary), Clarinda Crawford, Donna Miller, Lynda Hodges TBA (President & Treasurer) Ex Officio: Gary L. Kling, (Executive Director), Cathy G. Cole (Staff Counselor), Leigh Loftin (Office Manager)

Visit the website at chrysaliscenters.org to learn more about the Chrysalis ministry.

Gary L. Kling, Executive Director

d. Crossnore Communities for Children

Crossnore Communities for Children is dedicated to the complex needs of children facing abuse, neglect, or other serious risk, and is a recognized leader in understanding how trauma at home affects the whole child. Crossnore then works to give each child whatever support and therapies are necessary to help reclaim, rebuild, or re-imagine the essential belief in a safe and loving home. With a 100-year history of private support and public advocacy, as well as three locations in Winston-Salem, Crossnore, and Hendersonville, NC, Crossnore has unparalleled resources to help children realize their true selves while they heal, gain perspective, and learn to thrive as resilient and confident individuals. Whether they are at home, with a foster family, or at one of our residential campuses, Crossnore children are encouraged to believe in their own agency and self-worth.

Honoring its faith-based heritage, Crossnore values all children equally and believes every child deserves respect, acceptance, happiness, and the opportunity to know and trust a loving place called home.

Crossnore brings clinical expertise and compassionate care to children and families through four interconnected resource communities, each with a specialized focus. Functioning as a responsive, trauma-sensitive continuum of care, these services offer help based on individual circumstances when and how it's needed most.

Most recently, Crossnore launched the Bridging Families© program. Children belong with their families, and this innovative program supports reunification. Crossnore helps birth parents and their children nurture and grow their family relationships while children are placed in the care of the home. As part of Bridging Families©, children receive professional mental health services, medical services, case management, educational assistance, recreational opportunities, and a strong support network. Birth parents receive an organized structure for collaboration with Bridge parents, parenting skills curriculum and coaching, psychoeducation on trauma, nurturing relationships with team members, and service access assistance. The whole family will enjoy enhanced family time in a natural environment and family therapy.

Bridge parents are trained in trauma-informed care and bridge the gap by caring for children in a Crossnore home. Additionally, the Bridging Families© team walks alongside families during the reunification process. As part of the team, birth parents participate in planning and decision-making all along the way.

Today, Crossnore has nine Bridging Families© homes throughout the western part of the North Carolina. With the advent of this program, a unique relationship grew between Saluda United Methodist Church in Polk County and Crossnore. Under the leadership of Reverend Rob Parsons, Saluda UMC purchased a home to house a set of Bridge Parents. Crossnore staffs the home and receives referrals from the Department of Social Services for children to live in the home. The Bridge Parents care for the children, while

mentoring and coaching the children's parents along their reunification journey. Saluda UMC provides wraparound supports to the whole family through Crossnore's Fostering Communities program.

Churches provide a built-in support system for children in foster care. Crossnore's Fostering Communities' initiative, initially funded by The Duke Endowment, is designed to educate, guide, and support local churches as they answer God's call to serve these children and families in their communities.

The Fostering Communities team works to shift the landscape of foster care to include the whole community. The team recognizes the holistic support of foster parents and the children in their homes leads to healthier and more successful foster care outcomes.

For churches, it's important to shift the understanding of foster care from a place of "there's a need or an issue to solve" to making foster care the local mission field.

Any church community can support, love, and care for foster families and the children in their care. To find out more about these opportunities or to become part of a Fostering Community, contact Holly Kessler, Senior Director of Community Relations, at hkessler@crossnore.org.

Brett A. Loftis, J.D., Chief Executive Officer of Crossnore Communities for Children, directs an executive team of four: Angela Woods, Chief Operating Officer, Sarah Norris, Chief Program Officer, and Caroline Hart, Deputy Director and Chief External Relations Officer. Each officer leads a team of talented directors and staff who are committed to the mission of Crossnore Communities for Children. The Board of Trustees is led by B. Kelly Graves, Chair; Traci D. Royster, Vice-Chair; Katheryn Northington, Secretary; and Charles O. Izzard, Treasurer.

For nearly 114 years, Crossnore Communities for Children has worked to transform the lives of thousands of children in need of hope and healing. With three locations, professional and dedicated staff, and the support of many donors and volunteers, Crossnore Communities for children is the premier provider of children's services in Western North Carolina.

Holly Solomon, Senior Director of Community Relations
336.721.7600 • hsolomon@crossnore.org • www.crossnore.org

e. Givens Communities

Our mission to expand the possibilities for aging across the Western North Carolina community begins with a clear vision for the future; one that is ignited by imagination and founded on core values that have guided Givens Communities for nearly five decades; our commitment to serve seniors across economically diverse populations; our abiding care, compassion, and respect for all people all the time; our courage to be innovative and creative and to measure success by tangible and intangible returns on our investments; our collaboration to share knowledge, skills, and resources to create partnerships and achieve our goals to better everyone.

The goals of Givens Communities have been to develop and improve existing communities and campuses, to develop new communities to provide more affordable access to senior living, to develop innovative ways for providing care and services in homes, to be the employer of choice in order to hire and maintain a committed workforce to serve using our core values, and to have focused efforts on diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workplace and in our communities.

Givens Estates completed construction of Friendship Park in early 2022. Friendship Park includes 80 one- and two-bedroom apartments and is a more moderately priced offering to the campus. Friendship Park attained full occupancy in April of 2022 when its residents moved into their new homes. Givens Estates is now focused on revisiting the campus master plan, including independent living units and health service offerings on campus, specifically the health care center, assisted living, and memory care.

In 2022, Givens Highland Farms began the planning and work on vital life enriching updates to the campus master plan. Improvements included the razing of a portion of Brookside Apartments and the deconstruction of six cluster homes. Highland Farms residents have responded to the disruption with grace-filled support as they live through the inconveniences of this major construction project. The new Brookside Commons will be the home of a new kitchen, dining, assembly room and common areas. Highland Farms became part of Givens Communities in 2012 and this is the first time in 50 years that the community has embarked on a project of this magnitude. The new Brookside Apartments will include 30 one-and two- bedroom apartments and the new Vista Ridge Apartments will be constructed to include 36 one-and two- bedroom apartments, and they will be connected to the new common areas, dining, and activity amenities.

At Givens Great Laurels, team members and residents continue to emphasize the importance of social connections and being a community, particularly following the long-suffering time of isolation and uncertainty during the pandemic. The onsite Manna Food pantry, supported by many Givens Communities residents and area churches, and the access to campus nursing continues to benefit residents. Great Laurels is consistently 100% occupied with a healthy waiting list, which reinforces the need and demand for quality affordable housing in Western North Carolina and in Haywood County.

Evidence of the need and demand for quality affordable senior housing continues at Givens Gerber Park, where occupancy continues to be near 100% and the waiting list continues to grow. At Gerber Park, residents join with team members to take responsibility for making Gerber Park their home. Socialization is the cornerstone of resident life with a particular emphasis on nutritious meals, addressing food insecurity, navigating a complex and complicated health system, and accessing community-based services. All of these are assisting residents to gracefully age in their homes.

In 2022, Givens Communities, with the assistance of the Dogwood Health Trust, acquired the historic Clinchfield Mill on 19 acres in Marion, North Carolina. The Mill will be renovated and restored to establish a unique housing and supportive services model for affordable senior living. As the need for more affordable senior housing increases, Givens Communities is constantly considering ways to provide additional affordable senior housing to more residents of Western North Carolina. A partnership with the Dogwood

Health Trust is helping to fund exploration into future opportunities that exist in the nearby counties. There is a large need for this type of housing, and it is the mission and vision of Givens Communities to be a major provider and innovator of these services.

Givens wellness philosophy is committed to whole-person health, not only for our residents, but also for the people living beyond our campuses. Givens LifeMinistries outreach actively addressed health disparities of underserved, diverse, and vulnerable populations by providing access and connections to resources that promote independence and improve quality of life, while helping people age successfully in their homes and communities. Every year, LifeMinistries reaches approximately 10,000 people in twelve counties through outreach programs that address social determinants of health. Programs are partially funded by Givens resident volunteers and donations, along with a network of wider community participation. Welcome Tables at partnering churches address food insecurity, social isolation, health, and spiritual wellness. Families, expectant mothers, and grandparents raising children receive free clothing, diapers and supplies through the Baby Equipment and Resource Closet ministries. Medical equipment loan closets assist the uninsured and underinsured by providing free medical equipment and supplies to those in need.

In addition to consistently high Medicare ratings for its healthcare, Givens has two skilled nursing facilities recognized among the 2022-2023 U.S. News & World Report Best Nursing Homes. To receive this designation, a home must have been High Performing in short-term rehabilitation, long term care, or both. Of the 15,178 nationwide nursing homes evaluated by U.S. News, 2,426 (16%) met those criteria – of which 1,658 homes were High Performing in short-term rehabilitation and 1,103 homes were High Performing in long-term care. Givens Estates and Givens Highland Farms are among the 335 (1.3%) that were rated High Performing in both categories. These accomplishments are significant. They are the result of a commitment by the teams of caring professionals to provide exceptional healthcare choices. As Givens Communities plans to update its healthcare facilities and services at both campuses, the organization is also looking to the future of healthcare. Givens is developing plans to provide options for services where residents want to receive it most – in their homes. By expanding home and community-based services, Givens will offer the very best home care and other home-related services while improving efficiencies and bringing services to more older adults in Western North Carolina.

In order to expand the possibilities of aging, we have to look at alternative ways to carry out our mission to those who want to age with choice in their own homes. In 2022, we received the necessary approvals to launch a Life Plan Community without Walls program, called Givens Choice. Givens Choice is an innovative program that combines key components of long-term care insurance, home care, and retirement community living into a comprehensive program for those who want to age in place. We are optimistic that this program will allow us to expand our mission to more Western North Carolina seniors.

In 2022, we also began taking the necessary steps to forming a Givens Foundation. At Givens, we have always supported the greater Western North Carolina community, and by forming a foundation by 2023-24, we feel that we will provide increased strategy and intentionality to this support in the future.

Givens Communities has been extremely fortunate the past several years financially. Occupancy remains very strong in each of our communities, with our affordable communities being nearly 99%. Givens has become an organization that serves more than 1,450 residents, with 550 employees, nearly \$70,000,000 in annual revenues, more than \$280,000,000 in total assets, and \$85,000,000 in cash and investments. In August 2021, Givens' Fitch Rating was upgraded to an "A-" from "BBB+" with a "Stable Outlook" commendation and remained "A-" in 2022. Fitch continues to be enthusiastic about Western North Carolina and our ambitious strategic planning over the next 10 years, again, giving us the opportunity to adapt to the changing environment and marketplace.

Givens Communities continues to be an exciting organization with an abundance of opportunities for serving seniors in Western North Carolina. On behalf of the Board of Directors, its residents, and team members, Givens is grateful for the opportunity to serve in this region along with the Western North Carolina" Conference of The United Methodist Church.

Kevin Schwab, Chief Executive Officer
Hope M. Clayton, Executive Assistant

Proposal: Board of Directors of Givens Communities

(Petition 9) Approved June 16, 2023

It is proposed that the following be elected as members of the Board of Directors of Givens Communities:

Class of 2024	Class of 2025	Class of 2026
Margaret A. Kuhn	Adam K. Ennis	Alisa J. Brown
Suzanna E. Landis	Charles L. Frederick	Kelli R. Brown
Connie B. Martin	Larry B. Harris	Murphy H. Fletcher
Joseph P. McGuire	Horace S. Jennings	Rebekah M. Lowe
Robby Russell	William W. Mance Jr.	F. Patrick McGuire
Kenneth W. Swayze Jr.	Robert M. McKown	David C. Whilden
G. Edward Towson II	Judy P. Phillips	
	Ex Officio	
Russell S. Moxley Jr.		Charlie Pine
Robert E. Shepherd (Honorary Life)		Sarah A. Smith
Hal F. Starnes (Honorary Life)		Alfred J. Whitesides Jr. (Honorary Life)
	Clergy	
Robert M. Blackburn Jr.		Karen L. Easter Bayne
R. Keith Turman		W. Mark Ralls, Blue Ridge District Superintendent

f. Sanctuary Counseling Group

Sanctuary Counseling Group (SCG) is a Group Private Practice providing mental health counseling to 16 unique communities in the greater Charlotte and Western Piedmont areas of North Carolina. For over 55 years, SCG therapists have offered counseling, psychotherapy, pastoral counseling and consultation to individuals, clergy, congregations, and UMC districts. SCG's ministry is to work in conjunction with churches and the WNCC to promote mental health care to all. SCG works with a plethora of mental health and relationship issues, while also offering educational programs for congregations, church groups, and the community at large. SCG's Mission Statement is, "to walk with our clients as they journey towards the healing of their minds, hearts, and souls. We believe that health and healing are open to all."

In 2023:

- Present in 13 communities: Harrisburg, Monroe, Pineville, South Charlotte, Center City, University City, Huntersville, Davidson, Cornelius, Forsyth County, High Point, Winston-Salem, and Greensboro.
- Collegiate Program:
 - Includes three communities: Appalachian State, NC A&T and UNC Greensboro campuses.
 - New opportunities: Winston Salem State and UNC Charlotte
 - The Wesley Foundation has been instrumental inviting us at ASU, A&T and UNCC.
- Samaritan Scholarship recipients receive a discounted service rate, and each scholarship recipient receives \$900 per year.
- 35 percent of hours provided are at reduced rates.
- SCG will put approximately \$350,000 back into their communities through the sliding scale and scholarship programs.
- Approximately 25% of SCG's clients are clergy or clergy family.
- Psycho-Educational seminars and forums are offered on a wide range of topics.
- Insurance is accepted from five insurance carriers, including the WNCC plan and Medicaid.

All SCG therapists are licensed to conduct counseling in the state of North Carolina based on their professional affiliations, Licensed Marriage and Family Therapists, Licensed Clinical Mental Health Counselors, and Licensed Clinical Social Workers. SCG's goal is to meet people where they are on their walk without judgment or bias. Throughout life there are times that everyone needs some assistance, and SCG values the opportunity whenever someone calls for help in their despair and darkness. Clinicians at SCG specialize in play therapy, music therapy, abuse and trauma recovery, perinatal and child loss trauma, marital therapy, adolescents and young adults, men's issues, women's issues, and addiction. SCG clinicians are generalists who can engage most clients, but each specializes in specific populations or issues. By using various theoretical orientations and evidence-based methodologies, therapists can assist clients in reaching the goals they set for themselves. Pastors find that SCG serves as an important referral source for persons in their congregation or communities who are hurting. This includes pastoral counseling when directed by the client. As a faith-based organization, SCG offers God's healing grace and hope to all regardless of their beliefs or position in life.

Clergy Care: Approximately 25% of SCG's clients are clergy or their families, from all denominations. The SCG clinicians understand the struggles of many clergy and work to stay aware of the needs they face. They are routinely updated on the state of the church and the unique challenges of United Methodist pastors.

Psychoeducation: The SCG website and social media sites are updated regularly with new information that pertains to the field of mental health. A variety of original articles, blog posts, podcasts, and videos that have been created to help individuals, families, communities, and churches can be found on the website. The website can be accessed at www.sanctuarycounselinggroup.org. SCG encourages you to follow and post its social media links on your own church's websites and social media.

Donations: This work would not be possible without generous donations from church partners and donors who believe in SCG's mission. To learn more about the clinical services, as well as to make contributions to the Samaritan Scholarship Fund to aid persons without the financial resources for mental, spiritual, or emotional assistance, visit SCG's website or any of their social media sites.

SCG is a service center that is accredited by both the American Association of Pastoral Counselors (AAPC) and the Solihnten Institute.

Jay Cobb, MA, LMFT, LCMHC, Executive Director
704.375.5354 • info@scgnc.org

g. UMAR Services, Inc.

As a mission and ministry, UMAR promotes community inclusion, independence, and growth for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities through residential, employment, and cultural enrichment opportunities. Providing vital services for adults with a wide range of physical, mental, and emotional disabilities; the mission easily translates into "live, work, and thrive". UMAR is grateful for the partnership with the Western North Carolina Conference.

Districts, churches, and individuals welcome UMAR into their hearts, homes, and sanctuaries. While living out *The Social Creed of The United Methodist Church* to be committed to the rights of people with disabilities; the church body advocates, provides financial support and inclusive opportunities for spiritual development, volunteerism, essential items, and social interaction. Thank you for the support that embodies the Luke 14 mandate. If it were not for this support, UMAR would be unable to provide the following opportunities and quality services that families and communities rely upon:

- **Live (Residential Services)** – UMAR operates 19 homes, nine apartments and one duplex. Dedicated, trained staff provide residents with 24/7 support, meals, transportation, activities, and other quality of life enhancements – all while fostering independence and responsibility in a family-like setting.
- **Work (Vocational Services)** – UMAR helps adults with disabilities secure and maintain competitive employment with skills assessment, job coaching, placement, training, and support for as long as the individual is employed.

- **Thrive (Art/Day programs)** – UMAR Day Programs focus on art, social, and independent living skills. Because vocational services are not appropriate for everyone, day services ensure meaningful activities that foster learning and growth. With Art centers located in Charlotte, Lincolnton, and Reidsville, community partnerships inspire a variety of art forms such as painting, pottery, culinary, and horticulture. Artists earn a 40 percent commission for every piece sold.
- **Community Services** – Across 11 cities of 9 counties UMAR provides individualized or group activities to increase or maintain life skills, self-determination, self-care, and participation in the community. Supports can include community networking, supported living in their own residence, crisis services, respite for family caregivers, and supported employment.

As an outreach ministry, congregations can be engaged in the work of UMAR through hands-on mission activities, donations, and volunteering with participants. For more information on programs or to get involved visit UMARinfo.com.

Because of the ongoing pandemic, 2022 has continued to be a challenging year. During the federal-declared Public Health Emergency, the health, wellness, and safety of the adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities that UMAR serves as well as their caregivers and families have continued to be top priority. Staff shortages have become the norm throughout all healthcare fields and UMAR has strived to maintain a high quality of care with fewer staff members and a higher-than-normal turnover rate. Residents have been able to return to limited activities in the art centers and community-based services have expanded to meet the needs of individuals within their own homes. This year also saw mandated changes for managed care organizations as part of the State Medicaid overhaul that has created problems in billing and reimbursement for services at the approved provider level. Numerous infectious disease procedures and protocols continued to be in place to prevent, mitigate, and fight the spread of the virus with the organization pivoting to accommodate mandates and suggested protocols. Focus for the year quickly pivoted from helping individuals grow and thrive to also ensuring they had continuity of care and services. UMAR continues to recruit new residents as family and individuals evaluate their taste for communal living.

UMAR's inability to host in-person fundraising events has resulted in fewer donations and a loss of expected revenue as well as the need to expand partnerships and host alternative events. UMAR has held a new arts festival on April 9th in place of a cancelled luncheon in Winston Salem as well as numerous additional marketing strategies.

- This past year, UMAR served 212 individuals and their families.
- UMAR's three arts centers in Charlotte, Reidsville, and Lincolnton have reopened and seen participant and resident attendance increase to near pre-pandemic levels. The art centers have served 92 participants since reopening this year.
- 37 percent of UMAR residents received financial assistance through donations.
- The average cost of living in a UMAR home is \$46,500.
- 97 percent of all donations directly funded UMAR programs and services.
- UMAR's public policy consultant and advocate has continued to lobby state legislators on behalf of all individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families. UMAR is also submitting a grant request for state funding that would allow expansion of the community and vocational services to the community at large and allow more individuals with disabilities to enter the workforce.

Focus Areas for 2023/2024:

- Continue performance improvements in care delivery that embody UMAR's mission while meeting the needs and dreams of UMAR participants.
- Invest in technologies that enhance workforce resourcing and productivity, as well as improve outcomes of the people UMAR supports. Along these lines, UMAR is currently implementing new accounting software that allows for an increased ability to track expenses and expenditures. New key performance indicators to clearly set standards for care and organizational success is also being implemented. This would include utilizing current software to improve information.
- Implement organizational strategy to reduce annual operational deficit, improve financial strength, and sustainability.
- Increase organizational awareness and image throughout Western North Carolina.
- Advocate and lobby state legislators for appropriations and policy changes benefitting the people UMAR serves.
- Adjusting recruitment strategies and worker compensations to allow for the retention of valuable staff members during this time unprecedented time of healthcare worker shortages.
- Enhanced systemic training of personnel, especially as it relates to direct support of those served.
- Assess and update UMAR policies and procedures to reflect current standards and expectations for care.
- Create an atmosphere of excellence and accountability that would include key performance indicators (KPI's) and Performance Metrics that reflect the heart and intent of the organization and give a standard to evaluate success.
- Initialize cross-training within departments to foster collaboration on and between teams, increase workforce sustainability, increase moral, decrease turnover, and improve workforce sustainability.
- Build comprehensive communication strategies for communication with employees, constituencies, stakeholders, and the community at large that disseminates information as well as encouraging two-way communication.

Andra Eason, Chief Development Officer

Proposal: Trustees of UMAR Services, Inc.

(Petition 10) Approved June 16, 2023

It is proposed the following be elected as members of the Board of Trustees of UMAR Services, Inc.:

Class of 2023/24

Leslie Marsicano, Billy Morton, Theresa Kendrick, Max Daniel, Morry Johnston, Gil Middlebrooks, Archie Pertiller, Reeves Davis

2. BROTHERHOOD/SISTERHOOD OF WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA

The Brotherhood/Sisterhood is an affiliate ministry of the WNCC that was organized jointly by clergy and laity in 1893 to provide immediate financial assistance and support to family members when death comes to the clergy members. Ideally, the benefit is delivered within a day or two of a death. From July 2022 - March 2023, 16 families have already received this support.

The BH/SH is funded entirely through assessments of \$15.00 per death by our clergy members, laity contributions, investment income, and other gifts. When a death occurs, clergy members are notified and encouraged to respond with checks mailed directly to the office in Belmont or with online payments. Clergy members are truly thankful for the laity who support this ministry individually or through their churches, Sunday School classes, the UWF, and the UMM. Annually, the Conference approves a time for the local churches to recognize and encourage support for the Brotherhood/Sisterhood.

Membership is open to elders, deacons, associate members, and local pastors in good standing with the conference. In fairness to all members, those who join after their thirty-fifth birthday compensate the BH/SH for assessments issued since their thirty-fifth birthday. A promissory note can cover part or all of whatever that amount may be. All who are interested in joining may contact BH/SH personally, at annual conference, or register online at brotherhoodsisterhood.com.

The election of the governing Board of Directors and officers, the approval of an operating budget, the amount of the death benefit and of the clergy assessment rates, and other business matters take place during annual conference at the BH/SH's annual meeting. The board will propose a change to the Constitution and By-Laws to allow the annual meeting to be held prior to the annual conference beginning in 2024. This year, the annual meeting is scheduled to be held at 2:00 pm on Thursday, June 15, in Room 213 of the Terrace Hotel. Attending via Zoom is an option.

The current Board of Directors:

Class of 2023: W. Mark Andrews, Oliver W. Helsabeck, J. Burton Williams

Class of 2024: H. Donnell FitzJefferies, Barbara B. Mayo, Edward D. McKinney, Susan H Scales

Class of 2025: Mary W Brown, Alfonza Everett, Rodvegas M. Ingram, Sr., James K. Sanders

Class of 2026: Daniel J. Lyons, Jeremiah P. Pegram, Steven K. Rainey, James T. "Chip" Webb

Ex-Officio: Jatana Royster, Director of Laity; N. Fred Jordan, Honorary Member; Roland T. Barnhardt, Executive Director; Robbie Carr, Administrative Assistant

Jeremiah P. Pegram, President
Jatana Royster, Director of Laity
Roland T. Barnhardt, Executive Director

3. THE DUKE ENDOWMENT

The Duke Endowment was formed in December 1924 by the industrialist and philanthropist James B. Duke, who famously said that if it were not for his father and the Methodist Church, he would not have amounted to anything. When forming his Endowment, Mr. Duke named four areas of focus: higher education, health care, child welfare, and rural United Methodist churches in North Carolina. For nearly a century, the Endowment has engaged with rural churches to strengthen ministries across the conference and state. Formed by the grace and love of God, and led by the Spirit, rural churches understand what it means "love their neighbors."

In 2022, the Rural Church program area of the Endowment approved 42 new grants totaling nearly \$25 million. Other highlights of our work are:

1. We endeavor to cultivate and support United Methodist pastors through several initiatives, including:
 - The **Clergy Health Initiative (CHI)**, begun in 2007 and based at Duke Divinity School, has always been a collaborative effort of the conferences, the Endowment, and Duke both to better understand and to improve well-being for all United Methodist clergy in the state. We are pleased to be working together with leaders of both conferences as well as CHI staff at Duke on a Clergy Well-Being Council made up of representatives from the Endowment and Duke as well as the NCC's and WNCC's clergy orders, Boards of Ordained Ministry, Fellowships of Local Pastors, Cabinets, and staff. The Council will work with each other and with clergy and conference leaders across North Carolina to offer promising well-being programs to pastors, and to potentially inform policies and practices with the potential to bolster pastoral well-being.
 - The **Thriving Rural Communities Initiative (TRCI)** is also a collaborative effort among the Endowment, the two conferences and Duke Divinity School. The program forms and networks strong pastors, dubbed "Rural Fellows," for service to rural congregations. This year, Emily M. Robbian is graduating from Duke Divinity School as a Rural Fellows and beginning her ministry under appointment in the WNCC. There are a total of 35 Rural Fellow alumni actively serving in the Conference.
 - The **Hispanic House of Studies** at Duke Divinity School develops pastoral and congregational capacity for engagement with Latino populations, one of the fastest-growing demographic groups in our state.
 - The **Ormond Center**, also based at Duke Divinity, has been relaunched and seeks to contribute scholarship, training, and leadership on building thriving communities. You can read more here: www.ormondcenter.com.
2. We are working with both conferences on efforts to support congregations and the denomination in long-term planning, including helping churches to discern their most faithful and fruitful futures. A partner in this work is Wesley Community Development Corporation, and we celebrate the unique redevelopment programs that have been accomplished so far.

In addition, we are glad to be conversation partners in planning for the future of United Methodism in the state, particularly in rural areas that have been left with a reduced denominational presence due to disaffiliation.
3. We also seek to build the capacity of United Methodist churches to work with other organizations in addressing community-wide issues at their roots, primarily through system-level grants to non-profit agencies that are experts in issue areas and whose staff

members coach congregations to enhance their mission. With an intentional move away from building and construction grants, we now seek to create the conditions for congregations to thrive and to impact their communities in new and vital ways through grants that support multiple churches engaging in creative ministry. If your church is interested in deepening its work in food system engagement (including all food ministries), community or economic development, or strategic planning for community engagement, check our website for a resource containing details of the supported programs and contact information for the lead staff in the section entitled "*Building Congregations' Capacity to Engage with Community.*"

4. Finally, we are identifying and testing selected program models for high-impact community-focused ministry for the 0-8 population in North Carolina. Currently the focus of this work is our Summer Literacy Initiative, which resources 20 congregations (12 in the Western North Carolina Conference) to offer to early elementary students summer reading camps that adhere to a set of six Guiding Principles and two core values. More information can be found at our website in the section entitled "*Helping Early Readers Avoid Summer Learning Loss.*"

More information about endowment efforts may also be found at the website: www.dukeendowment.org/our-work/rural-church.

Robb Webb, Director, Rural Church

4. THE EUGENE M. COLE FOUNDATION

The Cole Foundation was established by the will of Eugene M. Cole in 1944 to provide benefits for retired ministers and surviving spouses for the Western North Carolina Conference. The foundation directs monthly payments to the conference treasurer to supplement the cost of health care benefits to retired ministers and spouses.

5. WNCC FAITH FORMATION COMMUNITY

The WNCC Faith Formation Community is for laity and clergy, full-time and part-time, professionals and volunteers, and anyone who participates in any form of Christian Education, Youth Ministry, Children's Ministry, Adult Education, and areas of faith formation. The board continues in the process of re-visioning the purpose of how the Faith Formation Community will provide educational opportunities. To learn more about the WNCC Faith Formation Community join the WNCC Christians Engaged in Faith Formation page on Facebook or go to www.wnccumc.org/CEF for more information; or email the board at wnccfaithformation@gmail.com if anyone would like to be a part of the group or have ideas that you want to share.

Edward Ramsey, President

6. HINTON RURAL LIFE CENTER

Our Mission: Inspired by Jesus Christ, Hinton Center serves individuals, congregations, and rural communities through retreat ministries, educational opportunities, and missional outreach. In 2022, Hinton Rural Life Center served conferences in the Southeastern Jurisdiction through equipping clergy and local churches (particularly small, rural churches) and offering opportunities for individuals and church groups to serve in Safe and Healthy Home Repair and firewood ministries and/or to come for retreats and renewal time, experiencing God's presence and blessing at our 33-acre campus in the Appalachian Mountains. Here are some of the year's highlights:

- Launched Theotokos Confirmation Retreats, providing a United Methodist confirmation experience for 314 young people from 20 different churches. www.hintontheotokos.org
- Developed and provided *Theotokos Connections*, a digital confirmation curriculum that is small church relevant, but meaningful for all ministry settings. We received orders from 55 churches in 2022 and continue to receive orders.
- Provided 388 children living in poverty with new clothes at Christmas through Christmas Care of Clay County.
- Entered our House on Wheels (HOW) mobile teaching unit in multiple parades and community resource events to promote home safety awareness and practices.
- Hosted 17 individuals participating in webinars for rural clergy.
- Facilitated poverty simulations for 550 people, helping those serving in missions to better understand the dynamics/challenges of rural poverty and what it means to "walk alongside" our neighbors in need.
- Completed 186 home repair projects on 48 different homes, prioritizing and addressing the health and safety of homeowners.
- Hosted over 725 mission participants. Mission team participants and local volunteers recorded 16,760 hours, a value of \$501,962 to our community!
- Provided over 700 loads of firewood to families/individuals who heat primarily with wood, a value of \$179,240.
- Trained 21 individuals in Mental Health First Aid online offerings, helping to remove stigma and create awareness of the signs and symptoms of mental health crises and best responses for connecting with help.
- Awarded \$1.8 million in grant dollars, with the majority of funds focused on our Safe and Healthy Homes initiatives. This will include the design and construction of an educational tool barn, where community members and mission volunteers can learn more about the direct connection between poor health and inadequate housing.
- Continued to provide missional and leadership training for young people through our Staffers-in-Training event, Summer Mission Outreach Service Ministry Leaders opportunity (for college-age summer staff), and the 12-week Leadership Chatuge Community Builders course, which is primarily for adults, but open to high school students. Clay County resident Lauren, one of the high school participants, was grateful for her experience: "This program has largely affected how I view business and economics. It gave me the opportunity to gain new connections with business owners. Also, it opened my eyes to all that our area has to offer in resources."

Jacqueline Gottlieb, President and CEO

jackie@hintoncenter.org • www.hintoncenter.org

7. LAKE JUNALUSKA ASSEMBLY, INC.

In 2022, Lake Junaluska Assembly continued to live into its mission to be a place of Christian hospitality where lives are transformed through renewal of soul, mind, and body. Future projections during the pandemic in 2020 were that 2023 would be the first year organizations like Lake Junaluska would see the “new normal.” That is indeed the case at Lake Junaluska.

Large group gatherings are returning this year, with all six large groups back for the first time since 2019. The Seventh Day Adventist Camp Meeting will be here May 28 - June 4. This is the traditional kickoff of the season and will be followed by Holston Annual Conference (June 4-7), Western North Carolina Annual Conference (June 15-18), and Music and Worship Arts Week (June 18-23). The Salvation Army Southern Bible Conference will be here August 5-13 and the Church of the Brethren Older Adult Conference is scheduled for September 4-8. Each of these events will be held in Stuart Auditorium and includes worship and other events open to the community.

Financial Review

Lake Junaluska ended 2022 with a balanced budget. This is in part because of a \$500,000 Pandemic Recovery Grant from the state of North Carolina and significant charitable support to our ministry.

Charitable Giving and Capital Improvements

Charitable giving remains strong and, in 2022, we exceeded our fundraising goal to the Annual Fund for the fourth straight year. The Annual Fund is a budget-relieving initiative that is a line item in Lake Junaluska’s annual operating budget.

Since generous charitable giving provides opportunities for Lake Junaluska to reinvest into its facilities and grounds, great strides have been made toward improving our infrastructure that will enable the conference center to continue to meet the needs of all guests.

Capital improvement projects continue, focusing on code compliance/safety as first priority and guest/revenue production areas as secondary. Bandwidth across the grounds has seen a 150 percent increase, and work is underway to double the number of Wi-Fi access points and replace network switches with new managed network switches in 10 buildings. Media Services has purchased new lightweight tables and chairs, upgraded Stuart Auditorium video production to 4K digital, and expanded live-streaming services to include all locations on the grounds. In addition, \$212,500 in utility improvements and \$140,000 in road improvements were invested throughout the grounds in 2022.

Work on the Warren Center multi-function event space (the former World Methodist Museum building) is currently underway. A walkway making it easier to access Susanna Wesley Garden from The Terrace Hotel is expected to be finished later this summer. Architectural plans for the interior are almost ready to be sent out for bids. The renovation is expected to take six to 10 months to complete, and we are hopeful that the interior work will begin as early as June. We anticipate being able to book events in this space by 2025.

Lake Junaluska Dredging and Dam Preservation

In 2022, Haywood County received a \$1.5M provision in the North Carolina state budget that is available to be used to pay dredging expenses at Lake Junaluska. Approximately 500-800 truckloads of sediment resulting from runoff in Richland Creek and Factory Branch must be removed each year. The total amount spent on the dredge completed in the winter of 2022-23 is \$214,103. This provision will expire in 2023; however, we are applying for an extension until 2025.

Recovery and Fresh Expressions of Ministry and a Bright Future

Seven theologians participated in the inaugural Theologian in Residence program in the summer of 2022, and plans are almost complete for the 2023 season. Summer worship attendance nearly doubled in 2022, and summer activity programs returned with offerings such as yoga, bonfires, devotions, and special events. These, along with over 100 hosted events, brought more than 50,000 people to experience the ministry of Lake Junaluska.

Looking toward the future, Lake Junaluska continues to focus on the following guiding aspirations, which were adopted by the board of trustees in 2020:

- Aspiration 1: To preserve and enhance the lake and grounds so that more people will recognize the natural beauty of God’s creation.
- Aspiration 2: To be a conference center that rivals hospitality industry leaders by exceeding guests’ expectations through excellence in staff and facilities.
- Aspiration 3: To be the place that connects more youth to Christ through meaningful ministry, recreation, and education programs.
- Aspiration 4: To identify, uphold, and strengthen the Lake Junaluska tradition of implementing innovative, shared experiences – for both individuals and families – that celebrate faith, recreation, the arts, and education.
- Aspiration 5: To be an involved, inclusive community that provides the highest quality of life for residents and guests.

Lake Junaluska appreciates your continued support as it lives into God’s purpose for this special place. The leadership and staff invite you to visit Lake Junaluska for a conference, retreat, or vacation. The lake and surrounding mountains will provide the perfect setting for you to experience transformation and renewal. To plan your next visit, please visit lakejunaluska.com.

Ken Howle, Executive Director

8. THE NORTH CAROLINA COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

With 18 denominations representing over 6,200 congregations in N.C., the Council provides incarnational evidence of Christian Unity. By creating unity without expecting uniformity, member bodies collaborate on matters that contribute to the flourishing of God's creation. The council is grateful to the Western North Carolina Conference for their support and for the leadership of the governing board provided by the Rev. Amelia Stinson-Wesley, Memorial UMC, Charlotte, N.C, and the Rev. Renee Hayes, Trinity UMC, Trinity, N.C.

Currently, some of our priority areas include:

- **Gun Violence Prevention** advocacy focuses on telling the truth about gun violence in the country. The council knows the majority of gun deaths are suicides; the next highest number is homicides, usually among people who know each other or who are related to one another. The work is to help people understand how guns end up in places that create great harm and what each can do to make all safer. For more information, contact jennifer@ncchurches.org.
- **Capital Punishment Abolition** has long been a priority for the Council. With the allies from N.C. Coalition for Alternatives to the Death Penalty the council is focused on adding North Carolina to the list of states who no longer allow this arbitrary and retributive practice. For more information, contact info@ncchurches.org.
- **Cash Bail Reform** is a part of the criminal justice system coming under the microscope for its unfair application. It is also a misunderstood piece of the justice system, making it harder to reform. The council has assembled a team of representatives from several member denominations to help educate everyone about Cash Bail Reform and advocate for better practices. For more information, contact info@ncchurches.org.
- **Confederate Monument Removal.** Related to the above, but with its own emphasis, the Council has joined the work of the N.C. Commission on Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Criminal Justice in the effort to move confederate monuments from courthouse lawns. If anyone lives in a county currently working on such an effort or would like to begin leading such an effort, please contact: info@ncchurches.org.
- **Eco-Justice Connection (EJC).** This multi-faith program area focuses on environmental and climate justice, with an emphasis on "advocating with compassion." A keystone initiative of EJC is NC Interfaith Power & Light. EJC's program mission is to educate, inspire, and mobilize people of faith and conscience to act on climate change as a moral imperative. For more information, contact susannah@ncchurches.org.
- **Partners in Health and Wholeness (PHW)** provides tools to help faith communities form healthy habits by supporting congregation-based health ministries with resources and mini-grants. Other PHW focus areas include mental health, substance use disorder, and issues related to healthy aging. The council is currently offering grant opportunities to BIPOC faith communities to enhance their mental health capacity. For more information, contact phwinfo@ncchurches.org.
- **The Opioid Crisis** educates faith leaders about compassionate responses to these growing health concerns and opportunities to reduce the associated stigmas. The council provides avenues to engage the overdose crisis by connecting congregations to resources in their communities. To host an event or learn more about this project, contact elizabeth@ncchurches.org.

Over the course of this year, the governing board approved the following policy statements which can be found on the website along with other statements from previous years:

- A Resolution to Change the Cash Bail Bond System (August 8, 2022)
- Resolution on Reproductive Health (September 13, 2022)
- Tribute to the Life of the Reverend Dr. T. Anthony Spearman (July 21, 2022)
- Statement Condemning Violence Against our Jewish Neighbors (January 24, 2022)

We craft these statements in keeping with the interpretation of the prophetic witness of the Old Testament and the gospel message of the New Testament.

Currently, other areas of emphasis include living wage and paid family leave endorsement, death penalty abolition, cash bail reform, fair courts advocacy, Medicaid expansion, and redistricting reform. Resources are available online and staff is available to help the congregation address any of the myriad concerns that arise in the contemporary setting. If there are any questions or for more information, please contact info@ncchurches.org, or call the office at 919-828-6501.

Denominational members include Alliance of Baptists, African Methodist Episcopal Church, African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, Christian Methodist Episcopal, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Episcopal Church, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, General Baptist State Convention, Metropolitan Community Churches, Mennonite Church USA, Moravian Church in America, Presbyterian Church (USA), Reformed Church in America, Reformed Churches of God in Christ, International, Religious Society of Friends, United Church of Christ, Unity Fellowship Church Movement, and United Methodist Church.

Jennifer E. Copeland, Executive Director
www.ncchurches.org

9. RFD CDC

RFD is in the final phase of ministry service. This report begins with gratitude from the RFD CDC board and staff for the privilege of having been an affiliated ministry since 2007.

NETworX, a movement to measurably reduce poverty at its holistic core, will continue as a ministry with Asheville Buncombe County Christian Ministry. Crystal Imes, a UMC member who began as a participant a decade ago is the Executive Director. ABCCM is now in all one hundred counties of NC and seeks to establish NETworX sites in each of them. The sites in other states will be part of network as well.

A large senior living consulting project is under construction. Alan Rice will continue the consultation in retired status until the project completion which is expected in 24 to 30 months.

Members of the RFD CDC board are as follows:

Rev. Lucy Robbins, President, Pastor Biltmore UMC
 Rev. Carol Goehring, Vice President, Retired District Superintendent, NCC
 Rev. Gil Wise, Secretary/ Treasurer, Pastor Salem Church
 Rev. Amy Coles, Assistant to the WNCC Bishop
 Tom Lambeth, Retired Executive Director, Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation

Rev. Ken Locklear, Gateway District Superintendent, NCC
 Rev. Joe Mann, Duke Divinity School
 Rev. Connie Marie Stutts, Pastor Beech Grove-Rhems Charge
 Rev. Dr. R. A. (Alan) Rice Jr., Executive Director, and COO

R. A. (Alan) Rice Jr., Executive Director
 Lucy Robbins, President

10. UNITED METHODIST FOUNDATION OF WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA, INC.

In a time of uncertainty for the greater United Methodist Church, the foundation sought to provide forward-thinking leadership while helping partners adapt to new realities.

One of the organization's proudest achievements was a 10 percent tithe of income to the Western North Carolina Conference for \$184,000, an expression of gratitude for many years of partnership. This tithe represents the first ever annual commitment from the general operating budget, making it a true tithe. At the end of the fiscal year, a budget surplus enabled the foundation to make an additional contribution beyond the tithe. These funds will be used by the conference to strengthen First Churches and equip clergy to act as peacemakers in a time of divisiveness.

It was a memorable year in other ways. Anne Martin became the first woman to serve as chairperson of the Board of Directors in the foundation's history. Anne sees the organization as a steadying influence during seasons of change in the broader denomination. Anne's roots run deep in The United Methodist Church. She's married to Dan Martin, a retired elder in the WNCC. Her son, Duncan, is senior pastor at Hawthorne UMC in Charlotte.

From a dollars and cents standpoint, while 2022 was a challenging year for the financial markets, the foundation's managed investment funds out-performed their respective benchmarks, enabling churches and institutions to preserve more of their capital.

The UMF Development Fund reached 48 loans in service, representing an all-time high of more than \$25 million to help United Methodist churches and institutions with low-interest financing for land acquisition, new construction, renovation, and refinancing existing debt.

A renovation brought new flooring and carpet to the foundation's 10-year-old building, part of an effort to offer a modern, welcoming space for outside groups. Energy-efficient LED lighting and thermostats, as well as a new phone system, will bring significant cost savings, freeing up more resources for ministry.

The Reynolds Ministries Team awarded \$375,000 in grants to 29 different ministries that seek to share God's message of hope beyond the church walls. Every penny is granted in the hope that new disciples will be made.

Being a pastor is a demanding job, even in the best of circumstances. The past three years have been anything but the best of circumstances — from the pandemic to political unrest to many other challenges. Leadership programs offered through Reynolds Ministries created safe spaces for clergy to confer, collaborate and consider new ways to lead, particularly in a time of unprecedented change.

A strategic visioning process is bringing together board and staff members as well as stakeholders from around the conference to discern God's vision for how the Foundation should evolve in the future. This initiative started before the pandemic, resumed in Fall 2022 and will continue through Spring 2023.

The foundation celebrated Donna Johnson, Senior Accountant, for earning her certified public accountant (CPA) designation. Donna put in many hours of hard work in preparation for the notoriously difficult CPA exam. She passed on the first try.

May we all remain committed to the work of building the church for generations to come.

Anne Martin, Chairperson, Board of Directors
 David Allen Snipes, President and CEO

11. WESLEY COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

As all began emerging from a COVID dominated environment, Wesley CDC has found the last 12 months to be as active as any time in its history. The churches are taking a deep look at how to position themselves for an impactful and sustainable future in these rapidly changing times. The nine team members are well positioned to enter the 21st year of operation, and prepared to provide continued disruptive thinking and action for its clients. Wesley does so with a deep appreciation for all the partnerships it has developed, particularly with the Western North Carolina Conference, The Duke Endowment, and the United Methodist Foundation of Western North Carolina. Much more can be done together, rather than individually, the foundation of its collective connection.

Since becoming a licensed real estate organization in 2019, Wesley has now brokered \$30 million in sales transactions, half of this stemming from healthy churches which found a need to reposition their campuses. In addition Wesley has led negotiations on leases which will collectively provide churches over \$54 million in income over the coming years. Wesley has also now surpassed the \$100 million mark in development with expectations that all of these benchmarks will increase significantly in the coming 12 months. Engagements with churches across the conference continue to increase with new opportunities and excitement developing in those conversations.

As this conference assembles, Mineral Springs Commons will be completing construction and open for leasing. This 73 unit affordable senior housing project is being built on the former Cole Memorial UMC site. Lydia's Place, Randolph County's first shelter for women and children, is housing clients, and phase two of this project is under construction in the former Calvary UMC in Asheboro. Both of these projects were made possible due to the vision and missional commitment of the Board of Trustees of the Western North Carolina Conference. New townhomes are rising out of the former Selwyn UMC site, with Woodlawn Community Fellowship benefitting as a partner in this project. Park Street UMC is entering into rezoning that will allow for church growth as well as the development of 100 units of market rate senior independent living. Wesley continues working on several projects in the North Carolina Conference, including the redevelopment of the Trinity UMC campus in Wilmington, and efforts to develop CityPlace, an affordable housing project for seniors and young adults with disabilities. The portfolio also includes the Virginia Conference, North Georgia Conference and the Florida Conference. Wesley is leading the development phase of a prototype Rural Village Center, a project designed to bring the church, medical and mental health services, food delivery, coworking space and more, to a single building surrounded by housing and community space. The focus of this new development is on the rural communities, allowing the church to serve in new ways. Wesley also looks forward, with anticipation, to partnering in a church evaluation and repositioning project with the Ormond Center and Duke Divinity School.

In early 2023, Wesley began a beta test of the Blueprint Network. This program establishes Wesley-styled partnerships in conferences across the SEJ and beyond. Once in place, this network will bring significant impact through shared resources, experiences, connections, and ideas. An acknowledgement of the connectional relationships, the Blueprint Network can facilitate large scale innovative work within the denomination.

Wesley would like to take this moment to remember, with appreciation, respect and love, treasurer and board member, Rev. George Coates. George brought talent, intelligence, experience and humor to the team and his presence is deeply missed. It honors his well-lived life and his many contributions to the growth of Wesley. The board and team are extremely grateful for its shared time together over the years.

The team at Wesley Community Development is prepared and ready to meet the challenges and opportunities presented in 2023 and beyond.

Joel A. Gilland, President/CEO
Randolph H. Harry, Chairperson

Proposal: Wesley Community Development Board of Directors

(Petition 11) Approved June 16, 2023

Randolph Harry
Phillip Jones
Richard (Dick) Woods

David Hiatt
Joseph (Ricky) Lefft, Esq
Mark King

Willetta Ar-Rahmaan
Lynda Ferguson
Don Pettigrew, PE

E. EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

1. HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS OF WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA

a.1. Bennett College for Women President's Report

I. Students (as of fall semester 2022-2023)

A. Full-time students.....	158
B. Part-time students.....	10
C. Full-time equivalent enrollment.....	161
D. Full-time North Carolina students	68
E. Full-time Methodist students.....	na
F. Resident students	96
G. Non-resident students (commuters and adult learners)	72
H. Male students.....	0
I. Female students.....	168
J. American black students	93
K. International students.....	7
L. Number of students receiving financial aid.....	164



Bennett College Enrollment Management Update University Senate, United Methodist Church December 2022

Microcollege, Macro Impact

In Spring 2021, the Board of Trustees of Bennett College approved a new *Strategic Direction* for the College. To ensure that Bennett College is open to & for the future, and able to deliver on our mission, we made a deliberate choice to be a microcollege (a college of about 200 traditional age undergraduates) delivering macro impact. This focus on being a microcollege allows the institution to focus intensely on the current student body and provide a personalized experience for the 78% Pell recipients and majority first generation women of color who attend Bennett College and often require additional academic and student services supports. Additionally, it gives clarity and direction to rightsize the budget, operations, personnel and physical footprint to help to stabilize costs in the near-term and opportunity to explore a new business model.

We continue to be optimistic about the deliberate transition to this model and see promising results in the rankings: in 2022 *Bennett College ranked #1 in social mobility for national liberal arts colleges ranking by US News & World Report* and in the most recent rankings, Bennett College is again named a "Best College" for social mobility.

Current Enrollment Status

Before the College could turn its attention to growth or even increased recruitment efforts, we had to focus on retention. We had to determine, for whom is Bennett College the best match. We implemented several tactics in the past 2 years focused on understanding our unique student and on retention. In so doing, we now are positioned to focus on recruitment – finding the best recruitment strategies for the unique Bennett student.

We are in a rebuilding phase. We had to get very small, to home in on our value proposition, do some rapid prototyping of student success strategies and make sure we could deliver on our mission within our existing resources.

Our optimism about our ability to serve students effectively once they enroll is buoyed by two straight years of retention rates over 80%. 2021 – 2022 the retention rate was 86% and this year it is 92%. This is in contrast to 2015 – 2020 when fall enrollment had some spikes but retention averaged 50% and one year was 43%; moreover, during that timeframe, graduation rates plummeted.

Much has been done to ensure a high-quality academic, residential and hybrid programming. Our progress in those areas is best reflected in the graduates of the Class of 2022 who are now enrolled in graduate schools including, Brown, Duke, George Washington, Elon, NC A&T, NYU, to name just a few. Others are working in meaningful jobs in their fields.

At the same time, more work is needed to improve the College's infrastructure and to address deferred maintenance. Current and future enrollments will rely on this.

Bennett College's enrollment as of Fall 2022 is 168 students. This is a decrease of approximately 40 students from fall 2021. The decline was anticipated, and institutional budgets and operations were developed accordingly. Bennett College intends to continue exist and thrive as a microcollege with modest year over year growth. We believe this strategy, given adequate time for full implementation, will be advantageous for the following reasons.

1. The College has fiduciary responsibility to strengthen infrastructure before actively pursuing substantial enrollment growth that it does not have capacity to physically serve. Excellence in academics and student experience are the College's top priorities and cannot be decoupled from infrastructure for in-person courses and experiences.
2. The College's resources are aligned with the strategic direction and future enrollment growth is expected to be a byproduct of the College's strategic investments in excellence and quality.
3. Bennett's microcollege environment and current enrollment is the perfect laboratory for exploring pedagogical, student success, and operational practices that lead to improved retention, graduation, and job placements. We have already seen an increase in student success based on high touch initiatives such as increasing and sustaining retention and graduation, ensuring every student has an opportunity for experiential learning and study abroad, and graduate school and job placement. These are at the very core of the mission and value of a Bennett College education.

The College is currently planning for flat enrollment through academic year 2024. This provides ample time to fully flesh out the long-range strategies necessary for prudent financial investments. The College also plans to actively seek out partnerships during this period. For a microcollege to thrive, it must reimagine its relationship with the local community and those institutions that were once considered competitors. Bennett will seek out symbiotic relationships that improve the College's financial position and capacity to effectively deliver value to all stakeholders.

Future Enrollment Projections

Beyond academic year 2024, Bennett is currently targeting an average growth rate of 5% per year after 2024. The goal is to rebuild enrollments at a pace slightly better than the cost of inflation, being careful not to exceed operational limits that might diminish economies of scale. Moreover, this conservative approach also takes into consideration the coming demographic shifts of a smaller traditional age student population.

2024	2025	2026	2027	2028
200	300	325	341	358

We will continue to focus on women of color who have tremendous potential but have not been given opportunities. The top 7 states for recruiting will remain North Carolina, Maryland, DC, California, Virginia, Florida, and Georgia. We have strong alumnae bases in those locations. We are additionally turning our attention to the following recruitment strategies based on our current data, we know that we are most successful with students with the following backgrounds:

- Small towns in our top 7 states
- Homeschoolers
- Girls Schools

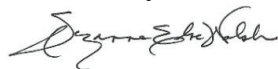
By focusing on students who are the right fit for Bennett College and vice versa, we are confident that once they enroll, they will be more likely to stay than if we simply wanted to grow enrollment for the sake of increasing the number in the fall only to lose 50% of the std

Audited Financial Statements

Bennett College is working diligently with its new audit partner, DMJ, to finalize the 2022 audited financial statements. This is Bennett's first year working with DMJ and, expectedly, the duration of the audit is slightly longer than usual. We do not anticipate any changes in the outcome of the audit; thus, we have attached a current draft for your review. We will submit a final audit when available.

Please do not hesitate to reach out with any questions. Thank you for your continue support of Bennett College and our students.

Submitted by



Suzanne Elise Walsh, JD, President

a.2. Bennett College for Women Chaplain's Report

The Chaplain's Office encourages spiritual inquiry and development through in-person and virtual opportunities that foster reflection and self-discovery while promoting a sense of belonging that seeks to strengthen bonds of sisterhood and community. Since reopening the campus to in-person residential living and hybrid instruction, most activities have occurred in the virtual format.

A Taste on Tuesday Bible Study: As the College continues to grow beyond the constraints of the pandemic, Bible studies provide time for a meal and fellowship. The topics are based on students' desire to dig deeper into the word of God surrounding themes of wholeness, discerning their season of spiritual growth, and in-reach among their sisters on campus and outreach within the community.

U.W.F. Book Study: The Bennett College community members joined the Northern Piedmont U.W.F in a book study, *Hidden Figures*, by Margot Lee Shetterly. The book is a biography based on the lives of three African-American female mathematicians: Katherine Goble Johnson, Dorothy Vaughan, and Mary Jackson, who worked at NASA during the Space Race. The conversation touched on historical and contemporary topics such as fighting racism, sexism, discrimination, and segregation. In addition, the message is never to give up and to work on your goals and dreams no matter what. The study leader was Sandra Williamson, past president of the Northern District of United Women of Faith.

Academic Cultural Enrichment Series (A.C.E.S.): "A.C.E.S. aims to enrich students' lives and the lives of the campus community. Students can enhance their cultural, social, intellectual, and spiritual development through A.C.E.S.

When Bennett College was co-ed, it was felt that graduates needed more than book learning and intellectual discourse to be successful. Our graduates needed to be well-rounded; the whole person required preparation to deal with the ever-changing world."

The series includes a mixture of faculty, staff, and student-coordinated programs. Highlighted programs:

- The Bennett Beauty Club partnered with Brianna Laren, the author of *Edge Control for the Soul*, a book of poetry. Her poems consist of messages of self-love and inspiration for black women and girls.
- Bennett College hosted Dr. Geoffrey Kiorpes, Co-founder, Artist Director, and Piano Teacher for the New York City Charter School of the Arts. His program featured the music of African American composers with particular emphasis on Dr. R. Nathaniel Dett, former choir director for Bennett College.
- In partnership with Bennett College Counseling Center, student nonprofit organization Still Rising, Inc. presented information on teenage pregnancy prevention and women's empowerment. The content included information on making healthy choices and connections with community resources.
- For the first time in Peace Corps history, C.E.O. Carol Spahn came to Bennett College campus and conversed with President Suzanne Walsh. The conversation focused on Black women and international service work and the history of the Peace Corps. Bennett College and the Peace Corps are connected. Bennett College alumna, Dr. Carolyn Robertson Payton '45, was appointed Director of the United States Peace Corps in 1977 by President Jimmy Carter. She was the first woman, the first African American, and the first psychologist to be Peace Corps Director. Students and the community attended sessions following the opening.

Church and Entrepreneurship: This course is structured to enhance student leadership skills and critical thinking, assess values, and develop a personal mission statement as a guiding principle. These tools are designed to support student self-discovery, encourage discernment of the call to service, and generate a plan with the potential to influence the campus, the church, and the community. Church and Entrepreneurship can encourage spiritual exploration and growth. Additionally, the course content will serve as a bridge between the theoretical and practical aspects of ministry. The goal was for students to identify an unmet need on campus or within the local or universal church. The course content also considers how toxic charity impacts the service they seek to provide.

Introduction to Bible: This course discusses the history, interpretation, chronology, archaeology, geography, and books of the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) and New Testament.

- Relates the contributions of various biblical scholars with particular attention to the work of African-American women and men.
- Utilizes methods of biblical criticism in the exegesis of a biblical text.
- Analyzes critical issues facing churches in the 21st century from a biblical perspective.

The Office of the Chaplain constantly strives to emphasize the acquisition of moral and spiritual principles and promote faith development. The Office is committed to helping today's young woman answer the questions of life: "Who am I, and what does it mean to be in the world?" Partnering with faculty, staff, community churches, other college communities, and other agencies beyond the local church, Bennett seeks to encourage a new generation of gifted young women to cultivate academic, social, and leadership skills and spiritual gifts. The Office aims to promote interaction with the local faith community to ensure a safe and supportive environment where students can express and nurture their faith.

Natalie V. McLean, Chaplain
www.bennett.edu

b.1. Brevard College President's Report**I. Students (as of fall semester, 2021-2022)**

A. Full-time students.....	764
B. Part-time students.....	45
C. Full-time equivalent enrollment.....	746
D. Full-time North Carolina students	402
E. Resident students	593
F. Non-resident students (commuters and adult learners)	161
G. Male students.....	449
H. Female students.....	360
I. American black students	107
J. Hispanic	55
K. Native American	13
L. Asian American.....	6
M. Foreign	31
N. Number of students receiveing financial aid	756

II. Faculty (as of fall semester, 2021-2022)

A. Number of Full Time Faculty	52
B. Number of Part Time Faculty	58
C. Full time equivalent faculty.....	69
E. Degrees of full time faculty.....	
Doctorate	42
Masters	10
E. Number of ethnic minorities employed on faculty and administrative staff	9
F. Average salary of full time faculty	\$47,204
G. Average compensation of full time faculty	\$48,246

III. Operating Finances (for 2021-2022 fiscal year)

A. Operating income (total)	\$26,699,656
1. Student Fees	21,833,472
2. Endowment Income	1,360,339
3. Church sources.....	0
4. Auxillary enterprises.....	7,063,676
5. Gifts and grants.....	3,088,004
6. Other	1,205,459
B. Operating expenses (total).....	\$21,899,129
1. Instructional.....	4,868,204
2. Administrative and general.....	6,020,026
3. Library	348,344
4. Physical plant.....	1,822,006
5. Auxillary enterprises.....	3,995,977
6. Student aid	1,126,623
7. Other	3,717,949
C. Operating indebtedness at beginning of current year	\$0
D. Operating budget.....	\$19,232,623
E. Expenditures per student.....	\$24,096
F. Amount per UM student provided by Western NC Conference.....	\$0.00

IV. Capital Funds

A. Market value of physical plant at beginning of current year	\$38,406,999
B. Capital indebtedness at beginning of current year	19,970,705
C. Net increases in physical plant during preceding year	0
D. Market value of endowment at beginning of current year.....	34,255,213
E. Net increase in endowment principal from preceding year.....	566,672

b.1. Brevard College President's Report, cont.

Brevard College is a four-year, experiential liberal arts college founded in 1853, and is the oldest college in Western North Carolina. The College is home to students from 30 states and eight foreign countries.

Brevard College's mission states, "Brevard College is committed to an experiential liberal arts education that encourages personal growth and inspires artistic, intellectual, and social action."

At Brevard College, education is much more than memorizing answers on a test. Faculty connect knowledge to direct experience, purposefully and intentionally. This experiential teaching and learning philosophy, led by expert faculty in small classrooms, develops students' ability to think, work in a groups, reflect upon what they have learned, and then apply their knowledge to real world problems. Faculty cultivate marketable skills such as collaboration, problem solving, teamwork, and conflict resolution, to name a few. Students graduate from Brevard College with an experiential resume full of undergraduate research they have conducted, real-world problems they have addressed, and in-class projects they have completed.

Brevard College is affordable. Students from North Carolina receive a Half-Tuition Scholarship when they receive offers of admission. Brevard has 19 NCAA DIII sports teams and two non-NCAA teams including competitive cheerleading and cycling.

Bradley J. Andrews, President

b.2. Brevard College Chaplain's Report

Brevard College remains a remarkable space for nurturing, expanding, and engaging the religious and spiritual life of students, staff, and faculty. Six themes were most pertinent to ministry at Brevard College during the 2022-2023 academic year:

Ministry was endowed. Thanks to the generosity of several benefactors, alums, and local faith communities, spiritual and religious life at Brevard College was endowed this academic year. The endowment, named in honor of the Reverend Doctor C. Edward Roy, one of Brevard College's first college ministers, will support religious and spiritual life at the college for years to come.

Ministry was necessary. The number of individuals requesting counseling, prayer, and opportunities to gather in person and virtually has steadily increased over the last three years. Students, faculty, and staff mentioned mental health challenges as their most significant concern.

Ministry was grace-filled. Brevard College remained a special place for ministry. The negative effect of COVID-19 on collegiate ministry was not the prevailing narrative of the year. It was the Ultimate Source's presence and grace with this ministry and the people who call Brevard College home.

Ministry was expansive. Individuals prayed during athletic events, studied as groups, created student ministries, volunteered, visited places of worship, mentored students interested in religious leadership, and offered service-learning projects.

Ministry was multifaith. An advisory group of students, staff, and faculty from multiple faith and nonfaith traditions was formed to help expand the college's programmatic offerings and deepen the college's understanding of religion, spirituality, and leadership.

Ministry was mentoring. Ministry at Brevard College provided mentorship for four seminary interns and nine undergraduate students interested in ministry as a profession.

Sharad Creasman, College Minister



c.1. Greensboro College President's Report**I. Students (as of fall semester, 2022)**

A. Full-time students.....	645
B. Part-time students.....	181
C. Full-time equivalent enrollment.....	705
D. Full-time North Carolina students	482
E. Full-time Methodist students.....	34
F. Resident students	307
G. Non-resident students (commuters and adult learners)	519
H. Male students.....	441
I. Female students.....	385
J. African American/Black students	254
K. International students.....	
L. Number of students receiving financial aid ((scholarship, grants or loans).....	695

II. Faculty (as of fall semester, 2022)

A. Number of Full Time Faculty.....	52
B. Number of Part Time Faculty.....	60
C. Full time equivalent faculty.....	68
D. Degrees of full time faculty.....	
Doctorate	36
Masters	15
E. Number of ethnic minorities employed on faculty and administrative staff	50
F. Average salary of full time faculty	\$53,906
G. Average compensation of full time faculty	\$54,164.85

Lawrence D. Czarda, President

c.2. Greensboro College Chaplain's Report

This past academic year has been marked by a return to normal schedules and in-person classes. Greensboro College has managed to maintain a relatively safe campus while seeking to provide students with the fullest experience of college life. Along with the safety of our community, we have also continued our discussions as a college about the influence and effects of racism in our institution. We have committed to this work through our Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion office and Religious Life. This past year we also received a grant from the General Board of Global Ministries to support a food pantry on campus.

The Religious Life office continues to support the spiritual life and faith development of students, faculty, and staff. Central to the life of the college is a weekly chapel service on Thursdays led by students, with music provided by the chapel band and gospel choir. This year our weekly chapel service has been in-person and streamed online on our YouTube page. A Sunday night worship service for college students is also provided in conjunction with the Wesley-Luther Ministry at UNCG.

A variety of student small groups and Bible studies have also been offered in-person this year. A weekly Zoom book study is also offered for Faculty and Staff. This year, we read works by Kate Bowler and listened to "Dolly Parton's America" Podcast.

Religious Life also offers an internship program to help students discern their call to ministry in a practical setting. We have a student at a local church leading Sunday School and helping with worship. We are also fortunate this year to hire an alumnus of the college who has maintained our food pantry on campus and increased awareness of food insecurity among college students.

The Religious Life office also provides service opportunities including inviting the Boys and Girls Club to campus for events, raising money at Relay for Life, and food drives for our local food pantries in conjunction with UNC-G campus ministries. Students participate and lead in these works of mercy throughout the year to grow in faith and service to others.

In 2019, Greensboro College realigned our tuition in order to be more affordable and accessible. We are also adding new programs and concentrations as Business Analytics, Gaming and Interactive media, a Bachelor of Fine Arts in theatre, and programs in Workforce Development. We have also added new sports programs such as Women's wrestling, E-Sports, and Triathlon. We anticipate our new programs will attract more students to be part of the long legacy of Greensboro College alumni.

Greensboro College continues to be a place where we join together, "knowledge and vital piety," through our classes, chapel services, lectures, and community service events so that our students might be faithful and informed citizens of the world.

Robert Brewer, Campus Chaplain

d.1. High Point University President's Report**I. Students (as of fall semester, 2022-2023)**

A. Full-time students	5,832
B. Part-time students	149
C. Full-time equivalent enrollment	5,890
D. Full-time North Carolina students	1,795
E. Full-time Methodist students	282
F. Resident students	4,863
G. Day (commuter students and adult learners)	1,118
H. Male students	2,574
I. Female students	3,407
J. American black students	533
K. International students	76
L. Number of students receiving financial aid	5,368

II. Faculty (as of fall semester, 2022-2023)

A. Number of full-time faculty	332
B. Number of part-time faculty	158
C. Full-time equivalent faculty	385
D. Degrees of full-time faculty:.....	
Doctorates and other terminal	270
Masters	63
E. Number of ethnic minorities employed on faculty and administrative staff	247
F. Average salary of full-time faculty	\$82,423
G. Average compensation of full-time faculty	\$105,089

III. Operating Finances (for 2021-2022 fiscal year)

A. Operating income (total)	\$269,854,480
1 Student fees	\$158,949,632
2 Endowment income	\$672,924
3 Church sources	\$14,000
4 Auxiliary enterprises	\$95,997,104
5 Gifts and grants	\$8,726,040
6 Investment income.....	\$0
7 Other	\$5,494,780
B. Operating expenditures (total)	\$224,825,926
1 Instructional	\$58,804,769
2 Administrative and general	\$68,919,350
3 Library	\$1,382,967
4 Physical plant	\$34,704,287
5 Auxiliary enterprises	\$61,014,553
6 Student aid	\$77,247,984
C. Operating indebtedness at beginning of current year	\$0
D. Operating budget for current year	\$272,625,274
E. Expenditures per student for current year	\$54,135
F. Amount per student by WNC Conference	\$2.77

IV. Capital Funds

A. Value of physical plant (with depreciation) at beginning of current year	\$763,097,372
B. Capital indebtedness at beginning of current year	\$111,862,745
C. Net increases to physical plant during preceding year	\$29,016,376
D. Market value of endowment fund at beginning of current year	\$138,711,571
E. Net increase to endowment fund principal during preceding year	\$21,050,704

Nido R. Qubein, President

d.2. High Point University Chaplain's Report

Hayworth Chapel and the Religious Life Office (aka "The Chapel") of High Point University seeks to grow the heart and soul of High Point University. Our ambition is that all members of the HPU community experience they are BELOVED. Every person, as much as is possible, will:

- Experience they BELONG
- BECOME who they are called to be, and
- BEHOLD the presence of God's grace.

The Chapel, fostered by its Christian tradition, exists to deepen High Point University's Christian character and practice, which also means being a place of radical hospitality to people of all traditions. In this way, HPU is Christian by tradition (and committed to that tradition) and interfaith in outlook, modeling inter-religious understanding and cooperation.

HPU Chapel Staffing. We are grateful for the combination of employed and volunteer Chaplains who guide, mentor, and disciple students.

- Rev. Dr. Preston Davis. Minister to the University
- Rev. Andria Williamson. Manager of Chapel Programs
- Rev. Dr. Al Ward. Clergy in Residence
- Rev. Dr. Chris Franks. Chair of Religion and Philosophy Dept. and Pre-Ministry Advisor
- Rev. Dr. Jim Smith. Volunteer Chaplain to Graduate Students
- Rev. Richard Payne. Sports Chaplain
- Rev. Tony Kindred. Sports Chaplain

Chapel Student Leadership. HPU Chapel provides a wide range of student leadership opportunities than ever before.

Board of Stewards. Approximately 40 members. This is the main student leadership group of the Chapel. They steward the offering, lead breakout groups, and partner with other organizations on campus for philanthropy and service.

Scholarship Music Opportunities:

- *Collision Worship Band.* The house worship band for weekly Chapel and HPU Sunday.
- *Genesis Gospel Choir.* A choir of diverse students expressing their faith through gospel music.
- *Chapel Choir.* The resident choir of the Chapel.

Student Employment. The Chapel Office now employs over 20 students whose duties range from multimedia production to interfaith engagement, to music leadership).

Other campus ministries include Alpha Delta Theta, Alpha Phi Omega, Campus Outreach, Catholic Campus Ministry, Fellowship of Christian Athletes, Habitat for Humanity, Hillel, Interfaith United, and Young Life.

Noteworthy Initiatives:

- **Weekly Chapel** averaged 206 attendees a week in the 2022-2023 academic year up from 150 attendees the previous year. The series from this year included (all series can be found through social media links below):
 - *The Second Mile: The Way of the Beatitudes*
 - *The Love that is God: An Invitation to the Christian Faith.* Based on the book by the same title by Frederick Bauerschmidt
 - *UnTrapped: Following Jesus in a Digital Wilderness.* A deeper look at how the temptations in the wilderness mirror our modern technologically driven lives and how Christ guides us through the traps.
 - *The Last Week: Holy Week for Lent.* Each Wednesday focused on a different day from Holy week, following Jesus from entry into Jerusalem to crucifixion to resurrection.
- **Small Groups.** Weekly Chapel continues to incorporate Breakout Groups, which averages 50 students participating each week. These small groups are a great gift for students deeper belonging and scriptural understanding.
- **Online Engagement.** Weekly Chapel continues to reach over 1,500 people weekly by streaming through social media platforms. A weekly highlight is also released on Instagram and Facebook. Follow:
 - [Fb.com/hpuchapel](https://www.facebook.com/hpuchapel)
 - [Instagram.com/hpuchapel](https://www.instagram.com/hpuchapel)
 - [YouTube.com/@hpuchapel](https://www.youtube.com/@hpuchapel)
- **Sunday Worship.** "Chasing God; Choosing Grace" HPU Chapel's Sunday evening worshipping community, named HPU Sunday, gives students a worship night every Sunday night where students lead *lectio divina* study of scripture and contemporary worship. This unique ministry is a training ground for students giving them more opportunity for preaching, leading worship in word and in music.
- **Pilgrimage:** Asheville and Christ in the Desert. Our pilgrimage program is made possible by generous contributions from HPU families, which keep the costs for students low. For instance, the pilgrimage to the Christ in the Desert below only required students to pay \$200. The cost is approximately \$1,400 per student. We are consequently able to provide once in a lifetime opportunity to students no matter their financial capacity. Over Fall Break, Rev. Preston Davis and Dr. Chris Franks (Chair of Rel. Dept.) led 10 students on a pilgrimage experience to Asheville, immersing students into the theology of art, deeper understanding of the wicked problems of homelessness, and serving with the Haywood Street congregation. Drs. Franks and Davis led 10 students on a pilgrimage experience to Christ in the Desert Monastery in New Mexico, immersing students into the contemplative life of Benedictine Monks. Prayer began at 4 am and finished at 8 pm each day.
- **Advent and Lenten Devotionals.** The Chapel Office led a daily Advent and Lenten devotional series that was read by over 3,000 members of the HPU community. This was a student-led project that included the reflections of faculty, staff, students, and alumni.

- **Social Entrepreneurship.** The Board of Stewards raised over \$15,000 to provide gifts for children during the holidays through the Salvation Army's Angel Tree program. These students also partnered with West End Ministries in the spring semester, providing this local ministry \$12,000 in raised funds. West End Ministries is a local community center that provides a women's shelter, afternoon programming for children, and food pantry. Students get experience in fundraising, philanthropy, theologically healthy practices of charity, and build relationships between community and school.
- **Interfaith Partners Program** was founded to provide students an employment opportunity to increase their interfaith knowledge and lead interfaith projects like this year's edition of *Infinite Space: Is it Still in Me*. These students are then leaders of wider interfaith initiatives on campus and community.
- **Jewish Life Flourishing.** Jewish Life continues to grow steadily each year. The Jewish Life Office has moved out of the Chapel and Religious Life Office to the Office of Student Life. Hillel and the Jewish Life Office will open their new center this summer, 2023.

Preston Davis, Minister to the University

e. Pfeiffer University President's and Chaplain's Report

Pfeiffer University has enjoyed another wonderful year of teaching students and preparing them for "lives of service" (to employ a favorite phrase of our founder, Methodist missionary Emily Prudden). Members of the most recent class of graduates are currently serving hospitals, North Carolina school districts, churches, and businesses throughout the Carolinas. They are also first-year graduate students at Duke Divinity School, Wake Forest Law School, and at Pfeiffer – whether in Pfeiffer's School of Occupational Therapy Studies located in downtown Albemarle (the "Center for Health Sciences") or in the Charlotte-based MBA program. Pfeiffer's regional accreditor, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges, has taken note of Pfeiffer's quality and placed the institution in "good standing" in June 2022.

Academic Programming Notes

In January 2023, data were released indicating that Pfeiffer's nursing program is among the 10 strongest in the state of North Carolina among Bachelor of Science in Nursing programs. Three-year rolling averages on institutional performance on the National Licensure Examination for nursing graduates were released by the North Carolina State Board of Nursing. 89% of Pfeiffer's graduates passed this exam on the first attempt – a percentage that surpasses most of the programs in the state of North Carolina. Pfeiffer graduates serve hospitals throughout the region – from Atrium Stanly in nearby Albemarle to the Duke and UNC systems in the triangle.

Pfeiffer's new graduate program in Occupational Therapy Studies also had a very positive year. The department graduated their first class of graduates in May. Then, in the fall, second-year students traveled to two conferences to share research – one group traveled to Ohio to share findings related to the positive impact that Occupational Therapy has on children on the autism spectrum, and another group traveled to North Carolina State University in Raleigh to unveil a new device designed to allow persons who use wheelchairs to more easily shop for groceries in a supermarket-type context. The latter group won first place in the category of "Innovative Devices" at this conference!

Finally, Pfeiffer's School of Occupational Therapy Studies secured accreditation for the next seven years after the accrediting body for their discipline visited campus to evaluate this new program's policies, practices, and personnel. At Pfeiffer's on-campus evaluation, the accrediting body offered no recommendations for improvement, and in the "commendations" section of their report, they commented that they had never seen such a strong partnership between a university and a small town (Albemarle is home to Pfeiffer's new health sciences campus, wherein Occupational Therapy and Physician Assistant Studies is housed).

Pfeiffer did experience a setback in the area of Physician Assistant Studies this year. The accrediting body for that discipline, ARC-PA, asked Pfeiffer to "pause" enrolling new students for one year and focus on improving the number of clinical sites serving the program. Specifically, the program needs additional relationships with student mentors, preceptors, and clinical sites in the area of women's health. The pause will force Pfeiffer to re-evaluate whether the number of clinical sites in the central piedmont region is sufficient to support original enrollment projections, which were based mostly on demand – and demand (as expressed in terms of application numbers and the quality of applications) is indeed strong.

Healthcare-related academic programs at Pfeiffer – especially Nursing, Occupational Therapy, and Physician Assistant studies – represent the way in which the university continues to adapt to the changing landscape of regional needs and the desires of prospective students. Their performance will be a key component not only of improving the lives of Pfeiffer's closest neighbors but in ensuring Pfeiffer's fiscal stability for decades to come.

Financial metrics

At the most recent meeting of the board of trustees, Pfeiffer's board voted unanimously to approve the audit of the most recently completed fiscal year. This audit indicated a surplus and an increase in unrestricted net assets for the third consecutive fiscal year. While the aforementioned "pause" in Physician Assistant Studies will dramatically affect Pfeiffer's tuition revenue outlook for the next three fiscal years, Pfeiffer is thankful for improved metrics overall. Accrediting bodies, the US Department of Education, and discerning prospective donors look for trends in this area and typically define a "trend" as three cycles. After failing to balance the budget in most fiscal years between 2012-2019, balanced budgets in FY 2020, 2021, and 2022 have restored confidence in Pfeiffer's future.

How did Pfeiffer successfully navigate the last three fiscal years, particularly when so many universities have struggled to balance budgets? The answer is a complex one, for undergraduate enrollment counts have dipped slightly since 2019. However, improving graduate student numbers on the Albemarle/Health Sciences campus, in addition to three of Pfeiffer's strongest fundraising years in her 137-year history, have bolstered the institution. The next 12-18 months will be important to Pfeiffer's ability to remain strong. Undergraduate applications are currently up by about 30% for fall 2023. Pfeiffer's ability to solidify this recruiting class, return to good standing in the area of PA Studies, and continue to fundraise well are all critical components for the successful navigation of the 2020s and beyond.

Campus Ministries

Pfeiffer continues to express its commitment to church-relatedness in engaging and meaningful ways. To stay abreast of university-church relations and developments at the national level, President Bullard attended all scheduled meetings of the North American Association of Methodist Colleges, Schools, and Universities (NAAMSCU) in 2022 and 2023. Bishops from The United Methodist Church addressed the NAAMSCU-related university presidents in Chicago last June, and a 2023 meeting in San Francisco (in conjunction with the Council of Independent Colleges) provided president Bullard additional time to reflect with other presidents of Methodist-related schools about the future of Methodist-related institutions.

Ministry on Pfeiffer's campus continues to flourish. For instance, Pfeiffer's XOK ("Christian Ecumenical Community") continues to be a beacon of light for students. If a student takes the XOK course six times before graduation, along with three Religion and Practical Theology courses, they graduate with a certificate in Christian Leadership. In the 2022-2023 academic year, 26 students participated in the program.

This year's XOK program theme was "Christian Leadership in a Changing World," which inspired students to explore various aspects of leadership and spirituality. During the fall semester, the course focused on spiritual and vocational discernment. In fact, throughout the semester, students met with a spiritual director. In the spring, students delved into the connections between spiritual practices and adaptive leadership in a changing world. Additionally, students attended weekend retreats at Mount Shepherd, where they participated in team-building leadership activities, high ropes courses, meaningful worship experiences, and collaborative spiritual practices.

Reflecting on this academic year, Pfeiffer is thrilled that the XOK program continues to grow and develop Christian leaders equipped to serve their local communities. But, of course, the impact of this program is not limited to the student's academic journey. It extends to their personal and spiritual growth, ultimately preparing them to make a meaningful difference in the world.

Pfeiffer's Youth theological Institute (YeTI) continues to evolve. This year, the program brought a new Assistant Director, Vera Smith. A long-time youth director within the Western North Carolina Conference, Vera brings expertise, energy, and innovation to the program.

Pfeiffer YeTI returned to in-person programming with excitement and energy. One of the program's standout moments was a lively Fall Festival where community youth played games, explored their callings, and attended a concert with acclaimed Christian Alexander Papas headlining. YeTI has also sponsored youth tailgating events throughout the school year, and its leaders have visited and led youth groups in activities throughout the conference.

Finally, Pfeiffer YeTI's summer program has an exciting lineup for students to explore the intersection of Christian leadership, social justice, and vocation. High school-age participants will get an exclusive opportunity to meet with Pfeiffer's faculty and staff from diverse fields to discern their calling in the world. They will also gain valuable insight into the majors and careers offered at Pfeiffer, visit innovative field sites, and delve into the theological significance of their work as it relates to the Kingdom of God.

Pfeiffer University remains committed to John Wesley's charge to "do no harm" through interfaith and faith-filled civil dialogue initiatives. These initiatives allow students to broaden their perspectives, think critically about their faith, and develop essential skills to create a more equitable and compassionate world. For instance, in the summer of 2022, students visited Charleston, South Carolina, where they had the opportunity to learn about the role of religion in racial violence and empowerment. They explored Gullah Geechee culture, visited Mother Emanuel AME Church, and discussed the lack of knowledge about indigenous people's history. The goal of this trip was to encourage students to think critically about their faith and how it can positively and negatively affect various aspects of their lives.

The Chaplain's Office and an English Department collaborated to teach a "Designing DEI" course. This course allowed upper-level Pfeiffer students to develop and facilitate diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) training that first-year students will participate in in the fall. Students in the class heard from various local leaders about the importance of DEI in a college setting. Pfeiffer is excited to present this training to new students, as it recognizes the significance of this work in creating equitable environments in the community and world. Finally, the chaplain taught a course titled "Controversial Issues in the Church Today." The class focused on exploring various Christian theological perspectives on controversial issues. In a world that has become increasingly polarizing, this course underscored the importance of civil dialogue, even when one disagrees.

Pfeiffer's weekly chapel service, *Intersections*, creates a unique space where faith and learning intersect. More than a weekly chapel service, *Intersections* offers engaging activities and opportunities for students to explore their spirituality. This year, students were privileged to listen to faculty and community speakers who shared their perspectives on important issues such as racial equity, entrepreneurship, and servant leadership. Students could also participate in traditional worship, special services like the Blessing of the Animals, and mindfulness experiences to explore their beliefs and values.

The Francis Center for Servant Leadership: Francis Scholars continue to embody John Wesley's charge to love God and one another. Students participated in several service initiatives on and off-campus throughout the academic year, including weekly builds at Habitat for Humanity Stanly, Stanly County Christian Ministries, Backpack Buddies with Uwharrie District, Stanly County Angel Tree, and Project Linus, among others. Within the center, students learn about servant leadership and how leading from below truly helps change the world.

Pfeiffer Pfriends: The chaplain's office continues to partner with an ecumenical group of local churches from five different denominations in Albemarle as part of the Pfeiffer Pfriends initiative. This growing program matches individual church members with Occupational Therapy and Physician Assistant students – matches based in part on the denominational preferences of the student – and the "Pfriends" sent notes of encouragement, gift cards, snacks, etc., to their students throughout the academic year. The goal is to provide support and community to the new OT and PA students in the area and deepen relationships between

students and the churches in their new “hometown” of Albemarle. The student response continues to be overwhelmingly positive, and Pfeiffer is grateful for the continued United Methodist and ecumenical support.

Scott Walker Bullard, M.Div., Ph.D., President

f. Proposed WNCB Higher Education Board Trustees

(Petition 12) *Approved June 16, 2023*

Trustees of Brevard College

Term Trustees: Betsy Barefoot, Barbara Boerner, John Boggs, Isaac Bradley, Ronald Burgess Jr., Joe DePippo, Art Fisher, Calvin Harrelson III, Reg Heinitsh Jr., Barbara Hulsey, Phillip Jerome, Edwin Jones, Bradley Lakeson Jr., Mark Lemel, Barbara Nesbitt, Leigh Ann Pickup, Al Platt Jr., Frank Stokes, Jerry Stone, Betty Taylor, Dona Vaughn, Heathley Weldon, Gil West, Michael Whitehead

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(Petition 13) *Approved June 16, 2023*

Trustees of High Point University

Elected: Michael Brown, Teresa Caine, Richard Callicutt, Roy Carroll, Lorraine Charman, Christine Cottrell, David Couch, J. Carlvena Foster, Shirley Frye, James Howell, Kenneth Kahn, Paul Leeland, Kristine Mestdagh, Kevin Norton, Jeff Patterson, Mark Phillips, Stephen Pond, Anne Kerr Walker, Cameron Wanek, J. Alexander (Al) Ward, Mark Webb, Douglas Witcher, Molly Millis Young

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2. UNITED METHODIST SCHOOLS OF THEOLOGY AND UNIVERSITIES

a. Africa University

United Methodists worldwide celebrated an ‘Ebenezer’ moment in the ministry of Africa University in 2022, marking 30 years of faithfulness, generosity, growth, and impact within and beyond The United Methodist Church.

God’s presence in the life of Africa University is evident, thanks to the prayers and generous support of the Western North Carolina Conference. Thank you! The Western North Carolina Conference invested 89.54 percent of its share of general church giving to support the day-to-day operations of Africa University. At 83.7 percent overall in 2022, giving to the Africa University Fund (AUF) remained resilient in all five jurisdictions in the United States.

Supported by strong missional engagement by Western North Carolina United Methodists and church members across the denomination, Africa University embraced new opportunities as it emerged from pandemic-related restrictions in 2022.

- **Enrollment:** Africa University achieved a total enrollment of 2,791 students in August 2022. Female students comprised 58 percent of the student population and 23 African nations were represented.
- **Academic Growth:** Africa University launched its first new academic unit in almost 20 years—The School of Law—with a pioneer cohort of 20 students pursuing the Bachelor of Laws (Honors) (LL.B.) degree program. The institution is implementing five new undergraduate and graduate programs approved by the Zimbabwe Council for Higher Education (ZIMCHE), the national accreditation and quality assurance agency.
- **Infrastructure expansion:** A new residence hall for female students at Africa University is under construction, funded by the East Ohio Conference’s \$1.5 million Teach * Reach * Bless campaign. Once completed, it will boost the available on campus housing for students to around 1200 beds.
- **Outcomes:** 712 graduates from 18 African countries became Africa University alumni in June 2022. The university’s almost 11,000 graduates to date are making vital contributions as clergy, educators, agriculturalists, health professionals, entrepreneurs, and innovators. Faculty and student research efforts to address endemic challenges such as malaria and tuberculosis, food insecurity, and climate change are gaining continental attention and significant international funding.

Africa University’s year-long 30th anniversary program culminated in October 2022 with a gathering of more than 3,000 people at its main campus in Mutare, Zimbabwe. Amidst the commemoration and joyful thanksgiving livestreamed to the world, the Rev. Dr. Peter Mageto was installed as the fifth vice chancellor (president) of the institution.

Mageto, a Kenyan and academician specializing in theological ethics, echoed the gratitude of the students, faculty, staff, trustees, and alumni of Africa University for the incalculable sum of answered prayers that are the Africa University story. His inaugural address highlighted the optimism and commitment to purpose that are the foundation of the university’s unfolding vision.

“Today, Africa University turns 30. The number 30 is a blessed figure. Thirty was the age of our Lord Jesus Christ when he commenced his ministry here on earth. It gives us great faith to be walking resolutely towards the fourth decade,” Mageto said.

Thank you, Western North Carolina Conference, for nurturing change leaders and building an enduring legacy through the ministry of Africa University. Let us continue to journey together—learning, leading, and serving God, all the time, everywhere.

James H. Salley, Associate Vice Chancellor for Institutional Advancement
and President/CEO, Africa University (Tennessee) Inc.

b. Boston University School of Theology

The university is profoundly grateful for your partnership, prayers, and support in these challenging times. A year like 2022 makes even more relevant BUSTH's historic and ongoing commitments to peace and justice in equipping transformational leaders. The school remains hopeful and vigilant in the continued partnership with the conference.

BREAKING NEWS:

- Students: Our academic year 2022-23 entering class was among the most diverse, with 88 new students enrolling, 34% of whom are international students.
- Faculty: In September three new *faculty members* were welcomed: James McCarty, Assistant Clinical Professor of Religion and Conflict Transformation; Eunil David Cho, Assistant Professor of Spiritual Care; and Peng Yin, Assistant Professor of Ethics.
- New Online Degree First Cohort: BUSTH's first fully online master's degree—the Master of Religion and Public Leadership (MARPL)—welcomed its first students in fall 2022. MARPL seeks students who wish to be prepared for leadership roles that creatively engage the challenges of public life. Learn more at bu.edu/sth/marpl.
- Faculty Research: Professor Filipe Maia was awarded a Louisville Institute book grant in April, and Professor Luis Menéndez-Antuña was awarded a grant from the Catholic Biblical Association in August. Other large grants continue to move forward, including the Trauma Responsive Congregations Project led by Professor Shelly Rambo and supported by the Lilly Endowment, and the Positive Psychology and Formation-Based Flourishing grant led by Professor Steven Sandage and supported by the Peale Foundation.
- Scholarships: This year, it was announced free tuition for all residential master's candidates. The school continues to offer free tuition to UMC-registered candidates for ordained ministry and leadership fellowships that support students in ethnic, gender, and sexuality studies. New funds include the Research & Teaching Fund and Affirmation & Empowerment Fund as well as the following endowed funds: DEI, Theology & the Arts, and Doctor of Ministry.
- Accreditation Visit: BUSTH just welcomed the United Methodist University Senate Review team on February 1-3 for the re-accreditation visit.
- Online Lifelong Learning: BUSTH offers online courses for professional and spiritual enrichment of religious leaders. Recent offerings include "Ethics and Video Games," and "Spiritual Mending for Helping Professionals." To learn more, visit bu.edu/sth/oll.
- Development: Recent accomplishments include endowing the Faith and Ecological Justice Fund, and new funding for student scholarships and academic programs.

COMMITMENT TO JUSTICE and COMPASSION:

- BUSTH's Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion offers webinars on timely inclusion efforts, such as "*Increasing Participation of Students of Underrepresented Backgrounds.*"
- This year's Lowell Lecture topics explore the spiritual dimension of artistic expression. This fall, Dr. Emmett G. Price III highlighted the brilliant resilience and demonstrative hope of Black folk through the lens of two exceptional spiritual beings: Nina Simone and John Coltrane. A diverse panel response fostered rich conversation.
- Work continues to improve accessibility, sustainability, and responsible investing. BUSTH is the first certified Green School at BU and is active in the Green Seminary Initiative.

G. Sujin Pak, Dean

c. Candler School of Theology

Since 1914, Candler School of Theology at Emory University has educated faithful and creative leaders for the church's ministries throughout the world. An official seminary of The United Methodist Church, Candler holds true to the Methodist value of ecumenical openness, enthusiastically welcoming students from more than 42 denominations, with nearly half of Master of Divinity students coming from the Wesleyan tradition, including United Methodist, African Methodist Episcopal, African Methodist Episcopal Zion, Christian Methodist Episcopal, Wesleyan, Free Methodist, Church of the Nazarene, and others. The student body reflects the diversity and breadth of the Christian faithful, with an enrollment of 417 from 16 countries and 33 states, and 43% persons of color. This diversity is a blessing, enriching life together and providing a "learning laboratory" for ministry in the 21st century—ministry that cultivates community across difference, welcomes all to contribute and belong, and embodies Christ's love in and among us.

Candler offers six single degrees and 10 dual degrees, most of which are available in hybrid or online formats so students can remain rooted in their home communities as they pursue their degrees. The new hybrid Master of Divinity blending online classes and in-person intensives launches in Fall 2023, and the successful Doctor of Ministry—with its high 87% completion rate—is 90% online. Hybrid and online options are also available in the Master of Religious Leadership and the Master of Religion and Public Life programs. Plus, Candler's Teaching Parish program allows student pastors to earn contextual education credit as they serve their churches. The school is excited that these flexible learning formats make a first-rate Candler education possible for even more people who are called to ministry.

Alleviating student debt through generous financial aid is a top priority for Candler. In 2021-2022, we awarded \$7.3 million in scholarship support, with 100% of MDiv students receiving aid. All MDiv students who are certified candidates for ordained ministry in the UMC receive full-tuition scholarships, and all MDiv, MTS, MRL, and ThM students receive a scholarship covering at least 50% of tuition. MDiv students also complete a financial literacy program to strengthen their financial and budgeting skills and reduce debt.

Candler was recently honored as one of 16 theological schools to receive a "Pathways to Tomorrow" grant from Lilly Endowment Inc. The \$5 million grant will support Candler in establishing a set of initiatives to create an interconnected continuum of offerings for the education of pastoral leaders. This will position Candler as a hub of theological learning with multiple entry points, including The Candler Foundry, the innovative program to make theological education accessible to the public, the United Methodist Course of Study, undergraduate classes, and a new venture, La Mesa Academy for Theological Studies. Set to launch in Fall 2023, La Mesa

Academy will offer diplomas in pastoral leadership via a two-year hybrid program with courses in Spanish and English. An optional third year of study will be offered to those aspiring to continue to a graduate professional degree at Candler.

This year, Candler welcomed the Rev. Dr. Brett Opalinski as Assistant Dean of Methodist Studies, a position made available by the retirement of the Rev. Dr. Anne Burkholder. Brett is an elder in full connection in the Florida Annual Conference and most recently served for nine years as senior pastor of Christ Church United Methodist in Ft. Lauderdale. In addition to other pastoral appointments, he has held a variety of leadership roles in the Florida Conference, including chair of the Board of Ordained Ministry. He is deeply committed to working with students in discerning their call, spiritual formation, and guiding them through the commissioning and ordination process.

Candler's ability to fulfill the mission to provide the church with the faithful and creative leaders it needs depends upon your prayers, partnership, and support. Thank you for the countless ways everyone advances this essential ministry in the life of the denomination. The school invites you to visit online at candler.emory.edu.

Jan Love, Dean

d. Drew University Theological School

Drew University Theological School (Drew) educates and mentors pastors, preachers, deacons, activists, teachers, thought leaders, and change agents. In fall 2022, Drew welcomed 77 new students; as of February 2023, Drew has a total enrollment of 408 students. Many Drew students are just beginning their ministry, while others come to graduate theological education with substantial ministry experience. The latter reflects a growing trend among all theological schools in the United States and Canada.

During 2022, some Drew classes met on campus in Madison, New Jersey. Other classes met exclusively online or met in hybrid fashion, i.e., partially online, partially in-person. This was also the case with chapel worship. This reflects both our ongoing emergence from the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown, but also Drew leaning into what it means to be a global school with a global student population.

With 35 percent of students coming from 28 different countries, Drew University Theological School is truly global and diverse in theology, vocation, and age, as well as racial, ethnic, national, and international identities. Drew's interdisciplinary degree programs foster out-of-the-box thinking, provide real-world apprenticeships, promote adaptive leadership skills, and encourage innovation through team-taught core courses reflecting the integration of the theological disciplines and practices characteristic of the life of faith. The faculty-articulated shared values are infused across the teaching and learning at Drew: a commitment to anti-racism, gender, and sexual-identity equality; eco-sustainability and environmental justice, and interfaith understanding and cooperation.

Drew University Theological School has seen an increase in United Methodist students. Moreover, Drew has many United Methodist Global Fellows who choose to pursue education for ministry at Drew. United Methodist graduates are serving in conferences across the United States; notably in regional conferences in Greater New Jersey, Eastern Pennsylvania, and in the New York Annual Conference.

Edwin David Aponte, Dean

e.1. Duke Divinity School

Duke Divinity School has been blessed to be part of the fresh work of the Holy Spirit this year and to participate in "little Pentecosts"—signs and foretastes of the hope we profess and the calling we follow. In his Opening Convocations sermon, Dean Edgardo Colón-Emeric said, "If Duke Divinity School is to keep on its Pentecost journey, it needs to devote itself to being guided by the marker of mercy. Our motto of *Eruditio et Religio* only makes sense when we add mercy. ...How we care for the needy is the measure for the apostolicity of our studies, the holiness of our communion, and the power of our prayers."

The school has continued in its commitment to form ministers of the gospel who will seek God's justice and mercy. Our faculty have been leaders in the Duke Climate Initiative, participating with colleagues from the Nicholas School for the Environment in the event "Pastoral Care for Climate Change: Weaving Together Science and Theology for Justice," at the Duke University Marine Lab in Beaufort, N.C. Divinity faculty have also co-taught a university course titled "Let's Talk about Climate Change," and welcomed 30 young faith leaders from various religious traditions and places worldwide to understand better how to engage their faith communities in the fight for our climate.

The Office of Black Church Studies, which has been commemorating its 50th anniversary year, hosted "Justice Ministry Reimagined: Reentry Simulation" for pastors, students, and lay leaders to learn more about how to support people reentering the community after incarceration. We launched the Prison Engagement Initiative with the Kenan Institute for Ethics. Divinity faculty taught a "Trauma Engaged Duke" seminar and led the project team Developing Best Practices for Trauma-Informed Teaching and Learning. These programs and events complement the ongoing work of field education and ministerial formation that puts Duke Divinity students in contexts ranging from rural churches to hospital chaplaincy to farm ministry, and many more.

This fall, the school welcomed 226 entering students from 35 different states and eight other countries, including Canada, Colombia, Indonesia, Japan, Mexico, Nicaragua, Nigeria, and South Korea. The Master of Divinity program gained 130 new students, with 88 residential students and 42 in the hybrid program. The Master of Arts in Christian Practice enrolled 13 new students; the Doctor of Ministry, 28; Master of Theology, six; Master of Theological Studies, 22; the Doctor of Theology welcomed six new students to campus, and one special student has enrolled. The Certificate in Theology and Health Care welcomed four residential students to campus and 16 in the hybrid program. Across all degree programs at the Divinity School, 30 percent of the incoming class identified as a race or ethnicity other than white. Black students made up 18 percent of all students; Latinx students, six percent; Asian students, five percent; and American Indian students, one percent. Fifty-seven percent of students in the incoming class are female.

There were 33 denominations represented in the M.Div. entering class, with 30 percent affiliated with The United Methodist Church. Baptists made up 17 percent of the incoming students; Anglican-Episcopal students, 12 percent; and nondenominational students, 12 percent. Dean Colón-Emeric said: "It is with the guidance of the acts of the apostles, their communal praxis, that the Divinity School continues to build that most delicate and often discredited of structures: an ecumenical community, a community

that boldly professes the Apostles' creed, a community where Christians from estranged churches study together, a community of generous, joyful Pentecost orthodoxy."

The school continued to build on its rich tradition of ecumenical engagement, with Dean Colón-Emeric participating in the Methodist-Roman Catholic International Commission Dialogue meeting with Pope Francis at the Vatican. Student Eliza Love, M.Div. '23, was awarded the \$10,000 Bossey Institute scholarship from The United Methodist Church Council of Bishops to attend the World Council of Church Ecumenical Institute. The Houses of Study at Duke Divinity School—Methodist House, Anglican Episcopal House, Presbyterian/Reformed House, Baptist House, Office of Black Church Studies, Asian House, and Hispanic House—all enrich the Duke Divinity community through theological formation, student support, dynamic lectures, and robust programming.

The school has also welcomed new leaders who bring their gifts to the work of advancing the mission to serve Christ and the church. Three new associate deans have accepted appointments: Daniel Castelo, William Kellon Quick Professor of Theology and Methodist Studies, as associate dean for Academic Formation; Jung Choi, a consulting professor and director of the Asian House of Studies, as associate dean for Global and Intercultural Formation; and Sangwoo Kim, a consulting professor and senior director of the Methodist House of Studies and the Wesleyan Formation Initiatives, as associate dean for Vocational Formation. Linda Coley, who earned an M.Div. from Duke Divinity along with M.S., M.B.A., and Ph.D. degrees, has also joined as the executive director for the Ormond Center.

Several new programs demonstrate Duke's sustained commitment to connecting with churches and ministers. The Ormond Center launched the Community Craft Collaborative to create resources for equipping lay and congregational leaders. The Certificate in Conflict Transformation and Reconciliation (CCTR), facilitated by leading scholars and practitioners in the fields of conflict transformation and reconciliation from Duke University and other institutions, provides a timely learning opportunity for pastors and other church leaders seeking theological and practical skills to foster reconciliation in their congregations and surrounding communities. We celebrate the expansion of our connection to UMC colleges through a partnership with Wesleyan College in Macon, Ga., to enable qualified undergraduates to take master's level course through the Duke Accelerated Pastoral Formation Program. The Clergy Health Initiative supports healthy practices for vibrant ministry. The research and programming from other Duke Divinity initiatives, including Theology, Medicine, and Culture; Duke Initiatives in Theology and the Arts; Leadership Education at Duke Divinity; and Thriving Rural Communities, continue to provide numerous opportunities to bear witness to God's creativity, compassion, and care for communities and congregations.

Our Convocation & Pastors' School (CPS) returned to an in-person format for the first time since the start of the pandemic with the theme, *Creativity & Courage: From Trauma to Tough Hope*. The presenters—professional dancers, visual artists, musicians, and scholars—guided participants in facing brokenness and sin honestly, as they offered glimpses of "the beauty of holiness." New York Times Best Selling Author & Associate Professor of Christian History, Kate Bowler led a live taping of her *Everything Happens* podcast to kick off CPS with over 1000 registered participants.

Duke Divinity School continues to be grateful for our ongoing participation in The United Methodist Church and partnership with this annual conference. We look forward to our ongoing work with you as we join the leading of God's Spirit in the task of preparing men and women for Christian ministry. To learn more about Duke Divinity School, please visit our website at www.divinity.duke.edu.

Edgardo Colón-Emeric, Dean

Duke Divinity School ha recibido la bendición de ser partícipe en las obra del Espíritu Santo este año y en experimentar "pequeños Pentecosteses", señales y anticipos de la esperanza que profesamos y la vocación que seguimos. En su sermón en el culto de apertura para el año académico, el Decano Edgardo Colón-Emeric dijo: "Para Duke Divinity School proseguir en el camino de Pentecostés, necesitamos ser guiados por señales de misericordia. Nuestro lema de *Eruditio et Religio* solo tiene sentido en conjunto con la práctica de la misericordia. ...La manera en que cuidamos a los necesitados es la medida de la apostolicidad de nuestros estudios, la santidad de nuestra comunión y el poder de nuestras oraciones".

La escuela ha continuado en su compromiso de formar pastores del evangelio que buscan la justicia y la misericordia de Dios. Nuestra facultad ha estado en vanguardia de la Iniciativa Climática de Duke junto con colegas de la facultad del Nicholas School for the Environment en el evento "Cuidado Pastoral para el Cambio Climático: Uniendo la Ciencia y la Teología para la Justicia", en el Laboratorio Marino de la Universidad de Duke en Beaufort, N.C. Profesores de divinidad también han impartido un curso universitario titulado "Hablemos sobre el cambio climático" y recibieron a 30 jóvenes líderes internacionales de diversas tradiciones religiosas con el propósito de comprender mejor cómo involucrar a las comunidades religiosas en la lucha por nuestro medio ambiente.

La Oficina de Estudios Afro-americanos, que está conmemorando su 50º año de aniversario, presentó "El ministerio de justicia reimaginado" para ayudar a pastores, estudiantes y líderes laicos a aprender más sobre cómo apoyar la reintegración de personas a sus comunidades después del encarcelamiento. Inauguramos la Iniciativa de Compromiso con las Prisiones juntos con el Instituto de Ética de Kenan. El cuerpo docente de Duke Divinity impartió un seminario llamado "Trauma Engaged Duke" (*Duke: Comprometido con el Trauma*) para desarrollar mejores prácticas para la enseñanza y el aprendizaje sensibles a perspectivas informadas por experiencias traumáticas. Estos programas y eventos complementan el trabajo formación ministerial que asigna a los estudiantes de Duke Divinity a servir en una gran variedad de contextos, desde iglesias rurales hasta capellanía de hospitales, ministerio agrícola y muchos más.

Este otoño, recibimos a 226 nuevos estudiantes de 35 estados diferentes y ocho países: Canadá, Colombia, Indonesia, Japón, México, Nicaragua, Nigeria y Corea del Sur. El programa de Maestría en Divinidad recibió 130 nuevos estudiantes, con 88 estudiantes presenciales y 42 en el programa híbrido. La Maestría de Artes en Práctica Cristiana inscribió a 13 nuevos estudiantes; el Doctor en Ministerio, 28; Maestría en Teología, seis; Maestría en Estudios Teológicos, 22; el Doctorado en Teología recibió a seis nuevos estudiantes y un estudiante especial se inscribió. El Certificado en Teología y Cuidado de la Salud recibió a cuatro estudiantes

presenciales y a 16 en el programa híbrido. En todos los programas en Duke Divinity School, el 30 por ciento de la clase entrante se identificó como de una raza o etnia que no es blanca. Los estudiantes afroamericanos constituyen el 18 por ciento de todos los estudiantes; los estudiantes latinos, seis por ciento; los estudiantes asiáticos, cinco por ciento; y estudiantes indígenas, uno por ciento. El cincuenta y siete por ciento de los estudiantes de la clase entrante son mujeres.

Hay 33 denominaciones representadas en la clase entrante del programa M.Div., con un 30 por ciento afiliado a la Iglesia Metodista Unida. Los bautistas constituían el 17 por ciento de los estudiantes entrantes; estudiantes anglicanos-episcopales, 12 por ciento; y estudiantes sin denominación, 12 por ciento. El Decano Colón-Emeric dijo: “Guiados por los hechos de los apóstoles y su praxis comunitaria, el Divinity School continúa construyendo la más delicada y muchas veces desacreditada de las estructuras: una comunidad ecuménica, una comunidad que audazmente profesa el Credo de los Apóstoles, una comunidad donde los cristianos de iglesias separadas estudian juntos, una comunidad que vive una ortodoxia alegre y generosa en el espíritu de Pentecostés”.

La escuela continuó construyendo sobre su rica tradición de compromiso ecuménico, con el Decano Colón-Emeric participando en la reunión de la Comisión Mixta Internacional para Diálogo entre el Concilio Mundial Metodista y la Iglesia Católica Romana con el Papa Francisco en el Vaticano. La estudiante Eliza Love, M.Div. '23, recibió una beca de \$10,000 del Consejo de Obispos de la Iglesia Metodista Unida para asistir al Instituto Ecuménico del Consejo Mundial de la Iglesia en Bossey. Las Casas de Estudios de Duke Divinity School (Casa Metodista, Casa Episcopal Anglicana, Casa Presbiteriana/Reformada, Casa Bautista, Oficina de Estudios Afro-americanos, Casa de Estudios Asiáticos y Casa de Estudios Hispanos) siguen enriqueciendo a la comunidad de Duke Divinity a través de la formación teológica, el apoyo estudiantil, charlas dinámicas y programación robusta.

La escuela también recibió nuevos líderes que aportan sus dones al trabajo de avanzar en la misión de servir a Cristo y a la iglesia. Tres nuevos decanos asociados han aceptado nombramientos: Daniel Castelo, Profesor William Kellon Quick de Teología y Estudios Metodistas, como decano asociado de Formación Académica; Jung Choi, profesora adjunta y directora de la Casa de Estudios de Asia, como decana asociada de Formación Global e Intercultural; y Sangwoo Kim, profesor adjunto y director de la Casa de Estudios Metodista y de las Iniciativas de Formación Wesleyana, como decano asociado de Formación Vocacional. Linda Coley, quien obtuvo un M.Div. de Duke Divinity junto con los títulos MS, M.B.A. y Ph.D., también se unió como directora ejecutiva del Ormond Center.

Varios programas nuevos demuestran el compromiso de Duke Divinity en vincularse con iglesias y ministerios. El Centro Ormond lanzó el Community Craft Collaborative para crear recursos para equipar a líderes laicos y congregacionales. El Certificado en Transformación y Reconciliación de Conflictos (CCTR), facilitado por académicos y profesionales destacados en los áreas de transformación y reconciliación de conflictos de la Universidad de Duke y otras instituciones, brinda una oportunidad de aprendizaje oportuna para pastores y otros líderes de la iglesia que buscan destrezas teológicas y prácticas para fomentar la reconciliación en sus congregaciones y comunidades circundantes. Celebramos la expansión de nuestra conexión con las universidades de la IMU a través de una asociación con Wesleyan College en Macon, Georgia, para permitir que los estudiantes universitarios calificados tomen un curso de nivel de maestría a través del Programa de formación pastoral acelerada de Duke. La Iniciativa de Salud del Clero apoya prácticas saludables para un ministerio vibrante. La investigación y programación de otras iniciativas de Duke Divinity, incluyendo Teología, Medicina y Cultura; Duke Iniciativas en Teología y las Artes; Educación de Liderazgo en Duke Divinity; y Comunidades Rurales Prósperas, continúan brindando numerosas oportunidades para dar testimonio de la creatividad, la compasión y el cuidado de Dios por las comunidades y las congregaciones.

Nuestra Convocatoria y Escuela de Pastores (CPS) volvió a un formato presencial por primera vez desde el comienzo de la pandemia con el tema, *Creatividad y coraje: del trauma a la esperanza audaz*. Los presentadores (bailarines profesionales, artistas visuales, músicos y académicos) guiaron a los participantes a enfrentar el quebrantamiento y el pecado con honestidad, mientras ofrecían vislumbres de “la belleza de la santidad”. La autora de libros reconocidos como “best sellers” por el New York Times y profesora de la historia cristiana, Kate Bowler dirigió una grabación en vivo de su *Todo pasa* podcast para lanzar CPS donde se registraron más de 1000 participantes.

Duke Divinity School continúa agradecida por nuestra participación continua en la Iglesia Metodista Unida y nuestra asociación con esta conferencia anual. Esperamos continuar nuestro trabajo con ustedes mientras nos unimos a la dirección del Espíritu de Dios en la tarea de preparar a hombres y mujeres para el ministerio cristiano. Para obtener más información sobre Duke Divinity School, visite nuestro sitio web en www.divinity.duke.edu.

Edgardo Colón-Emeric, Decano de la Escuela de Divinidad de Duke

e.2. Convocation & Pastors' School at Duke Divinity School

The 2022 Convocation & Pastors' School (CPS) returned to an in-person format for the first time since the start of the pandemic with the theme, *Creativity & Courage: From Trauma to Tough Hope*. The presenters—professional dancers, visual artists, musicians, and scholars—guided participants in facing brokenness and sin honestly, as they offered glimpses of “the beauty of holiness.” The distinguished list of presenters included:

- Kate Bowler, NY Times Best Selling Author & Associate Professor of Christian History, Duke Divinity School
- Elizabeth Gilbert, New York Times Best Selling Author
- Peter Storey, Retired Bishop and former President of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa (MCSA) and of the South African Council of Churches (SACC)
- Makoto Fujimura, Contemporary Artist and Author
- Freddie Moore, Rehearsal Director and Faculty Advisor in the Professional Division at The Ailey School and Founder of Footprints Dance Company and Liturgical Dance Institute
- Ellen Davis, Amos Ragan Kearns Distinguished Professor of Bible and Practical Theology at Duke Divinity School
- Ekklesia Contemporary Ballet
- Paiter van Yperen

For the Sunday night session, 1000+ participants (700+ in-person and 300+ via live stream) gathered for our live taping of the *Everything Happens* podcast with Kate Bowler and Liz Gilbert. During the Monday and Tuesday sessions, over 350 participants gathered to participate in plenary sessions and workshops. Additionally, our opening worship service was led by Bishop Leonard Fairley and our closing worship service was led by Bishop Ken Carter. Out of those who attended CPS, 281 were United Methodist clergy, 249 were Duke Divinity School alumni, and 44 were first time CPS participants.

The next Convocation & Pastors' School will take place in-person at Duke Divinity School with plenary sessions scheduled for October 15-17, 2023. Pastors serving churches eligible for grants from The Duke Endowment, current divinity school students, and recent graduates of Duke Divinity School are able to attend in-person Convocations at a discounted rate.

The Convocation & Pastors' School Board of Managers is comprised of representatives from the North Carolina Conference and the Western North Carolina Conference, and it advises and works with Duke Divinity School to offer a quality continuing education event annually.

The Western North Carolina Conference representatives on the Board of Managers are:

2019-2023: Darryl Dayson, Sue Anne Morris

2020-2024: Samuel Moore, Bill Roberts

2021-2025: Meg Peters, Ellis Carson

2022-2026: Pam Blackstock, David Lee

2023-2027: Stacey Lundy, Hugo Villagrana

Additional information about Convocation & Pastors' School is available online at: <http://www.divinity.duke.edu/cps>.

Ken Spencer, Director
ken.spencer@div.duke.edu

f. Gammon Theological Seminary

Gammon Theological Seminary is the Interdenominational Theological Center's United Methodist constituent member in Atlanta, Ga. The Interdenominational Theological Center (ITC) is a Christian Africentric ecumenical consortium of seminaries and fellowships that educate students to commit to practicing justice and peace through a liberating and transforming spirituality to become leaders in the church and local/global communities. Gammon was founded in 1883, bearing the name of the Rev. Elijah H. Gammon, a generous clergyman, businessman, and philanthropist. Rev. Elijah H. Gammon invested and endowed the founding of Gammon Seminary in partnership with Bishop Henry Warren and the Freedman's Aid Society. Gammon has educated Black Clergy for almost 140 years, with graduates serving every level of the church, including bishops, superintendents, general church leaders, conference staff, and clergy in every jurisdiction. Today, Gammon Theological Seminary is the only predominately Black Seminary of the thirteen approved United Methodist-related Theological Institutions. The ITC's accreditation is with the Association of Theological Schools and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges. Gammon/ITC offers the following degree programs: the Master of Divinity, the Master of Arts in Religion and Education, and the Doctor of Ministry. The support given to The United Methodist Ministerial Education Fund by United Methodist conferences continues to enable Gammon students to be grounded in the Wesleyan tradition of theological education. Our 17th President/Dean, Rev. Dr. Candace M. Lewis, is the first woman to lead the seminary in our 139-year history. The Rev. Dr. Lewis and the Gammon staff team continue to lead innovatively in chartering a "Brand New Day" for Gammon's recruitment, retention, research and resources, fund development, and scholarship endowments in her first two years of service.

Our new initiatives and celebrations this school year, 2022-2023, at Gammon include:

- **We established The Rev. Walter H. McKelvey Endowed Scholarship Fund with the South Carolina Methodist Foundation.** Dr. McKelvey was Gammon's 14th President/Dean, serving from 1997-2010. Under Dr. McKelvey's leadership, Gammon's enrollment and graduation rate increased, and buildings were renovated. Our initial goal is to raise \$100,000.00. We have already received a matching fund pledge of \$50,000.00 from Dr. Loretta F. McKelvey (wife of the late Rev. McKelvey).
- **Spring 2023 – International Student travel.** Gammon students traveled to Belfast, Ireland, with the North Georgia Conference as a part of the Rethinking Conflict experience. Gammon students also traveled to Johannesburg, South Africa, on the Doctor of Ministry Immersion experience.
- **Commissioned two National Research Projects,** the first one related to the Impact of COVID on UMC BIPOC Clergy in partnership with Wespeth Benefits and Investments – CFWI – Clergy Financial Wellbeing Initiative. The second research project is "Perspectives" The Future of Blacks in The United Methodist Church—public release of research reports of the Gammon Research Institute scheduled for Summer 2023.

The greatest challenge facing Gammon Seminary is the rising cost of theological education and the significant debt our students incur as they answer their call to full-time ministry. Therefore, Gammon is committed to raising a million dollars in the next two years to offer full-tuition scholarships to students called and committed to full-time ministry in The United Methodist Church. We are grateful to the Western North Carolina Conference for your support of theological education and your commitment to ensuring pastoral leadership is theologically trained to lead us forward in the Wesleyan tradition.

Candace M. Lewis, President-Dean

g. Methodist Theological School in Ohio

MTSO was pleased to host the four-day international Institute on Theology and Disability in June 2022. Founded in 2010, the institute celebrates, explores and investigates the ways that disability impacts many dimensions of religious life; theology and practice mutually inform and support one another; and diverse perspectives enrich and inform theological formation and religious practice.

Lilly Endowment Inc. has awarded MTSO a grant of \$1 million to support prophetic preaching through a partnership with WomanPreach! Inc. The grant period extends from Nov. 1, 2022, to Dec. 31, 2027. WomanPreach! was founded 12 years ago by MTSO Dean and Vice President for Academic Affairs Rev. Valerie Bridgeman, Ph.D., who serves as the organization's CEO. It provides practical training and nurturing community spaces that empower preachers across the country. Begun as a way to train women, WomanPreach! has since grown to include programming for people of all genders. Its numerous programs include the biennial Jarena Lee Preaching Academy, a week-long intensive academy that equips women of the African Diaspora to speak in their own prophetic voices; Sophie's Table: A Conversation Among Siblings, an all-genders program that amplifies voices of people of marginalized genders, women and children; and Chloe's Circle, which gathers women from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds to sharpen preaching that reflects a commitment to justice based in God's call through Jesus.

The University of Mount Union and MTSO have begun offering incoming college students a 3+2 program, leading to a Master of Arts in Social Justice degree in five years of study rather than the six years typically required. Students will begin the program at the University of Mount Union in Alliance, Ohio. After completing the program's requirements at Mount Union, they are eligible to begin two years of study at MTSO, where they will finish requirements for a Mount Union bachelor's degree and earn an MA in Social Justice degree from MTSO. Students in the 3+2 program are eligible for MTSO's exceptional scholarships.

Danny Russell, Director of Communications

www.mtso.edu

h. Saint Paul School of Theology

Educating tomorrow's leaders by offering on-campus, online, and hybrid learning courses at a FLEXible schedule, Saint Paul School of Theology is a seminary serving a diverse community committed to the formation of people for innovative, creative ministry through rigorous academic life. Grounded in the academic study of faith and ministry, theology is practiced in a traditional classroom and in remote spaces. The contextual curriculum features Ministry Collaboration Groups, Practicums, Spiritual Formation Retreats, and Seminars. Students learn from dedicated faculty, experienced pastors, and community leaders about best ministry practices leaving graduates with the tools and first-hand experience necessary to meet the needs of a changing world.

The school continues to implement the changes that the last few years have integrated into the students' daily lives. The weekly chapel service utilizes a hybrid format, where participants may join in-person or online, allowing staff and students to come together as one institution where all are invited to create a sacred atmosphere from wherever they are. In addition, Saint Paul offers weekly Spiritual Formation allowing students to engage in spiritual practices led by Rev. Jen Logsdon-Kellogg. Some practices will take the participants outdoors or to other sacred spaces, and others will connect with community leaders.

Saint Paul welcomed over 30 new students for the 2022-2023 academic year. Enrollment remained solid for the Master of Divinity (MDiv) degree program with promising growth on the Oklahoma campus. With COVID-19 restrictions lifted yet monitored, prospective students returned to in-person visits on both campuses, experiencing community meals, worship, and the newly implemented "Hammock ministry" on the Oklahoma campus. The admissions team continues to expand travel to meet new students, including the Carolinas, Washington, D.C., and various parts of Texas.

This year we have focused on strengthening the Master of Arts in Christian Ministry by creating two specializations: Women, Society, and Church; and Social Justice and Advocacy. In each case, the student takes 22 hours of MACM required courses, and then the remaining 12 hours of the degree are comprised of courses focusing upon the specialization. The two existing specializations, Prophetic Witness and Service; and Deacon Ministries, will continue to be offered as well. The Women, Society, and Church Studies specialization is also available in the MDiv program, as is a specialization in Wesleyan Studies.

Saint Paul staff and faculty continue contributing to the academy, church, and society. This year, Rev. Dr. Sharon Betsworth was welcomed as the new Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean and Professor of New Testament. The faculty of Saint Paul School of Theology maintains high standards of scholarship, research, publication, and engagement. Over the past year, their many activities and publications have been so numerous that space permits only sharing selected highlights.

- Rev. Dr. Sharon Betsworth co-authored a journal article with Julie Faith Parker, "Where Have All the Young Girls Gone? Discovering the Girls of the Bible through Childist Analysis of Exodus 2 and Mark 5-7," in *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 38, no. 2 (Fall 2022).
- Dr. Casey Sigmon, Assistant Professor of Preaching and Worship and Director of Contextual Education, was the keynote speaker for The United Methodist Church Missouri Preaching Academy "Offering the Word to a Digital World." She published "Failure to Discern the Online/Hybrid Body: A Captivity of the Eucharist" for the special issue of *Currents in Theology and Mission: Eucharist and Online Worship: Toward Extended Theological Reflection*, vol. 50, no. 1 (2023) and published the chapter "Liturgical Authority and the Table in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)" in *Liturgical Authority in Free Church Traditions*, edited by Sarah Johnson and Andrew Wymer, Calvin Worship and Witness Series.
- Dr. Joshua Bartholomew, Assistant Professor of Ethics, Church, and Society, led a "Race, Liberation, and Political Economics" series at Second Presbyterian. He also spoke at The Open Table KC on "Race, Liberation, and Economics."
- Dr. Amy Oden, Adjunct Professor of Early Church History and Spirituality, was a guest speaker at numerous events around the country this year, including at a Five-Day Academy for Spiritual Formation in Oklahoma, the Beyond Conference in St. Louis, and the Academy for Spiritual Formation in Alabama.

In October, Saint Paul hosted a forum on "Innovative, Creative Ministry" featuring alumni Matt Austin '18, Fabian Gonzalez '20, Bo Ireland '18, Matt Patrick '18, & Abby Peper '22, with each sharing their personal stories of innovation in ministry. In November, Saint Paul Evangelical Society, led by Dr. Israel Kamudzandu, hosted a forum given by Rev. Mike Slaughter, former lead pastor at Ginghamburg Church, on "Spiritual Awakening: the here and the not yet." Later in the year, the Evangelical Society hosted a

lecture featuring Dr. Cheryl Bridges Johns, Visiting Professor of Pentecostal Studies and Director of the Global Pentecostal House of Study at United Theological Seminary. And on May 12, Saint Paul again held a hybrid commencement celebration via Zoom, allowing graduates to come together from both campuses with attendees viewing from around the country. During the ceremony, honored was the 2023 Distinguished Graduate Award Winner and Commencement Speaker Bishop Delores J. “Dee” Williamston.

Saint Paul Board of Trustees changed leadership this year as long-time faculty and board member Rev. Dr. Tex Sample concluded his term as chair of the Board. Dr. Amy Hogan, Professor of Education and Dean of the School of Education at Ottawa University, has succeeded him as chair. Dr. Hogan possesses a deep reservoir of experience in teaching, research, and accreditation. In response to President Neil Blair’s announcement that he will retire on December 31, 2023, Dr. Hogan appointed a search committee composed of faculty, staff, students, and trustees charged with identifying Saint Paul’s next president. The search committee is currently conferring with Saint Paul’s constituent groups to prepare the position prospectus that will describe Saint Paul’s needs and aspirations to candidates.

In September 2022, Saint Paul School of Theology hosted a review team from the Higher Learning Commission (HLC), one of Saint Paul’s primary accreditation agencies, as part of the Seminary’s regular reaffirmation cycle. On November 18, 2022, the Higher Learning Commission notified Saint Paul that the commission “continued the accreditation of Saint Paul School of Theology with the next Reaffirmation of Accreditation in 2028-2029.” The Seminary’s Board of Trustees also devoted considerable time to improving its governance capacity. For example, in April 2022, trustees invested a significant portion of their meeting in a facilitated Emotional Intelligence and Trust-Building workshop. The workshop was led by Gail Parker, a noted management consultant who has worked with clients such as KPMG, Goldman Sachs, and Disney, among many others. In October 2022, former executive director of the Association of Theological Schools, Dan Aleshire, offered an overview of demographic and enrollment trends in the nation’s seminaries, focusing on how those trends affect institutions’ diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives. As these activities suggest, the Board remains deeply committed to enhancing its capabilities to guide Saint Paul effectively and knowledgeably.

The school is happy to report that Saint Paul School of Theology is financially sound. It operates with a balanced budget, no debt, and an endowment 9-10 times the size of annual expenses. As always, the school continues to be grateful for donations from the community that provide technology, scholarships, and evolving academic programs to students. At the close of 2022, over 100 alumni and friends of Saint Paul had contributed more than \$60,000 to create the Tex and Peggy Sample Endowed Scholarship Fund honoring the life and work of Tex and Peggy Sample. Sustainability has been the focus over the past five years, and the school has achieved its goal. Investments in the future bring exciting new opportunities for the students, staff, and faculty. Significant technological investments have allowed the school to maintain a hybrid educational delivery model providing a flexible working arrangement for the students.

Saint Paul continues to enhance the partnership with Zoom and Neat. Late last spring, in conjunction with the Neat Board electronic whiteboards and Neat Bars, the school implemented Neat’s newest product, their Neat Bar Pros, in the large classrooms. These new bars are designed to offer a superior video and audio experience in large spaces and the ability to output to multiple large screens to enhance the overall classroom experience significantly. In addition, the school has rolled out additional Zoom Room Neat Boards in numerous common areas to encourage ad-hoc use of the technology for breakout groups and other miscellaneous meetings between the two campuses and remote students. One of the best features of this technology is its ability to receive automatic real-time over-the-air features upgrades. Several significant enhancements have rolled out this past year, including improved voice cancellation, Zoom Room Breakout Groups, real-time Closed Captions with transcripts, and updated use of AI to split each in-classroom student into their individual zoomed-in Zoom window. In addition, the Neat equipment continuously monitors several environmental factors within the classrooms; air quality, temperature, humidity, VOC, and CO2, as well as being able to tell if the classrooms are occupied and how many individuals are in the room. The school can also monitor the audio/video quality and network connectivity in each of the classrooms, as well as the connection quality for all remote students attending the class. The school is excited about the additional enhancements that will come to the classrooms from Neat and Zoom over this next year and looks forward to a continued partnership with Neat and Zoom on this groundbreaking technology.

Saint Paul School of Theology is blessed to be a partner in ministry and help those seeking to discover more and answer the call. The school is grateful for the support of all students and the seminary. May everyone continue to live into the call of Jesus Christ to be faithful witnesses for future generations.

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

Neil B. Blair, President
spst.edu

i. United Theological Seminary

United Theological Seminary celebrated rising enrollment in the 2022-2023 academic year. In the previous year, 464 students were enrolled at United; in 2022-2023, the seminary is serving 541 students, a 17% increase. A diverse community of many denominations, races, and nationalities, United welcomed students from 36 states, 21 countries, and 43 denominations, with 42% of students identifying as United Methodist.* The seminary prepared 103 Course of Study students** and served 10 students through the Hispanic Christian Academy, a 3-year online course of ministry program for Hispanic/Latino lay pastors and leaders serving United Methodist congregations.

Houses of Study

In large part, this enrollment growth is a result of the seminary’s House of Study initiative, which is supported by a \$1 million grant from Lilly Endowment Inc.’s Pathways for Tomorrow Initiative. As of 2022-2023, the seminary has established five Houses of Study that are equipping master’s students for the unique ministry needs of the communities, movements, and denominations in which

they serve:

- Fresh Expressions, directed by Dr. Michael Beck;
- Full Gospel Baptist Fellowship, directed by Bishop Lisa Weah;
- Global Methodist, directed by Rev. Gregory Stover;
- Global Pentecostal, directed by Dr. Cheryl Bridges Johns; and,
- and Hispanic, directed by Dr. Jorge Ochoa.

The largest of these communities is the Hispanic House of Study (Casa de Estudios Hispana), which is meeting a need for Hispanic/Latino pastors and church leaders ready to pursue a Master of Divinity in their native language. Nearly 50 students from across the United States and Latin America, including students from Mexico, Cuba, Columbia, and Peru, started in the online program in the 2022-2023 academic year.

As United Theological Seminary continues to expand its offerings to support church leaders, it is preparing to launch three new Houses of Study in the 2023-2024 academic year: a Korean House of Study, taught 100% in Korean for Korean-speaking students, led by Dr. Seok Jae Jeon; an African Methodist Episcopal Zion House of Study led by Bishop Eric Leake; and a Global Lutheran House of Study led by Dr. Richard Blue, Dr. Tom Thorstad and Dr. Dan Landin.

Doctor of Ministry

The Seminary is also seeing growth in its Doctor of Ministry program. In 2022-2023, the Doctor of Ministry program has grown to 250 students, an increase of 32% over the past five years.* Doctoral students at United are actively engaged in ministry and seeking to become more effective leaders for the church through a Doctor of Ministry degree. Students identify a need within their congregations or communities, and, with the support of a peer group, mentor, and faculty, they develop a model of ministry to address the challenge.

Bishop Bruce Ough Innovation Center

Launched in Fall 2021, the Bishop Bruce Ough Innovation Center, directed by Rev. Sue Nilson Kibbey, is connecting with pastors, ministry leaders, and congregational members hungry to bring God's renewal to their faith communities. In the past year alone, the Innovation Center has engaged more than 1,000 participants through more than 40 live webinars, training events, and courses. The Innovation Center has also partnered with The Center for Spiritual Formation, a connectional ministry of the Susquehanna Conference of The United Methodist Church, to offer a two-year online training course for those called to the ministry of spiritual direction. In addition, the Center is partnering with two United Methodist conferences to provide its Breakthrough Prayer Initiative training for all clergy in these conferences. Through these and other new opportunities, the Innovation Center seeks to set the stage for the increased vitality of leaders and congregations everywhere.

Kent Millard, President

* Student data represent 2022-2023 headcount enrollment, as of March 1, 2023. Denominational figures represent those who responded.

** Course of Study figures represent the most recent four terms.

j. Wesley Theological Seminary

Wesley Theological Seminary continues to grow and thrive through research, innovation, and equipping Christian leaders for real-life ministries.

Course offerings and support that respond to students' needs follows:

- Pursue your call in a dynamic community within the corridors of power in Washington, DC, or earn a degree through flexible hybrid and online options from your home! Learn more: wesleyseminary.edu/study/
- Our FlexMA is a 36-hour flexible M.A. degree for those preparing for bi-vocational or specialized ministries. Learn more: www.wesleyseminary.edu/flexma/
- Wesley offers specializations in African American church leadership, public theology, military chaplaincy, and certifications in Christian studies, children and youth ministry and advocacy, and health ministry. Learn more: wesleyseminary.edu

Wesley provides \$2 million annually in scholarships, including **full-tuition scholarships** for master's applicants recommended by alums, campus ministers, or Christian service ministries; **Next Call in Ministry** scholarships for students working 10+ years in a non-ministry setting; and **Generación Latinx Scholarships** for emerging Latinx leaders in ministry.

Wesley's **Doctor of Ministry program** includes relevant tracks such as Church Leadership Excellence, Soul Care, Global Church Leadership, Howard Thurman, and the ground-breaking track on Trauma, Moral Injury, and Christian Life. Journey with a cohort of leaders with online classes and hybrid week-long intensive sessions. Learn more: wesleyseminary.edu/doctorofministry/

Research projects support congregational thriving and envision future ministry. Over \$11 million in grants from Lilly Endowment Inc. undergird Wesley's research into and support of congregational thriving and innovation.

- In collaboration with Southern Methodist University Perkins School of Theology, Wesley Theological Seminary is developing professional courses and certificates for pastors.
- The Wesley Innovation Hub brings together diverse congregational cohorts to learn and practice ministry innovations that engage young adults for social change. Learn more: wesleyseminary.edu/wesley-innovation-hub/
- The Wesley Ministry Innovation Fellowship is a one-year, cohort-based experience with community formation, spiritual direction, graduate-level courses, and hands-on experience leading innovation. Each innovator earns a stipend and four graduate academic course credits. Learn more: wesleyseminary.edu/wesley-innovation-hub/design-fellows/
- The Lewis Center for Church Leadership's **Religious Workforce Project** offers multi-denominational research into current and future needs. Visit religiousworkforce.com/

Enrich your congregational outreach and explore new dimensions of ministry.

The **Lewis Center for Church Leadership** conducts leading-edge research for the local church. Find the Leading Ideas e-newsletter and Leading Ideas podcast, a weekly resource for over 20,000 leaders, at churchleadership.com.

The **Community Engagement Institute** embraces a vibrant vision to be the premier center for churches and faith-based organization engaging their communities.

- The online Health Minister Certificate Program prepares congregations for public health work in their parishes. Contact: Dr. Tom Pruski, tpruski@wesleyseminary.edu.
- The Center for Public Theology creates spaces for civil dialogue at the intersection of religion and politics. Visit wesleyseminary.edu/ice/programs/public-theology/.
- The Henry Luce III Center for the Arts and Religion explores the intersection of the arts and theology. Visit luceartsandreligion.org.

Stay connected:

Contact (202) 885-8659 or admissions@wesleyseminary.edu for more information. Follow Wesley Theological Seminary on social media—Facebook [wesleyseminary](https://www.facebook.com/wesleyseminary), Instagram [@wesleyseminary](https://www.instagram.com/wesleyseminary), LinkedIn [wesleytheologicalseminary](https://www.linkedin.com/company/wesleytheologicalseminary), and Twitter [@WesTheoSem](https://twitter.com/WesTheoSem).

David McAllister-Wilson, President

3. THE GENERAL BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND MINISTRY

The General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM) seeks to bring people together to discern, learn, and lead for the church and the academy. As a worldwide agency, GBHEM works with key partners, churches, and institutions in Africa, Asia Pacific, Europe, and Eurasia, Latin American and the Caribbean, and North America to offer connectional, contextual, and collaborative programs to support the church, the academy, and the world.

GBHEM is responsible for The Methodist Global Education Fund for Leadership Development (MGEFLD) — which includes the international Grants and Scholarships Program (GRASP) — and the Central Conference Theological Education Fund (CCTEF). The agency also has ten regional hubs for Leadership, Education, and Development (LEAD Hubs) on five continents. LEAD Hubs supports the International Association of Methodist Schools, Colleges, and Universities (IAMSCU), which works with more than a dozen other Methodist-related regional education associations worldwide. These key partnerships, along with co-creating with other general agencies, and ecumenical groups, help GBHEM to strengthen theological education and pastoral formation across the world.

In addition to providing access to theological education worldwide, GBHEM also celebrates awarding 1,950 students over \$3 million in scholarships in 2022. The agency administers and awards scholarships from over 80 programs annually, supporting students from all over the world.

For over 150 years, The United Methodist Church has been investing in the education and empowerment of African Americans and other underserved populations. One of the most significant ways this is accomplished is through the Black College Fund, which supports the 11 historically black colleges and universities (HBCU's) directly related to The United Methodist Church. In 2022 the Black College Fund celebrated 50 years of providing United Methodist HBCU's with millions of dollars in funding that has assisted with operating budgets, capital improvements, and special programs.

The educational institutions affiliated with The United Methodist Church are among the finest in the world and contribute to the greater good of humanity and to the health and well-being of society. The vast expanse of Methodism's educational footprint cannot be overstated, the 109 United Methodist affiliated educational institutions have made an innumerable impact in the world.

There are 678 United Methodist clergy appointed under GBHEM endorsement providing pastoral care in active and reserve military settings, hospitals, hospices, prisons, retirement communities, workplaces, and other ministries beyond the local church. GBHEM also endorses clergy for volunteer chaplaincies in multiple settings, extending the pastor's ministry into their local communities. Through GBHEM's endorsement, United Methodist seminary students are offered the opportunity to explore military chaplaincy in the chaplain candidate program, offering them a unique learning experience and a source of income to offset seminary costs.

GBHEM continues to develop and align its priorities and staff to reflect an unequivocal commitment to worldwide inclusion diversity, equity, and access (WIDEA). Through strategic planning, prayer, and discernment, the agency strives to increase understanding, intercultural competencies, and promote appreciation and tolerance for difference among core constituencies. Research and feedback from key constituents remain a critical element in guiding GBHEM's strategic direction and goals, as well as advancing staff development and increasing a deeper understanding of the value GBHEM provides to The United Methodist Church.

The United Methodist Church's commitment to education has been rooted historically in the vision and actions of the founder of the Methodist movement, John Wesley. Wesley encouraged intellectual development alongside spiritual growth and the pursuit of sanctification. GBHEM is honored to be a part of the historic tradition of promoting and providing transformative learning opportunities, offering support, advocacy, and resources to assist with cultivating and empowering a new generation of thoughtful Christian leaders.

Greg Bergquist, General Secretary