



DISCIPLES

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VOLUME



2016 OFFICIAL RECORD
48TH SESSION OF THE
WEST MICHIGAN
ANNUAL CONFERENCE
THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
East Lansing, MI
June 9 - 13, 2016

Deborah Lieder Kiesey,
Presiding Bishop
Rev. Gregory L. Buchner
Annual Conference Secretary



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CONFERENCE LEADERSHIP TEAM

The Plan of Organization frames the responsibility of the Conference Leadership Team (CLT) in this fashion:

“Hold the various boards and agencies accountable to the boards’ and agencies’ respective processes of visioning, planning, implementation, funding and evaluation, in accordance with the 2012 DISCIPLINE ¶1610:

1. *“How are we intentionally reaching new people for Jesus Christ through our ministries? and,*
2. *“How are we helping new people grow and mature as disciples of Jesus Christ through our ministries and areas of responsibility?”*

The Plan of Organization requires the CLT to:

1. *“Design a process for implementing the action strategies of the West Michigan Conference.*
2. *Annually convene the leaders of the conference’s and districts’ boards and agencies to:*
 - a. *test the current conference vision;*
 - b. *develop vision/strategic plans necessary for future changes for the conference and;*
 - c. *provide an opportunity for training and collaboration.”*

During 2015, the CLT gave particular attention to focusing on these areas of mission and ministry:

Creating a New Michigan Area Conference

This motion passed in both Michigan conferences with a strong consensus and balance between both conferences. The Design Team of 29 was named by Bishop Kiesey with a good balance of laity, clergy, DAC and WMC, Deacon, and age. The first meeting was held September 1 and 2 at the Area Ministry Center. Four additional full meetings were held in addition to smaller task force sessions related to various specific areas for examination and visioning into the new design. Everything is on the table for consideration. There is a healthy dynamic of the group being led by the group and not by individuals.

Creating a New Area Camping & Retreat Ministries Board

This motion passed in both conferences. The new board is assembled and functioning. It will be primarily a governance policy board linking responsibility and authority and less of a hands-on board. Strategic planning has begun. The capital campaign was started in 2015 to increase overall capacity, fund development and building needs. Decisions and financial allocations have been made to care for any cumulative camping ministry related deficit thru 2015. All future camping related deficits or positive balances will be the full responsibility of the new Area Camping Ministry.

The 2016 and 2017 Budgets

In advance of the 2015 West Michigan Annual Conference in collaboration with the CFA, CLT developed a detailed “Trends Document” with graphs and visuals, for distribution to all attendees. The document outlined the “seemingly unrelated factors throughout the conference that are, in fact, related” to the development of an annual budget for recommendation to the conference every year.

The 2016 budget included clear separation and funding toward our Native American congregations and other racial ethnic and mission congregations so that accountability with support can be more strategically understood. This separation took place as a result of multiple collaborative conversations led by the DCM on behalf of the CLT.

As the 2017 budget was being developed in November of 2015, the CFA Budget Committee and CLT acknowledged some critical factors that will affect the alignment of our resources for 2017: 2015 Ministry Shares receipts were lagging behind the same point in November 2014; there were insufficient Reserves to currently pay our General Church Apportionments beyond the 75% paid to date in 2015; the cabinet had reported continued financial challenges were being experienced by local congregations across the conference; CFA, with the encouragement of many congregations, was committed to reducing the Ministry Shares rate by .5% to 12.5% for 2017; the total projected Table III income was projected to be approximately \$300,000 less than it was for calculations related to the 2016 budget.

At the time, those factors were contributing to the CLT’s and CFA’s decisions to identify \$300,000 to possibly \$400,000 in reductions for the 2017 conference budget as compared to the 2016 budget. In spite of those factors, CLT had earlier adopted an overall Youth Ministry Strategic Plan to help fund and encourage youth ministry at the district and local church level through a grant application process and

leadership network. As a result, for the first time, CLT approved \$17,500 in grant requests from the Grand Traverse and Heartland Districts from the Pooled Youth Ministry Fund for new youth ministry development in local churches in their respective districts.

Higher Education and Wesley Campus Ministries

The CLT has continued their attention to “Benchmarks for Accountability & Funding,” along with encouraging the intentional training and support in the governance model of board oversight. In light of significant financial reductions needing to be made in the support for this ministry, the Wesley campus ministries, with the encouragement of the CLT, have been working to improve their relationships and collaborations with local congregations.

Area Collaborations

During 2015, with the encouragement of Bishop Kiesey and the CLT, the DCM worked closely with the Detroit Conference DCM in several areas of strategic collaboration. They have included shared staffing and strategic planning in the areas of:

- Planning for the program and facilities for the future combined sessions of the Annual Conference.
- Hispanic/Latino Ministry.
- Vital Church Initiative.
- New Church Development.
- Disaster Response Team Planning and Deployment.
- Abuse Prevention Policy Updating.
- Youth Ministry.
- Area Communication Team development and technology/database/web improvement.

An exciting shared strategic planning meeting with the Detroit Conference CLT is scheduled in early February, 2016 as we respond to guidance from the New Conference Design Team.

The CLT is committed to its consistent focus upon aligning human and financial resources toward a clear vision, providing funding for key priorities, consistently looking for fruitfulness, supporting ministries of mission and justice, strengthening vital congregations, and contributing to leadership development with excellence.

Benton R. Heisler, Director of Connectional Ministries (DCM), Ned Weller, CLT Chair

WORLD SERVICE AND CONFERENCE BENEVOLENCES

Summary of the 2016 Budget

[As approved by the Conference Leadership Team]

	2014 Budget	2015 Budget	2016 Budget
World Service & Conference Benevolences			
1. World Service	\$860,836	\$842,439	\$839,057
2. Conference Benevolences			
Commission on Christian Unity	\$500	\$500	\$250
Commission on Religion & Race	\$500	\$500	\$250
COSROW	\$500	\$500	\$250
Board of Christian Camping	\$175,000	\$298,500	\$253,725
Board of Church & Society	\$500	\$500	\$500
Board of Discipleship	\$500	-	-
District Youth Ministry Grants	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$20,000
Board of Global Ministries	\$260,000	\$255,000	\$105,000
Racial/Ethnic Local Church	\$90,000	\$85,000	\$179,550
Higher Education & Campus Ministry	\$308,000	\$360,000	\$324,000
Communications Commission	\$100,000	\$43,000	\$36,000
Connectional Ministries Staff	\$618,000	\$543,000	\$515,000
Board of Lay Ministries	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$3,000

Conference Personnel Committee	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,500
Board of Evangelism	\$500	\$500	\$500
United Methodist Men	\$500	\$500	\$500
Hunger Committee	\$500	\$500	\$500
Prison Ministry	\$500	\$500	\$500
Indian Workers Conference	\$500	\$500	\$123,633
Disability Concerns Committee	\$500	\$500	\$500
Vital Church Initiative	\$35,000	\$35,000	\$55,000
Hispanic/Latino Committee	\$12,000	\$55,000	\$45,000
Cooperative Ministry Committee	\$1,000	\$500	\$500
Pooled Ministry Fund	\$25,000	\$25,000	\$10,000
Contingency	\$6,500	-	-
Conference Benevolences Total	\$1,645,000	\$1,714,000	\$1,675,658
Total World Service & Conference Benevolences	\$2,505,836	\$2,556,439	\$2,514,715
TOTAL ANNUAL CONFERENCE BUDGET	\$6,185,660	\$6,321,847	\$5,967,263

2016 LINE ITEM BUDGETS
Conference Benevolences Programs
[As Approved By The Conference Leadership Team]

		2016 BUDGET
COMMISSION ON CHRISTIAN UNITY & INTERRELIGIOUS CONCERNS - 3020		
4903000	Distrib Rev-WS and Conf Benevolences	\$250
BOARD OF CHURCH AND SOCIETY - 3030		
4903000	Distrib Rev-WS and Conf Benevolences	\$500
DISABILITY CONCERNS COMMITTEE - 3032		
4903000	Distrib Rev-WS and Conf Benevolences	\$500
COMMISSION ON COMMUNICATIONS - 3040		
4903000	Distrib Rev-WS and Conf Benevolences	\$36,000
COMMISSION ON STATUS AND ROLE OF WOMEN - 3050		
4903000	Distrib Rev-WS and Conf Benevolences	\$250
DISTRICT YOUTH MINISTRY GRANTS		
4903000	Distrib Rev-WS and Conf Benevolences	\$20,000
BOARD OF EVANGELISM - 3080		
4903000	Distrib Rev-WS and Conf Benevolences	\$500
UNITED METHODIST MEN		
4903000	Distrib Rev-WS and Conf Benev	\$500

CONNECTIONAL MINISTRIES - 3100

4526010	Personnel Support	\$500
4903000	Distrib Rev-WS and Conf Benevole	<u>\$515,000</u>
	Total Receipts	\$515,500
5050000	Program disbursements	\$2,606
5051135	New Pastors Orientation	\$500
5200000	Payroll-Salaried Employees	\$170,471
5210000	Payroll-Hourly Employees	\$130,396
5223101	Pension Contr-CCOM Staff	\$23,064
5223102	Pension Contr-CCOM Support Staff	\$9,851
5240000	FICA/Medicare Taxes	\$16,958
5241000	Worker's Comp Insurance	\$1,054
5260000	Health Insurance	\$93,900
5270000	Continuing Education	\$3,500
5280000	Resource Materials	\$1,000
5290000	Membership Dues	\$350
5340000	Telephone	\$500
5350000	Mobile Phone	\$2,000
5360000	Postage and Shipping	\$750
5380000	Printing	\$500
5400000	Office Supplies	\$1,500
5420000	Equipment Repair and Maintenanc	\$1,000
5410000	Equipment Replacement	\$1,000
5580000	Credit Card Fees	\$250
5620000	Admin and Meetings	\$2,000
5620000	Travel-Mileage, Staff	\$500
5633110	Travel-Mileage, Conf Dir	\$7,500
5633120	Travel-Mileage, Min Consult1	\$7,500
5640000	Travel-Other Than Mileage	\$1,000
5643110	Travel-O/T Mileage, Conf Dir	\$3,000
5643120	Travel-O/T Mileage Min Consult1	\$2,500
5720000	Insurance, Other	\$1,100
5800000	Miscellaneous	\$0
5810000	Computer Services	\$1,000
5830500	Computer Equipment	\$2,500
5840000	Software Purchase and Support	\$1,000
5970000	Contingency	\$0
6102130	Distrib Rev-Conf Properties	\$20,000
	Health Insurance (Liability)	\$3,750
	Total Disbursements	<u>\$514,500</u>

BOARD OF CHRISTIAN CAMPING - 3200

4903000	Distri Rev-WS & Conf Benevolencese	<u>\$253,725</u>
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BOARD OF GLOBAL MINISTRIES - 3400

4903000	Distrib Rev-WS and Conf Benevolences	\$105,000
	Total Receipts	\$105,000
5033400	Other-Education/Cultivation	\$1,000
5620000	Admin & Meetings	\$500
5913400	CBGM Secretary	\$750
5913406	School of Missions	\$1,000
5913407	Haiti Task Force	\$2,000
5913408	Mission Promotion	\$500
6105850	Distrib Exp-Vol in Mission	\$1,000
6107100	Block Grant - Albion District	\$5,000
6107200	Block Grant - Heartland District	\$5,000
6107300	Block Grant - Grand Rapids District	\$48,250
6107400	Block Grant - Grand Traverse District	\$0
6107500	Block Grant - Kalamazoo District	\$10,000
6107600	Block Grant - Lansing District	\$0
	Mission Congregation (The Gathering)	\$30,000
	Emerging Ministries & Contingency	\$0
	Total Disbursements	\$105,000

HUNGER/UMCOR COMMITTEE - 3440

4903000	Distrib Rev-WS and Conf Benevolences	\$500
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HISPANIC / LATINO COMMITTEE - 3445

4903000	Distrib Rev-WS and Conf Benevolences	\$45,000
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BOARD OF LAY MINISTRIES - 3460

4903000	Distrib Rev-WS and Conf Benevolences	\$3,000
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INDIAN WORKERS CONFERENCE BUDGET - 3450

4903000	Distrib Rev-WS and Conf Benevolences	\$123,633
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CONFERENCE PERSONNEL COMMITTEE - 3470

4903000	Distrib Rev-WS and Conf Benevolences	\$1,500
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PRISON MINISTRY COMMITTEE & RESTORATIVE JUSTICE CONCERNS - 3480

4903000	Distrib Rev-WS and Conf Benevolences	\$500
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RACIAL ETHNIC LOCAL CHURCH COMMITTEE - 3490

4903000	Distrib Rev-WS and Conf Benevolences	\$179,550
	Total Receipts	\$179,550
5030269	Distrib Exp-South Lansing Ministries at Lansing Grace	\$14,000
5030308	Distrib Exp-Washington Heights UMC	\$16,000
5033218	Distrib Exp-La Nueva Esperanza	\$43,040
	Distrib Exp-Baldwin	\$13,000
6107323	Distrib Exp-GR Vietnamese UMC	\$41,510
	Distrib Exp-Mount Hope	\$20,000
	Distrib Exp-Lansing Korean	\$32,000
	Total Disbursements	\$179,550

COMMISSION ON RELIGION AND RACE - 3495

4903000	Distrib Rev-WS and Conf Benevolences	\$250
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VITAL CHURCH INITIATIVE - 3510

4903000	Distrib Rev-WS and Conf Benevolences	\$55,000
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BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND CAMPUS MINISTRY - 3600

4903000	Distrib Rev-WS and Conf Benevolences	\$324,000
	Total Receipts	\$324,000

5043610	Grants-Albion College	\$1,000
5043620	Grants-Adrian College	\$1,000
5620000	Admin and Meetings	\$1,000
6106026	Distrib Exp-GVUMSF/GR Youth	\$62,800
6106200	WF-Capital Funds	\$7,000
6106208	Distrib Exp-WF CMU (1)	\$62,800
6106212	Distrib Exp-WF MSU (1)	\$62,800
6106216	Distrib Exp-WF WMU (1)	\$62,800
6106222	Distrib Exp-WF FSU (1)	\$62,800
	Total Disbursements	\$324,000

COOPERATIVE MINISTRY COMMITTEE -

4903000	Distrib Rev-WS and Conf Benevolences	\$500
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ABUSE PREVENTION TEAM

2015 has been an eventful year for the Abuse Prevention Team, filled with significant changes. The first of these changes was the completion of a new and updated Abuse Prevention Policy for the West Michigan Conference, and passage of that policy at the 2015 Annual Conference. The Abuse Prevention Team would like to thank all of those who rotated off the team this year for their hard work and dedication in developing this policy. Other decisions impacting the team have been the decision of the West Michigan and Detroit annual conferences to create a new annual conference and the decision of those conferences to form a new conference camping corporation.

During 2015, the Abuse Prevention Team continued its practice of providing abuse prevention training to local churches as a courtesy and encouragement to those churches to adopt abuse prevention policies to protect children involved in their ministries as well as the churches and volunteers. During this past year, the team has trained approximately 116 people – for both initial training and renewals representing about 20 churches. An additional 136 people representing 26 organizations received abuse prevention training online.

In addition to training, a subgroup of the Abuse Prevention Team has been participating in the Protection Transition Task Force with members of the Detroit Annual Conference Abuse Prevention Team. This team is working to create a conference policy for the prevention of abuse in the new conference that will be created as Detroit and West Michigan come together. Our aim is to prepare the best policy we are able to drawing upon the expertise of the members of both conferences' Abuse Prevention Teams.

We look forward to another year of serving the West Michigan Conference in making sure the children, youth, and other vulnerable persons who participate in the ministries of our conference and districts are protected from harm, and that the risks associated with hosting these activities may be minimized for the conference and volunteers alike.

David Elmore, Chair

AFRICA UNIVERSITY

Over the past 24 years, The United Methodist Church has grown Africa University www.support-africauniversity.org into a ministry that is vibrant and impactful, through visionary leadership and extraordinary faithfulness. The generosity of local churches in the West Michigan Conference and throughout the connection is integral to the Africa University story. Your commitment has enabled the university to live into its mission of developing principled and proactive global leaders.

2015 Highlights: Under the leadership of the Vice Chancellor, Dr. Munashe Furusa, Africa University pursued a number of initiatives aimed at enhancing the student experience and student success in 2015. The university articulated staff development strategies that will ensure that the majority of the faculty have terminal degrees in their various disciplines. Academic programs were assessed for their relevance to current realities and crucial development challenges in Africa. Course offerings were updated and fine-tuned.

A human resources audit, completed in October 2015, is now the foundation for an evolving re-alignment of staffing in the university's administrative, support and academic units. A new strategic plan is in development and will focus resources more effectively, while ensuring that fiscal responsibility and accountability are maintained. In addition, the university is increasing its friend-making and fundraising efforts in Africa and among its core beneficiaries – its graduates and their families.

Enrollment: Currently, Africa University has a total enrolment of 1,415 full-time students who represent 26 of Africa's 54 countries. An additional 770 students are gaining new skills and knowledge as they pursue undergraduate and graduate degrees on a part-time basis. Thanks to an intentional focus on access to education for women, more than half of the students (52.9%) are female. This is twice the average for higher education institutions in Africa.

Alumni: Africa University graduates number around 6,200. They are dispersed across the continent and engaged in vital efforts to improve public health, food security, peace, stability, and the enjoyment of economic prosperity in Africa. Africa University graduates are in the forefront of articulating contextually-appropriate and sustainable responses to continental challenges.

Thank you, West Michigan, for your continuing strong support for the Africa University Fund (AUF). Your investment in the AUF allows Africa University to send forth young women and men to provide care and knowledge, share the Gospel, and make disciples of Jesus Christ in communities across sub-Saharan Africa.

The Africa University is humbled by the love and generosity of United Methodists in the West Michigan Conference. Despite the challenges of the economic downturn at the time, sacrificial giving in every district of the conference brought the idea of a central gathering space – a place of welcome, sharing and learning – into beautiful reality in the form of the Ubuntu Center. The Ubuntu Center opened its doors to guests from near and far earlier this year, and it is proving to be an important addition to the campus infrastructure.

Africa University's efforts are very closely aligned with the four areas of mission focus of The United Methodist Church, and the institution is effectively advancing the denomination's global mission: To make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

Through Africa University, The United Methodist Church honors its Wesleyan roots and values: active personal faith, social justice, connection, and global concern.

Looking ahead: Leaders with the ethical grounding, knowledge, pan-African network and passion for service that Africa University inculcates are profoundly important to the changes that are underway in Africa. Across sub-Saharan Africa, these graduates are leaders and role models who inspire a new optimism. Students will keep coming because our "Cross and Flame" is a beacon of hope and opportunity.

Investment in Africa University produces excellent results and continuing that investment means a growing number of effective disciples and tangible positive change. Thank you, West Michigan, for your support. By giving, you help young people to access a relevant and holistic education that generates a living legacy and changes everything.

Please encourage your local church to continue to invest 100% of its asking to the Africa University Fund. Consider leading an effort to have your church or district invest in an endowed scholarship which can support one student a year in perpetuity. Also, remember to include Africa University in your estate plans. As you journey with Africa University, know that you are part of a ministry that equips Africans to do for themselves and grow the experience of God's promised abundance in the world.

We pray that you will continue to answer the call to witness through this transforming ministry with vigor and commitment. Thank you and God bless you.

Mr. James H. Salley, Associate Vice Chancellor for Institutional Advancement
Africa University Development Office

COMMISSION ON ARCHIVES AND HISTORY

The West Michigan Conference Commission on Archives and History hosted the 2014 annual convocation of Archives and History Commissions from the North Central Jurisdiction. This convocation took place on July 7-11 in Petoskey. At that time, we made contacts with Rev. Anita Hahn, Grand Traverse District Superintendent, Petoskey United Methodist Church, Lake Louise Camp near Boyne Falls, Bay View Community in Petoskey, and Greensky Hill United Methodist Church near Charlevoix.

We have begun discussions with Greensky Hill United Methodist Church about steps toward naming the church as a historic site of the West Michigan Conference, and to recognize the evangelistic and pastoral work of Rev. Peter Greensky, founder of the local church. There are, however, a number of churches which began as Indian missions in the Grand Traverse area, and we are looking into the history of each to possibly name them all as historic sites. Such recommendations would eventually come before the West Michigan Annual Conference.

An ongoing concern of the commission is in providing training for local church historians. This has traditionally been led by the archivist for the conference. Our conference experienced a transition of archivists in 2014. The former archivist, Nicole Garrett Smeltekop, left her position in June, and the new archivist, Justin Seidler, was hired in September 2014. As the conference archives are housed at Albion College, the archivist divides his time between the work of the conference and that of the college. We plan to engage Justin in helping us to lead church historian workshops in 2015.

For the 2015 report, we continued discussion on both the naming of historic sites and the local church historian workshop. We met at Bradley Indian Mission and learned more of the history there toward the naming of Native American United Methodist historic sites in the conference. There were also gatherings in 2015 with those from the Detroit Conference to begin to revitalize the United Methodist Historical Society for the Michigan Area. And finally, our archivist has pointed out a need for more archival storage space than is currently available to us at Albion College. Whenever a local United Methodist Church closes, its pertinent historical materials are sent to the conference archives, as well as conference-level historical materials. The commission has begun discussing options for the location of the archives, especially considering the upcoming combination of the two conferences in Michigan.

Melanie Young, Chair

BOARD OF CHURCH AND SOCIETY

Members of the West Michigan Conference Board of Church and Society advocate the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the church and world. We focus on issues of peace and justice in the Michigan area, as well as around the globe. Through our work we seek to reflect the compassion of Christ for all humanity and for God's gift of life and creation.

At the 2015 West Michigan Annual Conference we continued our tradition of sharing a meal. Our featured speaker was Rev. Lisa Deneen Gorman, who spoke on Lighthouse Ministries of Benton Harbor. Rev. Gorman received the Peacemaker of the Year award. The Lifetime Peacemaker award was received by Rev. Ellen Brubaker. The Peace Sermon of the Year award was received by Rev. Hillary Thurston-Cox.

The following petitions were offered for consideration at the 2015 West Michigan Conference:

- Global Maternal Health: Support for Healthy Families, Healthy Planet;
- Terror in Nigeria;
- Creation Care;
- Church and Society Representatives from local churches;
- Alcohol Abuse Prevention;
- General Conference Petition on Divestment from companies that profit from illegal Israeli settlements.

All proposed legislation was approved and the Conference Board of Church and Society has been busy following up on these petitions.

We continue to promote the Peace with Justice offering each year. This offering is shared with the General Board of Global Ministries. One half goes to GBGM for grants helping projects of justice and peace throughout the world. The second half stays within our conference. The Conference Peace with Justice Coordinator, Ellen Brubaker, is a member of our committee and attended the annual Peace with Justice training provided by the General Board of Church and Society.

We currently administer the conference's Keep Making Peace fund, United Methodist Global AIDS Fund for the conference and peace scholarship funds available from the Brubaker/Thompson Peace Fund.

In 2015 we continued to bring many issues of justice and peace to board meetings – concerns for stewardship of the earth, peace, immigration, race and gender equality, LGBTQ rights, refugee rights and more. Seeking to be instruments of God's peace, we continue to work for a world that reflects God's love and grace, praying and working for justice and peace that God's reign will come on earth.

Amee Anne Paparella, Chair

CONNECTIONAL YOUTH MINISTRIES

On a cold 2015 January weekend, 130 students and leaders from 16 different West Michigan churches gathered at Grand Rapids First United Methodist Church for a time of connection and change. As groups arrived the room was full of awkward excitement. However, awkwardness transformed into friendships as we played group games and rotated through small group stations.

One station intentionally asked: "How can I be a leader in the church?" Students' responses ranged from "encouraging more young people to come to church," "lead a cookout," "teach love and acceptance," "help with music," to "plan mission projects." It's amazing to see how our students are eager to be involved in the leadership of our churches! Students were also asked to respond to the question: "If I were pastor for a day, I would..." Answers to this question yielded some fun responses.

Included in our evening was a little free time for students and networking time for adult leaders. The youth leader time provided for making connections, sharing stories, and dreaming for the future. Out of this youth leader time, we've realized a desire to create more times/spaces for youth leaders to connect and share resources. As a side note, it was such a blessing to see so many youth leaders committed to making an impact in their students' lives. It was also a huge blessing to have so many youth leaders help (and offer to help) throughout the entire retreat. They are great role models!

After a somewhat full night of sleep, we began with breakfast and a short time of worship. Next, youth groups were given \$20 and two hours to make a difference. What did the different groups do with such an open-ended challenge? Groups went to local missions, handed out food, visited Clark retirement home, visited DeVos Children's Hospital, wrote nice notes on cars, salted sidewalks, handed out treats at the bus station, put gas in cars.

As students returned, we shared stories of being the change. Students and adults alike, excited to see the many ways we can Be the Change in our own communities and beyond. And, in the process of being the change, we were changed.

Thank you, Grand Rapids First United Methodist Church for hosting Be the Change. Thank you to the many youth leaders who took a leap of faith and brought students to something new. Thank you students for having the courage to Be the Change!

Sami Marasigan

The founding leader of the annual Haiti youth mission trip, David Hills, engaged in a well-deserved sabbatical in 2015. While he was missed on the 2015 Haiti mission trip, he wrote the following about the annual event:

We “are all convinced of the transformative benefit of the Youth/Young Adult Haiti Mission. We have seen lives changed and great growth among participants in their understanding of issues of poverty, privilege of their own places of birth, the lessons we can learn from our Haitian brothers and sisters, and so much more. Their eyes have been opened and no one has left unchanged. We see this endeavor as opening up the possibility of calls being heard to ministries as missionaries and pastors. It also appeals to an emerging generation of potential leaders who want to ‘do’ things to personally make a difference in the world rather than just sending money. They get incarnation ministry even if they might not name it that way. This trip is a means of grace to all involved and I see it as an exponential camp experience as well.

“The biggest concerns for the long run are in terms of finances and recruiting. The former is going to be dependent on conference, YSF, and General Church support to keep access reasonably affordable. Even with the support we’ve had, participants have had to come up with close to \$1,000. We dream of someday having a pool of scholarship funds available for those needing financial help.

“The good news is we’ve worked out a model that we believe gives broad exposure to the way of life and faith of Haitian people.”

I thank Sami Marasigan and Zach McNees for their generosity in the early months of this calendar year. I am grateful for and to Jorge Costales, Joel Fitzgerald and Joy Mills for their continuing leadership in equipping both adult workers with youth and youth for real life ministries. The Be the Change 2016 will focus on connecting and equipping adult workers of youth in early 2016.

Late in 2015 the Conference Leadership Team (CLT) named connectional youth ministries as “important for making disciples and transforming the world.” Its strategy focuses fiscal and personnel support on each district. Early responses from district leaders are mixed. Some districts have added youth ministry staff to their teams. Others strengthen their connectional efforts to support local youth ministries in other ways.

I invite you to join me in following our Caller’s voice saying, “don’t stop now.”

Naomi García, Associate Director for Discipleship

COOPERATIVE MINISTRIES COMMITTEE

Cooperative Ministry can be as simple as a few churches joining together to offer a local food pantry or community Good Friday worship services. It can be as complex as two or more local churches entering into a covenant, creating a ministry team, or combining committees to carry out the mission of the church. By its nature such ministry needs to be flexible and contextual. Cooperative Ministry allows individual churches to share their strengths and accomplish things they could not do on their own. Paragraph 206 of the 2012 *Book of Discipline* outlines the variety of forms Cooperative Ministry can take and the various roles and responsibilities of local churches, annual conferences, and cabinets.

The Cooperative Ministries Committee has decided on initial goals and objectives. These include:

- Continued support and consultation of the formal Cooperative Ministries (groupings of churches which have entered into covenantal relationships by Church Conference action) and informal Cooperative Ministries in West Michigan. We currently have at least two formal, one exploring and one informal Cooperative Ministries in the West Michigan Conference representing at least three Districts. We know there are many more informal arrangements of shared ministries throughout the Conference.
- Creating and providing regional events to introduce the concept of Cooperative Ministries and / or to resource groups of churches who are already exploring cooperative ministry.

- Identifying and developing tools, guidance, and training materials, as well as identifying persons with experience in effective cooperative ministry, in order to resource local churches and the cabinet. We hope to make much of this “resource library” available online and have taken the initial steps in developing this.

We look forward to developing this vital ministry with local churches in the coming years.

Jodie R. Flessner, Chair

COMMITTEE ON DISABILITY CONCERNS

The Disability Concerns Committee is charged with dealing with the many disabilities persons have, and how they can be included in the life of the church. The committee is reorganizing this year and studying how to best be in ministry with the churches of the West Michigan Conference. In the past, we have given out grants that served as seed money for disability ministries, such as ramps, braille materials, and listening devices. Because of budget constraints, we are no longer able to offer these grants. The committee is prayerfully considering how we can help congregations with disability ministries and stay within the budget confines given us. We invite you to join us in praying for new ways of being in ministry with the churches of the West Michigan Conference, and to think “outside the box” in doing ministry within the West Michigan Conference and its future entity.

Mark R. Babb, Chair

COMMISSION ON EQUITABLE COMPENSATION

The purpose of the Commission on Equitable Compensation (CEC) is to annually propose the minimum compensation schedule for clergy in various appointment categories and to assist local churches in making disciples of Jesus Christ by helping to meet minimum compensation standards for their pastors when local church resources are not sufficient. In fulfilling the obligations of ¶342, ¶624, and ¶625 of *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church*, and in using Ministry Shares to ensure compliance with their purposes, the work of the CEC is firmly rooted in our strong connectional heritage. The CEC takes seriously the stewardship of Ministry Share resources entrusted for this purpose.

In 2015, a total of 17 charges, representing 24 churches, received \$165,640 in direct financial assistance from the Commission on Equitable Compensation for support of pastoral compensation. Grants ranged from as little as \$3000 to as much as \$20,000, with an average grant of \$9741 per charge. Of the \$165,640 in total grants, an estimated \$100,500, or 61% of the total, went to Racial/Ethnic/Missional churches that, without funding revisions being considered, would likely remain on Equitable Compensation beyond the three-year Conference Guideline (See next paragraph). The CEC also approved \$2350 in pulpit supply grants for pastors on medical leave, \$10,000 for pastoral sustentation, and \$200 in administrative expenses.

The chairperson of the CEC participated with The Mission Church Task Force in 2014. As a result of the Task Force’s work, the mission churches will be removed from the Commission on Equitable Compensation as of the 2016 grant cycle. This will give the Commission members a more true picture of churches that require temporary assistance from the CEC budget.

The Commission on Equitable Compensation considers it part of the CEC’s assignment to assist churches with stewardship campaign techniques, programs such as the Vital Church Initiative, and unconventional fundraising ideas, to help reduce the need for salary support from the CEC in future years.

Because the CEC members want to help churches in any way they can as to Equitable Compensation, in 2016 our grant application process will become more user-friendly through electronic submission. Electronic submission will be easier for both the applicants and the CEC once any initial glitches are resolved.

Beginning in 2009, the CEC was more intentional about paying attention to the rate of payment of Ministry Shares from congregations receiving Equitable Compensation support. The CEC added a statement regarding the expectation of full payment of Ministry Shares to the Conference guidelines in 2010. Included in this statement was the stipulation that in consultation with the District Superintendent and/or the Cabinet, a church not meeting its conference obligations could find its Equitable Compensation grant reduced or rescinded.

The Commission on Equitable Compensation thanks the churches that are faithful in payment of Ministry Shares in full, making it possible for the CEC to continue its work of seeking to support local churches in making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

EQUITABLE COMPENSATION 2015 YEAR-END SUMMARY

	SALARY SUPPORT	PENSION SUPPORT	HEALTH INSURANCE	HOUSING	TOTAL
ALBION DISTRICT:					
Girard (Pulpit Supply)	400.00				\$400.00
DISTRICT TOTAL	\$400.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$400.00
HEARTLAND DISTRICT:					
Brooks/Barryton/Sears	4,140.00				\$4,140.00
The Gathering	8,000.00				\$12,000.00
DISTRICT TOTAL	\$16,140.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$16,140.00
GRAND RAPIDS DISTRICT:					
GR Vietnamese	17,000.00				\$17,000.00
La Nueva Esperanza	18,500.00				\$18,500.00
Salem/Bradley	8,000.00				\$8,000.00
DISTRICT TOTAL	\$43,500.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$43,500.00
GRAND TRAVERSE DISTRICT:					
Baldwin Covenant Community	4,000.00				\$4,000.00
Charlevoix	4,000.00				\$4,000.00
Grace Life	3,000.00				\$3,000.00
Greensky Hill	10,000.00				\$10,000.00
Kewadin	5,300.00				\$5,300.00
Northport	14,700.00				\$14,700.00
DISTRICT TOTAL	\$41,000.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$41,000.00
KALAMAZOO DISTRICT:					
Berrien Springs	10,000.00				\$10,000.00
Gull Lake (Pulpit Supply)	300.00				\$300.00
Hopkins	5,000.00				\$5,000.00
Keeler/Silver Lake	10,500.00				\$10,500.00
Lawton St Paul (Pulpit Supply)	450.00				\$450.00
Paw Paw (Pulpit Supply)	1,200.00				\$1,200.00
Sunnyside	5,000.00				\$5,000.00
DISTRICT TOTAL	\$32,450.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$32,450.00
LANSING DISTRICT:					
Felt Plains					\$0.00
Lansing Korean	20,000.00				\$20,000.00
Mount Hope	4,500.00				\$4,500.00
Nashville	15,000.00				\$15,000.00
DISTRICT TOTAL	\$39,500.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$39,500.00
Dues	200.00				\$200.00
Meetings	241.01				\$241.01
Sustentation	7,250.00				\$7,250.00
TOTAL	7,691.01				\$7,691.01
GRAND TOTAL	\$180,681.01	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$180,681.01

Pastor Nancy J. Patera, Chair

BOARD OF EVANGELISM

A word from the Word:

³⁵ Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and curing every disease and every sickness. ³⁶ When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. ³⁷ Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; ³⁸ therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest." –Matthew 9:35-38 (NRSV)

I write to you today to encourage you in the area of evangelism. It's easy to see how the world in general and our little corner of it specifically has come full circle to the place that Jesus described in the passage above: The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. But after just a few short years and through the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus' disciples went on to change the world. Today, I believe that the Christ we still follow invites us to do the same.

The first thing I want to encourage you in is your prayer life. We know that it is the grace of God that saves, not us. So, let us pray that the harvest will be rich. Let us pray that laborers will be raised up among us to do this vital work. Let us pray for transformed lives.

Second, let's each examine our own context to see where we might allow God to use us as evangelists. Is there someone in our lives that we might walk alongside of? Is there a place in which we might bring healing? Do we know anyone who is harassed and helpless? Those are the people Jesus started with – that seems like a good place to start. I pray that you would examine your own calling to see whom you might be Christ like to.

Third, Jesus taught and proclaimed. You might say to yourself that you aren't a teacher or a preacher. Yet, each of us has a story of how the grace of God has touched us. What is that story? Have you thought about it? Have you written it down? Have you told someone? Fear might tell us that our story isn't worthwhile. We might imagine that God's grace for us is so small that it isn't worth sharing. But, it's grace we're talking about. It's amazing (or so the song says). Look for the ways that God has touched your life and then ask for a chance to share.

Lastly, pray some more. Pray that we will be bold and courageous in conquering the fear that keeps us from living out our faith. Pray that we will be those laborers in a plentiful harvest. May God bless you in your ministry in the coming year.

Jonathan Van Dop, Chair

COUNCIL ON FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

Thank You West Michigan! Thank you for your prayers and financial support of our shared mission and ministry by giving to Ministry Shares. While we came up short of the budget in 2015, we remain thankful for God's many good gifts. *"For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what one does not have."* (2 Corinthians 8:12)

In 2015, the pay-in rate (the average rate of payment to ministry shares) was 78.3% which provided 88.2% of the budget approved by Annual Conference. The 2015 results were the lowest in ten years. Compared to the 2014 and 2013 results, the pay-in rates were 84.3% and 84.5%, respectively and the percentages of the budget paid were 95.7% and 96.4%, respectively. Total remittances to the conference treasurer were \$7 million, of which \$5.6 million went to ministry shares, \$445 thousand to district funds and \$1 million designated to various causes in the Six Lanes of the Advance program of the West Michigan Conference. The 2015 total receipts were more than \$900,000 lower than in 2014.

In the face of these realities, the CFA was constrained to reduce payments for general apportioned funds to an average of 73% for all funds. Sadly, this was unlike our historical experience of paying 100% over many years.

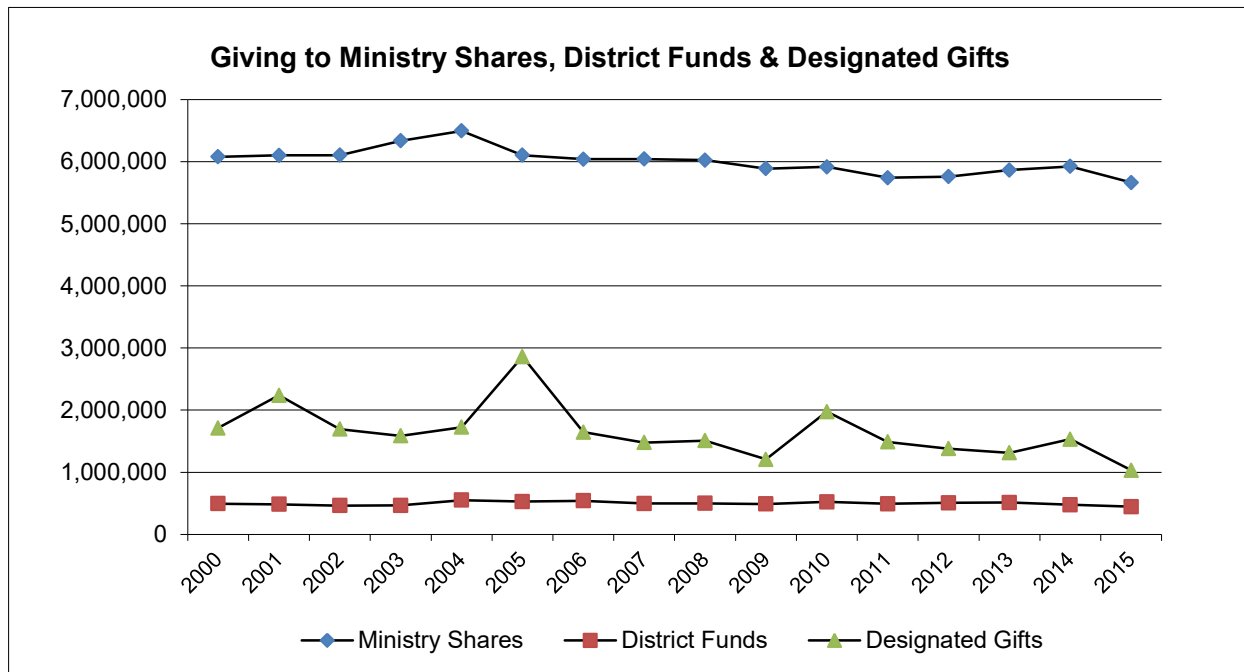
Ministry Shares Disbursements in 2015

Praise God for the provision that is given to administer God's grace in various forms. (1 Peter 4:10)

Superintendency and Ministerial Support	\$ 1,598,101	29%
Connectional Ministries & New Church Development	\$ 1,874,408	33%
Conference and Area Administration	\$ 908,002	16%
World Service and General Church Apportionments	\$ 1,218,248	22%
Total	\$ 5,598,759	100%

Disturbing Trends

The CFA along with the Conference Leadership Team recognizes the financial struggle that our churches are experiencing. There are realities and disturbing trends in the life of our conference that we need to face.



Giving In 2015 Was Down

Year	Ministry Shares	District Funds	Designated Gifts	Total Giving	% Budget Paid	Budget
1999	5,831,246	415,603	2,127,102	8,373,951	93.0%	6,212,681
2000	6,077,069	495,049	1,695,898	8,268,016	93.0%	6,461,164
2001	6,101,954	483,183	2,229,571	8,814,708	89.8%	6,710,319
2002	6,102,615	464,250	1,686,198	8,253,063	87.5%	6,912,025
2003	6,334,732	465,715	1,585,979	8,386,426	87.2%	7,215,846
2004	6,495,492	551,814	1,724,170	8,771,476	85.1%	7,636,830
2005	6,102,417	527,803	2,861,950	9,492,170	89.5%	7,222,355
2006	6,038,584	539,597	1,645,391	8,223,572	93.4%	6,466,961
2007	6,040,628	497,768	1,478,474	8,016,870	92.6%	6,526,221
2008	6,024,180	500,417	1,508,594	8,033,191	91.9%	6,555,913

2009	5,888,021	488,516	1,207,482	7,584,019	87.9%	6,694,890
2010	5,916,148	521,944	1,975,543	8,413,635	95.3%	6,209,076
2011	5,741,225	491,506	1,487,123	7,719,854	93.2%	6,159,550
2012	5,759,683	507,432	1,380,351	7,647,466	96.8%	5,951,495
2013	5,864,716	512,070	1,313,465	7,690,251	96.4%	6,084,889
2014	5,922,040	477,301	1,531,383	7,930,724	95.7%	6,185,660
2015	5,662,974	444,784	1,032,463	7,140,221	89.6%	6,321,847

Declining Number of Churches Giving 100%

In 2006, 289 churches gave 100% to their Ministry Shares. The historical lowest number was 242 in 2009 as a consequence of the Great Recession. In the last three previous years, the number of churches giving 100% was trending down.

Year	# of Churches
2012	285
2013	263
2014	253
2015	230

Giving By District Was Down

MINISTRY SHARES & DISTRICT MINISTRIES FUNDS GIVING		<u>12/31/13</u>	<u>12/31/14</u>	<u>12/31/15</u>
CONFERENCE	Ministry Shares & District Funds Paid	\$6,376,785	\$6,399,340	\$6,006,942
	Pay-In Rate	84.5%	84.3%	78.3%
	Special Giving	\$1,313,466	\$1,531,384	\$1,010,982
	ALBION	Remittances Year To Date	\$860,773	\$832,232
	Pay-In Rate	87.8%	88.2%	81.0%
	Special Giving	\$145,846	\$177,042	\$118,941
HEARTLAND	Remittances Year To Date	\$707,015	\$732,827	\$690,836
	Pay-In Rate	81.9%	84.7%	79.3%
	Special Giving	\$151,600	\$144,440	\$109,504
GRAND RAPIDS	Remittances Year To Date	\$1,882,400	\$1,865,093	\$1,833,511
	Pay-In Rate	92.2%	88.5%	84.0%
	Special Giving	\$372,921	\$589,602	\$282,977
GRAND TRAVERSE	Remittances Year To Date	\$825,705	\$859,189	\$812,503
	Pay-In Rate	82.0%	85.4%	78.8%
	Special Giving	\$166,035	\$155,049	\$110,432
KALAMAZOO	Remittances Year To Date	\$989,888	\$983,160	\$862,069
	Pay-In Rate	76.9%	76.3%	67.0%
	Special Giving	\$255,334	\$236,453	\$227,472
LANSING	Remittances Year To Date	\$1,111,004	\$1,126,839	\$1,033,025
	Pay-In Rate	81.0%	81.4%	76.7%
	Special Giving	\$221,730	\$228,798	\$161,656

SPECIAL GIVING		<u>12/31/13</u>	<u>12/31/14</u>	<u>12/31/15</u>
		\$	\$	\$
1.	Imagine No Malaria	76,896	484,062	62,380
2.	Camp Endowment Campaign	285	571	25
3.	Christian Education Sunday Offering	4,111	3,803	3,000
4.	Racial Ethnic Local Church Sunday Offering	5,724	5,830	5,427
5.	Human Relations Day Offering	13,983	11,199	13,205
6.	Rural Life Sunday	5,047	4,952	3,480
7.	Peace With Justice Sunday	10,798	11,014	10,796
8.	Camp Sunday	7,675	6,252	4,966
9.	Native American Ministry Sunday	17,246	18,199	15,865
10.	Golden Cross Sunday Offering	5,353	5,138	3,920
11.	United Methodist Student Day Offering	9,061	10,128	9,036
12.	World Communion Offering	18,887	18,053	17,294
13.	One Great Hour of Sharing	71,208	79,977	65,207
14.	Global Aids Sunday		220	98
15.	Africa University Endowment Fund	487	495	497
16.	World Missionary Support	139,581	138,318	116,282
17.	World Mission Projects	208,629	117,911	117,738
18.	National Missions	47,132	38,002	38,185
19.	U.M.C.O.R.	596,494	343,637	353,775
20.	Ethnic Ministries	26,402	21,330	19,478
21.	Conference Ministries	138,154	201,153	143,982
22.	Other Benevolences	-90,698	11,139	6,346
GIVING SUMMARY:				
	Special Giving	\$1,313,465	\$1,531,383	\$1,010,982
	District Funds	\$512,070	\$477,301	\$433,656
	Conference Ministry Shares	\$5,864,716	\$5,922,040	\$5,573,286
	TOTAL RECEIPTS	\$7,690,251	\$7,930,724	\$7,017,924
	Conference Budget	\$6,085,389	\$6,185,660	\$6,321,847
	% of Conference Budget Received	96.4%	95.7%	88.2%

Giving Trend is a Concern

Our giving pattern continues to raise concern. While the 2015 budget increased by almost \$140,000 we received \$350,000 less in Ministry Shares. Our churches' total remittances to the conference dropped \$900,000. This pattern was reflected in the decline of giving to Ministry Shares in all of our six districts.

Some of the reasons are: a) The per capita giving of new members is possibly less than the giving of mature members that passed away or retired. b) The endowment funds or reserves of churches have been depleted. c) Debt load from building/capital improvements may be an impediment to full payment of Ministry Shares. We identified forty-five churches with loans/mortgage payments that had paid 100% in previous years, but did not pay 100% in 2015.

2017 Proposed Budget

The financial weakness of many of our congregations is a serious threat to our shared mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. As a consequence of this reality, the CFA will be steadfast in reducing the conference Ministry Shares Rate. The first priority will be that the local church ministries are funded. Our strength is in our God of abundance who will provide the resources for the ministries that God has planned for us to do. So, the budget will challenge our ability to be faithful stewards of God's resources. For the coming annual conference session in June, the CFA budget recommendation will be published in April in accordance with the revised Rules of Order.

Work on the New Conference

The CFA of both conferences are working together in the journey towards the creation of the new Michigan conference. As directed by the Design Team, the current members who are able will continue to serve until the new Michigan conference comes to fruition. We take this opportunity to express appreciation for the dedication of the council members: Jim Bosserd (Vice President), Susan MacGregor (Secretary), Joseph Huston (Assistant Secretary), Arnold Burke, Brad Bartelmay, Roger Bradshaw, Patricia Bromberek, Cameron DeLong, Chris McKenna, Georgia Marsh, Russell McReynolds, Patrick Tiedt, Molly Williams, Benton Heisler (Director of Connectional Ministries), John Boley (Cabinet Rep), David Bell (President UM Foundation), Melanie Carey (Clergy Assistant to the Bishop).

Again, thank you for what you do in the name of Christ.

With God's power working in us, God can do much, much more than anything we can ask or imagine. (Ephesians 3:20)

Susan Cobb, President, Council on Finance and Administration
Pros Tumonong, Treasurer & Benefits Officer

BOARD OF GLOBAL MINISTRIES (BGM)

Board Leadership and Membership: This report is provided by Delberta Troutman, chairperson in her second year of leadership. Mark and Sharon Burkart have just completed their first year as BGM Secretary. The board commends Mark and Sharon and the work they have done managing itinerations, and the tremendous work done on updating the West Michigan Conference 6 Lanes of Advance Specials. The board appreciates the work that Mark and Sharon put into their position.

The **District Mission Secretaries** are vital to the board, providing a connection between the conference BGM and the district mission committees. These individuals provide the main connection between global ministries through district efforts. We are blessed with very talented and dedicated district mission secretaries: John Williams, Albion; Laura Mieskowski, Grand Rapids; Michael Simon, Grand Traverse; Kathy Shepard, Heartland; and Trevor McDermont of Kalamazoo.

District Superintendent Rev. Anita Hahn continues to serve the board in a liaison role with other district superintendents as well as providing excellent support of district and conference levels with the board.

The remainder of the **BGM membership** consists of persons representing specific areas of ministry as well as board members representing the church at large.

WMC BGM Highlights 2015-2016 – The following is a sampling of activities and challenges of the board this year:

- **Missionary Itineration and Advance For Christ** – Sharon and Mark learned the ropes of itineration this past year, and appear to have a method that will itinerate the missionaries without so much travel.
- **Advance For Christ** – The Advance for Christ has been updated by Sharon and Mark Burkart. The committee is grateful to the Burkarts for the time-consuming work done on the book.
- **UMVIM & Haiti Area Taskforce** – Dave Morton continues to represent United Methodist Volunteers in Mission on the board providing information for VIM trips. He also represents Haiti Area Taskforce.
- **District Block Grants** – District block grants are seeing a large reduction going into 2017. With the number of block grants awarded to the Indian Workers Conference, it was decided to transfer that funding directly to the Indian Workers Conference to distribute themselves.
- **Mission U** – Shirley Chappel leads Mission U on behalf of the Conference UMW. Mission U was held at Central Michigan University July 17th through 19th in Mt. Pleasant. Mission U has been reduced from 4 days to 3 days with 2 studies of which each participant chooses a study for the conference. Mission U short studies were then scheduled within each district to educate and disseminate the information to the local churches.

- **Annual Conference Dinner Speaker** – Stephanie Plotas was our presenter for the special dinner during 2015 Annual Conference. Stephanie is serving in Tucson, Arizona as a U2 Missionary. She provided a very informative presentation explaining the U2 Missionary process.

Notable Challenges:

- **Michigan Area Conference** – With the upcoming new conference, there have been and continue to be meetings between the Detroit Annual Conference BGM and our West Michigan Conference BGM as we discern God’s plan for combining the boards. We are becoming a board recognizing in each other similar ministries with common goals in making the Michigan Area Conference BGM a unified ministry.
- **Conference Loan Fund** – We received no applications for loans in 2015; however, it was our privilege to forgive a loan to the conference camping program, approve a grant to Traverse City Christ United Methodist Church, and provide a grant to the conference to reduce a deficit in the general fund.
- **Funding – Impact on District Block Grant and Conference Items** – The committee is very grateful for the ongoing support by the conference through block grants made available to the districts to support ministries of their choice. Unfortunately, due to the reduction of ministry shares, the block grant funding continues to decrease.
- **BGM Mission Summit** – Sharon and Mark Burkart and I all attended the BGM Mission Summit in NYC November 10-13. It was a very informative summit with classes to choose from during the three days. It was also a time to get together with our counterparts throughout the North Central Jurisdiction and learning how other conferences utilize their BGM committees.
- **2016 Annual Conference** – As Sharon and Mark Burkart and I continue to meet with the DAC BGM, we look forward to a combined ministry fair at 2016 Annual Conference as we all work through the planning stages.

In conclusion, and on behalf of the board, thank you for your attention and support of the West Michigan Conference Board of Global Ministries.

Delberta Troutman, Chair

CLARK RETIREMENT COMMUNITY

For more than 100 years Clark Retirement Community has created a community of dignity, compassion and respect centered on the lives of older adults and those who care for them. Clark provides a full continuum of care to approximately 500 residents on two campuses in Grand Rapids, and also provides services to more than 400 people throughout the greater West Michigan community.



Clark leadership, with support from the Board of Trustees, has identified four strategic priorities that are driving the organization forward. These “anchoring assumptions” have been chosen to sustain innovation in the core business. They are also designed to keep Clark vibrant, competitive and financially healthy in the years to come.

- **Service Delivery, Design & Redesign.** Clark has been carefully evaluating its organizational structure and model of service delivery. Throughout the last year, the organization has undergone changes in structure, and also brought in new team members. The new structure is part of building an intentional system that supports the organization's near and long-term goals. Clark is doing this to meet changing resident expectations, enhance quality, partner with health systems and become more efficient.
- **Collaborations in Our Home- and Community-Based Services Business Line.** These are services delivered primarily to people who do not live at Clark. Older adults desire to live and age in place. Community-based services are designed to facilitate this growing need in West Michigan. We continue to expand our service offerings through partnerships with other like-minded organizations.
- **Dementia as a Business Line and a Community Collaboration.** Clark is already positioned as a leader in dementia care, thanks to the innovative work that has been done over the past decade. In 2015, Clark and Holland Home together initiated "Rethinking Dementia: Accelerating Change." This community-wide summit included thought leaders from around the country who shared what they are doing in the area of memory loss care. The collaborative effort has continued, as funding and partnerships with health systems and other community-based organizations have come together. Lisa Ellens was hired to lead this initiative, and Clark is a key partner moving forward.
- **Growth & Strategy.** Clark is identifying expansion opportunities that will include growth in independent living accommodations and, most likely, more specialized accommodations for memory care. The long-term strategy is a 50/50 balance in independent living and supportive living units. In addition, growth will focus on more community-based services to meet the increasing demand of our older adult population.

Thanks to generous donors and committed volunteers, Clark successfully reached (and actually exceeded) the three-year, \$7.5 million *Vibrant Community* advancement campaign goal in April. This is an amazing milestone for Clark. It positions the organization to provide higher levels of service for current residents, and advances the mission for the future, especially in dementia care.

During the 2015 fiscal year (ending 4/30/15), revenue received by Clark Retirement Community for operations totaled \$26 million, of which \$24 million, or 93%, came from direct resident care. Capital investment in new facilities, investment in new services, support for Benevolent Care and ongoing operating expenses totaled \$29 million. The Clark Foundation funded the difference with specifically designated funds from the *Vibrant Community* campaign. The Foundation is extremely grateful to the individuals, families, corporations and organizations whose gifts make it possible for Clark to fulfill its commitment to benevolent care and continue to enrich the lives of seniors.

Brian A. Pangle, President/CEO

CONFERENCE SECRETARIES OF GLOBAL MINISTRIES

This position, which answers to the Bishop and the Conference Board of Global Ministries, has three primary responsibilities:

1. To itinerate missionaries.
2. To promote Advance Special giving.
3. To serve between the annual conference and the Board of Global Ministries.

We began this position in January of 2015 and itinerated two new missionaries to our conference in May. The first of November we attended the national gathering of conference secretaries (CSGM's) in New York. This provided us the opportunity to review policies and procedures along with the other CSGM's in the North Central Jurisdiction. We spent time in fellowship, discussion groups and worship with the General Board of Global Ministries leaders and several missionaries. Having this opportunity inspired us to fan the flame of missions here in West Michigan Conference by sharing the stories wherever possible.

Continued emphasis is being placed on recruiting, training and the deployment of young adult missionaries through [GEN]ERATION TRANSFORMATON. This program provides three avenues for young adults to participate in:

1. Global Mission Fellows, which is a long term mission service for ages 20-30.
2. Global Justice Volunteers, which is a short term mission service for ages 18-30.
3. Individual Volunteers, which is a flexible mission service for ages 18 and up.

In May we hosted Lester and Debbie Dornon who are new to our conference. Lester is serving as senior physician at the Tansen Hospital in western Nepal and Debbie is assigned as coordinator of expatriate services. We will also have the opportunity to welcome Chin H. Cho to our conference. He is serving at the United Methodist in Mongolia as the coordinator and is based in Ulaanbaatar.

2015 was also a time to say good bye to several of our missionaries in Lane #1. Helen Sheperd serving in Mongolia, Stephanie Plotas serving as a US2 in Arizona. Detroit conference's Alex and Brenda Awad serving in Palestine/Jerusalem also included several of our churches in their last itineration before retirement.

In the future we will be working towards the creation of the new Michigan Area conference. Historically, we have seen the heart for mission our two conferences have and our prayer is for this union to be a catalyst to further the work of our Lord and Savior. May each of us hear the words of Paul when he tells Timothy to "fan into flame the gift of God" which was in him.

Mark and Sharon Burkart

METHODIST CHILDREN'S HOME SOCIETY

Methodist Children's Home Society provides a wide array of programs and services for children and families in the realm of child welfare. This past year at Methodist Children's Home Society (MCHS) has been both busy and exciting, and, because of donors and supporters like you, we were able to continue fulfilling our mission of caring for some of Michigan's most fragile children and families.

In 2015, MCHS provided a home to over 80 boys who are victims of child abuse and neglect through our **residential program**. The children in this program live in cottages on our 80-acre campus located in Redford, Michigan. Our highly qualified staff work to provide these children with therapy, education and a sense of belonging while also meeting their basic needs. We work to build these children up by teaching them that their past does not define their future!

This was the first full year for our two transitional living programs, **Independent Living Plus (ILP)** and **Young Adult Voluntary Foster Care (YAVFC)**. ILP accepts children between the ages of 15 and 18 who are nearing the time when they will age out of foster care. In this program, children learn a multitude of skills which will help them to be successful in their adult lives such as budgeting, healthy eating and workplace readiness. YAVFC children are between the ages of 18 and 21. This program is similar to ILP; however, these children have voluntarily chosen to remain in the foster care system as young adults. They learn many of the same skills as the ILP children, but allow MCHS to be a presence in their life for when they need a little extra help navigating through the real world.

Our **foster care** and **adoption programs** continue to be strong with approximately 100 children in foster families and upwards of 20 adoptions in 2015. MCHS is so grateful and works tirelessly to provide a huge amount of support to the families who generously give of their time and resources to provide a family life for these children.

In August of 2015, we welcomed a new CEO. Kevin Roach, MSW joined MCHS, and we are all excited about what is in store for 2016 and beyond! Kevin has already begun involving the entire organization in the implementation of an aggressive strategic plan which will build on our already strong foundation and nearly 100 year history while also revitalizing our programs and services.

If you're looking to learn more about Methodist Children's Home Society as well as the projects on the horizon for 2016, feel free to contact us to set up a tour of our campus.

Brooke Adams, Chief Development Officer

MISSION U AND MISSION U OF THE NORTH

The purpose of Mission u and Mission u of the North is to provide, each year, education about various mission topics selected for emphasis by the National Organization of United Methodist Women. In 2015, Mission u was held at Central Michigan University and included a Children's class. Mission u of the North was held at Gaylord UMC. Both Mission u sessions are cooperative schools.

The Spiritual Growth Class was titled "Created for Happiness." The early Methodist tradition used the language of happiness often. Not only did John Wesley preach and teach about happiness, but his brother, Charles, wrote hymns about happiness that the early Methodists sang. The happiness they

sought was happiness in God. The Rev. Devon Herrell was the study leader in West Michigan and the Rev. Beth Librande led this study at Mission u of the North.

Rev. Gordon Schleicher led the second year of the study on “The Church and People with Disabilities” at both Mission u sessions. The study went beyond the issue of physical barriers in the church to note the increasing stress caused by decades’ long wars and resultant physical and emotional injuries. We continue to learn as a church how to recognize and welcome hurting people of all kinds. Richard Prangley again assisted with the class at Mission u.

The geographical issue was titled, “Latin America, it’s People and Culture.” The study was a broad picture of Latin America from historic and socio-economic perspectives. The five chapters of the text cover the life and culture of pre-Columbian civilizations, the process of colonization, the diversity of its people, and the Africans brought as slaves. The Rev. Joseph and Joanne Perez led the study at Mission u and the Rev. Jennifer Rodriguez led the study at Mission u of the North. The children’s class of Mission u also studied Latin America led by Glenys Nellist and Ronda Libbett. This study will be repeated in 2016 for adults.

Susan Emmons, Dean

TOWN AND COUNTRY COMMITTEE

Town and Country Committee of the West Michigan Conference was able to offer \$2,000 in scholarships in 2015 to three seminary and course of study students focusing on ministry in rural settings. The committee worked with the Circuit Riders Committee from the Detroit Conference to develop a joint retreat in West Branch November 2-4 for anyone involved in rural ministry. Next year we look forward to having retired Bishop Linda Lee as the keynote speaker. The committee mourned the death of a very active member, Susan Olsen. Susan had served on the committee for many years and was the contact person for anyone interested in scholarships. Paul Hane has taken over that responsibility.

Linda Burton-Collier, Chair

UNITED METHODIST COMMUNITY HOUSE

Summary of ministry:

United Methodist Community House (UMCH) has been a venerable, trusted resource in Grand Rapids, MI, providing expansive services for everyone from infants to senior citizens in a warm, inclusive, multi-cultural atmosphere since 1902. UMCH continues to fulfill its mission “*to increase the ability of children, youth, adults and families to succeed in a diverse community*” by treating people with dignity and respect while providing the support services they need. Some of UMCH’s strengths include:

- Proximity of the facility to its client base.
- Proven and recognized history of innovation in a full spectrum of services.
- The series of support services that UMCH provides (child care, food, transportation) that eliminates barriers for people in need of services and,
- UMCH’s long history of collaboration with other service providers in and around Grand Rapids.

Community Impact:

While 2014 was a year of growth, 2015 was focused on improving and maintaining the long-term success of the core services that UMCH provides. The past year has proved to be a year of continued success in the programs and services of UMCH.

- In May, UMCH graduated 43 children who are all meeting or exceeding kindergarten readiness benchmarks. The current schoolyear started off with over 65 children enrolled in our Child Development Center.
- The children and youth in our programs are continuing to receive extra attention through two opportunities this schoolyear, Project Lift (youth) and our EPIC Coach (child development), which allows for the gap between school and home to be closed. Goals include increasing parent involvement, reducing attendance issues and improving academic performance.
- UMCH is providing before and after school programming off-site at 5 Grand Rapids Public Schools through our partnership with the LOOP Program!

- The First Step House received lots of attention and got some much needed TLC through a recent grant which allowed for some necessary renovations and upgrades in the house to provide a more desirable living environment for the women.
- It continued to be a year of collaboration and growth for our Senior Development Center, as we strengthened our relationships with organizations who share our dedication to the spiritual, emotional and physical well-being of Grand Rapids' senior citizens.

As UMCH looks ahead, we are committed to the future and will work diligently to ensure that this diversely rich organization will continue to support unmet needs in the community. We encourage you to visit www.umchousegr.org, where you can keep up-to-date on UMCH activities and agency funders, upcoming events and opportunities for involvement and to sign up to receive agency communications.

Richard Clanton, Chief Executive Officer

UNITED METHODIST METROPOLITAN MINISTRY OF GREATER GRAND RAPIDS

Overview Metro is a loose collaboration of the 18 United Methodist congregations in the urban/near-urban Grand Rapids community. Metro's leadership team represents and supports Grand Rapids United Methodist congregations and ministries and works on their behalf toward our mission to inspire and equip all people to serve God in transforming the greater Grand Rapids community. We are guided by the Metro vision of the day when God's peace and justice is a reality for all people in the greater Grand Rapids community.

Metro Ministry is funded through local church Ministry Shares from GR congregations, the Grand Rapids District Board of Missions, and the West Michigan Conference Board of Global Ministries. Its vision and ministry are discerned and led by a leadership team which includes the Executive Director (Rev. Julie Liske), an Executive Committee (co-chaired by Laure Mieskowski and Rev. Joel Fitzgerald), and a Board of Trustees (chaired by Rev. Mark Thompson). Per current Metro Ministry by-laws, the clergy leaders of each of the 18 metro Grand Rapids congregations are ex-officio members of the Metro Ministry Board of Directors; by-laws also require two lay members of each congregation to be members of the Board. By-laws define the annual meeting as the gathering during which the entire Board of Directors receive annual reports and vote to approve budget and leadership roster.

By mandate of the *Book of Discipline* and West Michigan Annual Conference rules, Metro Ministry also maintains fiduciary responsibility for proceeds from the sale of any United Methodist-owned facilities in the urban area. Proceeds are invested with the United Methodist Foundation in the Urban Ministry Fund, and are returned to the urban area via grants to "new and/or existing ministries within transitional communities."

Revitalization and Redesign Funding for Metro operations continues to decline, even as the sale of four church-related buildings has increased grant dollars in the Urban Ministry Fund. In addition, Metro's role, as well as the relationships and connections with and among local urban churches, has changed dramatically since the by-laws were last revised in 1990. In faithful response to current realities and resulting new opportunities, the Metro Leadership team has discerned anew Metro Ministry's mission, purpose, and focus to move Metro with relevance and vibrancy into the future.

While details are still being clarified for specific ministry processes and a flexible structural redesign that reflects our refocused mission and current reality, Metro's working mission statement is "**Metro Ministry incubates, funds, and informs urban ministry.**" Focus areas for the next five years are: resolving poverty through Circles Grand Rapids; ethnic congregations; urban mission and service opportunities, especially for young adults; and alternative worship communities.

Continued discernment in 2016 will include clarification of:

- The constituency of the Metro Ministry team. A favored option is to move from currently mandated all-congregational representation model to a self-selected group of lay and clergy who are passionate about and poised to implement vital urban ministry in response to current and future goals. Descriptions for the roles of potential active members of Metro Ministry's redesigned leadership team will be developed and new members will be invited and confirmed.

- The role of Metro Ministry's staff leader (now the Executive Director). Clearer mission, focus, and strategy, along with new and revitalized membership composition will guide how the future role of the Metro staff leader is shaped.
- By-laws, which will be re-written to reflect all changes and updates.
- Grant-making guidelines and investment evaluation for Urban Ministry Fund. The sale of four church-related buildings has increased funds currently available for urban ministry grants. Improvement of grant application guidelines and discussion of best practices for investment of modest grant-making funds are now underway.

Building Sales and Urban Ministry Fund The Metro Ministry leadership team has spent countless hours and considerable energy over the past five years maintaining and discerning the future of three facilities in the city of Grand Rapids: Hope Center (formerly Olivet United Methodist Church at 1933 Buchanan SE); the associated former parsonage at 2319 Prospect SE; and the building at 100 Burton Street SE (formerly Burton Heights United Methodist Church, and La Nueva Esperanza United Methodist Church).

The condition of the three buildings was poor, and Metro leaders discerned that rather than attempt to save what was not in our financial capability to save, faithful stewardship called for the sale of those buildings in order to turn proceeds into funding for new and vital ministries in the city through the Urban Ministry Fund.

In addition, Metro leadership was part of the discernment process as the congregation of Plainfield United Methodist Church decided to discontinue, and of the transfer of the property to the Conference New Church Committee in the implementation of a Restart in that location.

In 2015, Metro received into the Urban Ministry Fund the proceeds from sales of each of those buildings. Those proceeds were invested with the UM Foundation, and are available for urban ministry grants.

Urban Ministry Fund Grants Metro Trustees approved in 2015:

- \$7,500 to the WMC Young Adult Internship Program, to pilot a WMAC summer internship program to engage young adults in meaningful and relevant urban ministry and church leadership.
- \$12,400 to Thrive Refugee Support Program to open a refugee center.
- \$10,000 to South End Community Ministries (SECOM) towards construction of a certified teaching kitchen as part of the Healthy Food program.
- \$15,564 for Metro Executive Director salary support to launch the Circles Grand Rapids initiative to resolve poverty.

Circles Grand Rapids: A Community Effort to Resolve Poverty Since its creation by the Grand Rapids District in 1954 as "The Methodist Union of Greater Grand Rapids", Metro Ministry has initiated significant and human service ministries in the city, most of which are now self-sustaining 501c(3) non-profit organizations: South End Community Outreach Ministries (SECOM), North End Community Ministry (NECM), Grand Rapids Area Service Project (GRASP, now discontinued), Habitat for Humanity of Kent County, GVSU Wesley Fellowship. Congregations started with the assistance of Metro are Aldersgate, Georgetown, La Nueva Esperanza, Pawating Magedwin (now discontinued), Vietnamese, and Wesley Park United Methodist churches.

The "next big thing" to be launched by Metro in January 2016 is the local chapter of *Circles USA*, an innovative national initiative whose mission is "to inspire and equip families and communities to resolve poverty and thrive."

Circles is a strategy that engages the entire community to own the solution to poverty by (1) empowering highly motivated low-income participants to permanently move out of poverty and (2) increasing the poverty IQ of leaders in business, education, the faith community, and other sectors of the larger community to motivate strategic action to resolve systemic and policy barriers to self-sufficiency.

Partnering with Metro to bring Circles to Grand Rapids are Inner City Christian Federation (ICCF), 5/3 Bank, United Way, Access of West Michigan, the Local Missional Engagement arm of the Reformed Church in America, The Pantry, and others.

Metro's role as the "lead organization" in this venture includes salary and in-kind support of the Metro Director to build the infrastructure for the launch in January of 2016; leadership in decision-making for the launch; and grant funding from the Urban Ministry Fund for the initial contract fee in 2014, as well as some additional expected funding in early 2016. The Metro Director will be concluding leadership of Metro Ministry, moving into the full time role of Circles Chapter Director in March, 2016. As is typical of the relationship between most Circles chapters and their lead organizations, Circles will remain a program area of Metro Ministry until such time as the initiative is stable and sustainable.

We encourage all United Methodist congregations in and near Grand Rapids to be part of Circles Grand Rapids, building lasting relationships across economic lines, engaging with persons of influence in removing systemic barriers that keep persons in poverty, and being transformed in the process.

Gratitude

The Metro Leadership Team is deeply grateful for the continued financial support of the Grand Rapids District Board of Missions / Conference Board of Global Ministries, and for all Grand Rapids urban/near-urban congregations for their Ministry Shares support and their selfless generosity of time, prayer, and personal commitment to faithful discipleship.

Julie Liske, Executive Director

BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND CAMPUS MINISTRY

The mission of the Board of Higher Education and Campus Ministry (BHECM) is to advocate, secure and allocate resources, hold accountable, promote and evaluate United Methodist campus ministries in West Michigan. We oversee the extension of local church ministry to five campuses and our two Michigan United Methodist-related schools:

- Central Michigan University
- Ferris State University
- Grand Valley State University
- Michigan State University
- Western Michigan University
- Adrian College
- Albion College

Their individual reports are in this same volume.

We started 2015 by sponsoring Nonprofit Board Certification Training for our board and our five local Wesley boards through the Johnson Center at Grand Valley State University. Covering the history, major responsibilities, structures, and fundraising strategies of nonprofit boards, we learned that "when you do it right, it's hard." What we learned will be integrated and reviewed over the course of several years.

At the end of November, Jim McCartney, an active member of our board, died. At his death, he left generous financial gifts for our five Wesley ministries. I appreciated the gift of his integration of an accounting vocation and passion for the abundant value of campus ministry. He will be missed as we move into life together as a state-wide conference.

With a new metric for measuring numbers of people (students, staff, board members, local church congregations) put into operation in 2015, our directors worked hard to record the various events for their Wesley ministries. They logged over 1,725 discreet events for 2015. Each of the five Wesley ministries included at least one event of 150 people or more. The search for a single number of people impacted by, or involved in, our campus ministries has yet to be determined. We will continue refining our metric to get closer to this number. You can read the individual ministry reports for further reporting of numbers of people involved.

The nature of campus ministry is highly energetic, fluid, adaptive, and re-generative. Our Wesley directors, student staff, and board members make extensive good faith efforts to count the people in their ministries. Our third goal below of regular contact with at least 50 students means that we expect each Wesley ministry to develop a sustained core of students to be a critical mass for ongoing ministry, which has the nature of a perpetual new church start. Each year approximately one-third of their congregation leaves and one-third comes in new. This represents one distinct difference between campus ministry and a local church.

In fall 2015, Wesley campus ministries in total averaged approximately 1,150 contact hours per week (230 average contact hours per week per campus). If we estimate that local church attendees average 15 hours per week involved at their church, this would correspond to a "Sunday Worship Attendance" of about 760. The contact hours are distributed in these ways:

- Group size: 1-on-1 (5%); Small groups (12 or fewer) (50%); Large groups (greater than 12) (45%).
- Activity type: Religious (58%), Secular (42%).
- Participant: Director (8%), student leaders (18%), other students (74%).

We affirmed three main goals in working with our Wesley ministries. Here are their reports near the end of the 2015 Fall term:

- Church Covenant Relationships: At least 10 per Wesley ministry (total of 50) by 2025.
 - CMU: 4
 - FSU: 4
 - GVSU: 3
 - MSU: 5
 - WMU: 10
- Local Church Internships: At least one intern per Wesley ministry by 2016.
 - CMU: 2
 - FSU: 0
 - GVSU: 3
 - MSU: 2
 - WMU: 7
- An overall goal of regular contact with at least 50 students, defined as students participating or interacting in Wesley Ministries or Wesley Leadership two times a month.
 - CMU: 63 (coming at least 1/2 of the weeks since they started).
 - FSU (goal of 50 by 2020): 50
 - GVSU (goal of 50 by 2017): 12 regular attendees at events, larger community of 37 who either attend events less regularly or connect to Director directly.
 - MSU: 65
 - WMU: Currently, 12 leaders reaching 6-12 regular attendees.

2015 was an active year of evaluation for our campus ministries. We conducted site evaluations for Wesley of Kalamazoo, Wesley Fellowship at Grand Valley, Ferris State Wesley House, and Wesley @ CMU. The MSU Wesley site evaluation is due in 2017.

Through these evaluations and to ensure a quality ministry, the campus ministry is required to demonstrate meeting criteria in the following areas:

1. Integrity of the Ministry.
2. Quality of the Ministry.
3. Sound Management and Financial Health of the Ministry.
4. Annual Conference Relation.

The results of these evaluations are a SWOT (Strength, Weakness, Opportunity, Threat) analysis and a Recommendation. These are the Recommendations from our spring evaluations:

- Wesley Foundation of Kalamazoo: Approved: next onsite visit 2019, written reports submitted annually.
- Wesley Fellowship at Grand Valley: Approved with monitoring with follow up in one year regarding creating a Strategic Plan and a Fund Development Plan. Next onsite evaluation in April 2017.
- Ferris State Wesley House: Approved with monitoring for review in two years (2017).
- Wesley @ CMU: Approved with monitoring for review in two years (2017). This is an initial recommendation that has not yet been accepted by the Board because it occurred in December.

We celebrated these highlights from our site evaluations and reports from our Directors during the year:

- Consistency with their mission is powerful. Their commitment to open, authentic community results in invitations extended to new persons. As one international student commented, "I am open to Wesley. Wesley is open to me." (Wesley @ CMU)

- Charlie's teaching of tithing and calculation about helping just one Wesley student a year become a lifelong tither as a "return on investment" for the Annual Conference confirms the value of a theologically trained campus ministry director. This is a very helpful illustration that should be shared graphically and often with the Annual Conference which reveals the material worth of ministry with college students... (Wesley @ CMU)
- Flexible appropriate ministry both on and off campus serving unique needs of FSU students. (Ferris State Wesley House)
- Building strong relationships - with students, with local churches, churches in both districts, and between students and board. (Ferris State Wesley House)
- Greg is seen as a leader with a strong connection with students from all different backgrounds and faiths. Students trust Greg's theological and faith background. Greg is willing to extend the ministry beyond the 'traditional' means to reach more students. (Wesley Fellowship at Grand Valley)
- Monthly service opportunities and weekly worship and Bible Study. Baptism through Covenant Churches. (Wesley Fellowship at Grand Valley)
- They are building new facilities. (Wesley Foundation of Kalamazoo)
- In addition to campus organizations, there is intentional partnering with local churches and community organizations. (Wesley Foundation of Kalamazoo)
- In Spring of 2015 MSU Wesley Campus Ministries conducted a 360 review in consultation with the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry. Two major initiatives were established out of this work to create a fruitful and sustainable Christian Community of Young Adults that loves without exception, serves without judgment and rejoices without restraint.
- Our fall is kicking off strong. Our new mailing has over 250 students who have self-identified students whose religious preference is United Methodist. And our hospitality team is making great progress in connecting these students with the active ministry. (MSU Wesley Foundation)

We received reports from local churches of the names and contact information for their college, university, and military students. So far, 155 names from 28 different churches have been submitted from local church conferences this Fall. For students on our five Wesley ministry campuses, our plan is to have their students contacted by Easter if they are not already involved in the Wesley ministry.

At Annual Conference I announced the recipients of three Merit Award Scholarships and the Francis Asbury Award. Nathan Buchanan, Katherine Fahey and Tiffany Newsom received Merit Award Scholarships that are funded through the United Methodist Student Day offering. The Francis Asbury Award recognizes individuals who have made a significant contribution to fostering the church's ministries in higher education at the local, district, or annual conference level of the church. It is named for Bishop Asbury and is based on his admonition to the people called Methodists to erect a school in the vicinity of every church. "We must," he said, ". . . give the key of knowledge to your children, and those of the poor in the vicinity of your small towns and villages." Rev. Lisa Batten, Director and Campus Pastor for Wesley Foundation of Kalamazoo, received this award in large part for her outstanding work in developing student internships with local churches.

In addition to our Conference Merit Award Scholarships, seven West Michigan students received \$10,700 through the Office of Loans and Scholarships of the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry. United Methodists contributed to the scholarship funds through donations on United Methodist Student Day, World Communion Sunday and Native American Sunday. Funds also come from gifts, annuities and endowments administered by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry.

The "EncounterMICall" (www.encountermicall.org) internship program to recruit and place 30 young adult, campus ministry students at local churches, built upon its original \$64,000 grant and distributed \$56,000 in 2015. This program is an expansion and extension of the Wesley Foundation of Kalamazoo's "Rethink Intern Program" to six additional campus ministries in Michigan.

Through church covenant relationships and local church internships there is personal, intentional interaction with local congregations. Local churches hire Wesley students and other university students directly. These interactions are based not on helping campus ministries but being one body in ministry with young adults. Our campus ministries have baptized and received new members of The United Methodist Church. We are grateful to our district superintendents for including Wesley students in local church conferences through worship music and ministry presentations. Local Wesley boards of directors are a mission connection for local church members in the vicinity of Wesley ministries. Equipping young

adults as church leaders, our Wesley ministries, and Albion and Adrian colleges, annually send students to the alternating-year denominational events of Exploration (www.explorecalling.org/exploration/) and NEXT (nextumc.org).

We are grateful to Mark Doyal, Kay DeMoss and Paul Reissmann for campus ministry articles in the Michigan Area Mlconnect. For more information on our Wesley ministries, visit miwesley.org.

Thank you, West Michigan Conference, for ongoing financial support. We strongly affirm that we are in the right place, doing the right thing in campus ministry with the most concentrated population of young adults in our culture.

Jeff Williams, Chair

ADRIAN COLLEGE

Adrian College continues its nationally-recognized theological leadership in several ways. We are committed to student-centered ministry, and we combine this movement with academic depth. It is a rare integration among United Methodist colleges and universities.

There are eight different spiritual life groups on campus and weekly chapel services. Our staff includes one chaplain and seven student ministers. Chaplain Chris Momany teaches as a member of the philosophy/religion department and publishes in both academic and popular church journals.

Dr. Momany is a regular columnist for *The United Methodist Reporter*. He continues to write for the United Methodist Publishing House's *Daily Bible Study* and for *Adult Bible Studies: Teacher*. In March of 2015, he presented to the annual meeting of the Wesleyan Theological Society. His book on Christian Holiness is used in a variety of classes and workshops. Over the past year, Dr. Momany has served with the National Council of Churches on the "convening table" dedicated to "Joint Action and Advocacy on Issues of Justice and Peace," and he is serving on the denominational review of our United Methodist Social Principles. In this later capacity, he is among a select group of writers tasked with drafting preliminary updates to the Social Principles.

The Adrian College Chaplaincy is grounded in a theological commitment to the "intrinsic worth" of all people. This conviction guides our approach to campus community and drives our current witness against "human trafficking" or modern-day slavery.

Highlights Include:

- A Wednesday Noon Chapel Series
- A Nationally-Respected Pre-Seminary Program that Unites Student Discernment with Formal Academic Study
- Adrian College fielded a large contingent of students at "Exploration 2015," Orlando, Florida.
- Adrian College students presented to the Second Formal Conference of "Historians Against Slavery," September 26, at the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center, Cincinnati, Ohio, and Dr. Momany presented to this body regarding the relationship between moral theory and contemporary slavery.

Currently, Adrian College is working toward becoming a "fair trade" institution – a place where resources and products are available from honest "supply chains" that respect human dignity.

You, too, can join our movement. Contact Dr. Chris Momany at 517-265-5161, X4211.

Christopher P. Momany, Chaplain, Part-Time Professor, and Director of Church Relations

THE WESLEY FOUNDATION at CENTRAL MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY (CMU)

Overview of ministry

Wesley@CMU is a United Methodist congregation in the heart of campus, creating Christian community for CMU students. We do this through Christ-centered worship, study, and service each week, and offering retreats and mission trips each semester. Students return to their dorms and apartments to be the Church in the world; weekly movies, exercise and dance classes, and meals provide an avenue for non-Christians to meet our larger community. We have covenantal relationships with four nearby churches, sharing our prayers, presence, gifts, service, and witness. Every year is a "new church start" – every year, we lose our most experienced leaders and 20-35% of our membership to graduation. Every

year, we offer the Gospel to people at a pivotal point, as they decide what they are going to do with their adult lives. We appreciate your support – spiritual, emotional, and physical.

Numbers

In 2015, Wesley@CMU had:

- 66 congregants, spending an average of 2 hours each per week in Wesley activities
- 24 new congregants
- 15 congregants move on
- 7 interns serving at Wesley and/or nearby churches
- \$135,232 in total expenses, raised as follows: 51% ministry shares, 4% grants, and 40% direct gifts,¹ with the remainder raised through rental and other income.

What difference do we make?

“Jim” is autistic. During worship he likes to pace, especially during the sermon. When things get too emotional he tends to leave the room. Jim tried worshipping at several area churches, each of which let him know his behavior wasn’t welcome. At Wesley, Jim has found a congregation that welcomes him and his gifts.

Andrew attended worship occasionally at his home church in a different denomination, where he was baptized and confirmed. For Andrew, church was about keeping your nose clean and giving God the service required to be a good person. Andrew first came to Wesley as part of our praise band, but regular worship and the realization that church is a community began warming his heart towards God. A mission trip in Nicaragua opened his eyes to the possibilities of Christian discipleship – he has rededicated his life to Christ and is growing as a leader in the Church and on campus, while exploring ordained ministry in The United Methodist Church.

Wesley is The United Methodist Church on campus, with open hearts, minds, and doors.

Charles Farnum, Director, Wesley@CMU

WESLEY FOUNDATION AT FERRIS STATE UNIVERSITY (FSU)

Overview of ministry

The Ferris State Wesley House continues to grow into a new identity as we seek to be an open, welcoming place for the entire Ferris community. Our slogan for the fall of 2015, “Love more. Judge Less,” has become both a vision for the future and a challenging goal for our existing community. We desire to be a truly welcoming community, which means that our fellowship is made up of Christians and those not ready to claim that title. We have students who have been faithful church-goers their entire lives and many who have been quite skeptical of embracing the term “Christian” for themselves. In the midst of searching and naming their own goals and identities, the young adults that make up the Wesley House are also seeking, listening, and growing into their faith-lives as people of God. This happens during weekly Bible Study, worship opportunities, service to our local community and beyond, and even around the Taco Tuesday tables with new friends. Thirteen student leaders volunteer their time and talents to providing both fun and spiritually challenging activities and opportunities. These students commit to weekly meetings and discussions in addition to fulfilling their specific ministry roles.

The fast-paced seven-day-a-week ministry of the Wesley House changes as often as the semester. Every four months we say goodbye to students that graduate while embracing new faces, ideas, and ministry opportunities that all seek to reach out, challenge, and form the spiritual lives of the students at Ferris. In the midst of this leaders are born in often unsuspecting places, as young people come to realize the gifts they have for ministry. This is truly the power of campus ministry, the most effective vehicle we have to bring the strength of young adults back into our churches.

By the Numbers

In 2015, the Wesley House at Ferris State had:

- An average of 22 congregants spending 3 hours each per week in worship and fellowship.
- A community of approximately 50 members.
- 10 congregants moved on due to graduation or changing schools.

¹ Direct gifts include donated labor by the director, who requests quarter-time pay for full-time work so that Wesley can have the resources needed to reach its goals.

- 13 New students have joined our fellowship.
- 3 students attended leadership development events such as Next/Exploration/Worship Training.
- Covenant Church Partnerships have developed with four churches.
- Over the last year we have visited and led over 30 church worship opportunities.

Why does Wesley House Matter?

These quotes come directly from students who have been involved in Wesley House in 2015:

- “Through my involvement in Wesley House I have come to realize my gifts for ministry in the church.”
- “Wesley House has helped me grow in my faith and has challenged me to go outside my comfort zone to help make a difference in my community.”
- “Wesley: A safe place to worship and grow in God.”
- “Wesley is a place of opportunity and growth spiritually, mentally, and emotionally with God.”
- “Wesley House matters because it connects young adult lives with the power of God. It gives us opportunities for volunteer and mission work that allows us to share the love of Jesus.”
- “Wesley House is important because it allows many different people with different ideas to dialogue. Also, you can be yourself and trust that you are not being judged.”
- “Wesley House is a place of no judgement. It doesn't matter how stressed out you are, or if you're not feeling well, seeing the faces of the friends I call family is welcoming. It is more than a place to just hang out, we're there because we love God and get to share our love for Him with like-minded students.”

The Holy Spirit is moving greatly in our young adults. Thank you for supporting this important work. Because of your generosity Wesley Campus Ministries are changing the lives of young adults. Students are being changed, transformed, and given leadership opportunities in the local church. God is good and we are blessed.

Devon Herrell, Director, FSU Wesley House

WESLEY FELLOWSHIP AT GRAND VALLEY STATE UNIVERSITY (GVSU)

Overview of ministry

The Wesley Fellowship is an inclusive and welcoming community striving to create a spiritual, missional and outreach ministry for students at GVSU. We do this through interactive worship, Bible study, monthly service projects and occasional retreats and outreach events. Student leaders commit to one-on-one coaching and leadership team meetings in addition to their areas of service. Each semester brings a new rhythm as student schedules and leadership opportunities arise while every year we experience the fresh ideas of new group members and celebrate the time we've had with our graduates. This year we looked at how we can love the Lord our God with our hearts, souls, minds and strength as we learn to love our neighbors as we love ourselves. We have collaborated with the Sustainable Agriculture Project, the Kaufman Interfaith Institute, the Religious Studies Area, the Office of Student Life and the Honors College on projects and events on campus. We have covenantal relationships with three area churches, sharing with them in prayer, presence, gifts, service, and witness. Our connection with other student groups and GVSU departments helps us be the campus ministry we say we are. Our connection to congregations throughout the Grand Rapids District helps us be the United Methodist presence on our campus.

By the Numbers

In 2015, the Wesley Fellowship at GVSU had:

- An average of 12 congregants spending 2 hours each per week in worship.
- A community of 37 members including 8 new congregants.
- 4 congregants move on due to graduation or schedule conflicts.
- 3 interns serving in local churches and 2 paid staff working for Wesley.
- \$105,630 as an annual budget, raised as follows: 83% ministry shares, 9% direct gifts, and the remainder raised through tenant rent and other income.
- We have one recent alumni serving as youth minister in a district church, one serving for two years with Brethren Volunteer Services, and another planning to attend seminary in 2016.

What difference do we make?

Miranda came to us as a transfer student in the fall of 2014. Because of her experience at LMC, she was ready to plug into our ministries and lead. In 2015 she served as the Children's Ministry Intern at Valley Church Allendale through our Encounter MI Call internship program. She blossomed in this role and showed her ability to lead through change. Because of her skills, dedication and devotion, she has been

hired by Valley Church to be one of two new co-coordinators for their Children's Ministry. When she finishes her degree, she is considering serving as a US-2 young adult missionary. Wesley students are leaders in the church now and in the near future.

Gregory W. Lawton, Director

WESLEY at WMU (Wesley Foundation of Kalamazoo)

Wesley Campus Ministry serving Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo Valley Community College and Kalamazoo College has had an exciting year developing leaders for the church and the world. We were part of a statewide initiative, and our third year of EncounterMICall Intern program, in which young adults discerning a call to ministry serve 10 hours weekly in a local church. The young adult is mentored by an individual in the church and through leadership training provided by the Wesley Director. Seven young adults served in five congregations, with Kalamazoo Non-Violent Opponents of War, and with the Conference Communications Director Mark Doyal. Another group of leaders, the student staff, receives leadership development through semester retreats, weekly meetings, and one-on-one mentoring with the Director.

Wesley of Kalamazoo serves 145 students, 24% United Methodist with the remaining coming from a wide variety of various denominations, non-religious and nominally religious. These students come from a range of social, economic and cultural backgrounds due to growth in outreach to and ministry with international students. The ministry includes several university staff persons, a retired professor, a tenured professor, and an educational counselor. Through the weekly Campus Beet lunches approximately 45 members of the campus community are served including university employees. Each of the three weekly worship services averages 35, five small groups average six participants, and each of the 12 ministry areas averages a 12-person ministry team.

Wesley of Kalamazoo received two awards of recognition – the Francis Asbury award for significant contribution to campus ministry and “Outstanding Bronco Award” from the university for our work as a student organization.

During the 2015-16 academic year, Wesley served at a variety of area social services through a weekend Urban Plunge and week-long Staycation in which student participants served and reflected. A spring break team served in Hollywood, learning about the gross socio-economy disparities in that city and reflected on the systems in place that continue those conditions. Wesley has an ongoing relationship with the Kalamazoo Freestore, serving weekly. In May 2016 we co-lead a team of young adults to Africa University, in which they received Volunteer in Mission training as part of a Mission Discovery experience.

In addition to the intern program, Wesley has convent partnerships with 17 Kalamazoo District churches in which we are in relationship through our prayers, presence, gifts service and witness. Churches provide weekly meals, financial support, serve on the Wesley Board of Directors, and pray for the ministry. Wesley provides support for one time or ongoing ministry events, pulpit supply, leadership in teaching classes, and prays weekly for the covenant partners.

Wesley staff receives a three-year cycle of leadership training that includes family systems theory, Lencioni's “Five Dysfunctions of a Team,” and “Building a Gifts Based Church.” Student leaders are also trained in how to build a ministry team and lead the team effectively. As Director, I have received training as a VCI facilitator and coach and work with smaller churches in the Kalamazoo District.

Wesley of Kalamazoo is training the leaders of the future to begin leading today. Wesley students are leading at the 2016 Annual Conference through serving in a variety of capacities and are the future of the church now. Our vision is to be an “authentic, transforming, Christ-centered community” in which we have deep relationships, serve in mission, strive for justice and equip leaders for the church and the world.

Lisa Batten, Director and Campus Pastor

WESLEY at MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY (MSU)

Wesley Campus Ministries at Michigan State University is a Christian Community of Young Adults that loves without exception, serves without judgment and rejoices without restraint. 2015 has been an exciting year to be a Spartan, a follower of Christ and a participant at the Wesley Foundation at MSU. We have 67 students who regularly participate in our ministries. We connect with 258 students on a weekly basis who call us their faith community throughout the year.

Building Sale – This year MSU Wesley sold the building at 1118 South Harrison Drive to East Lansing University United Methodist Church. MSU Wesley **will continue to operate out of this location** in the

years to come and will no longer be directly responsible for the operating costs of this facility. The proceeds of this sale have been placed into an **Endowment** that will generate funds for programming ministries with Young Adults at Michigan State University.

Consultation Event – This year MSU Wesley worked with the General Board of Higher Education and Campus Ministry. They helped us to evaluate your campus ministry program at Michigan State University and establish three major initiatives: 1) acquire a full time director; 2) reorganize our local board for financial support of this ministry; 3) reorganize the ministry for student led and driven ministry.

Full-Time Director and Campus Pastor – The MSU Wesley Board requested a full-time campus pastor, and Bishop Deborah Kiesey appointed Pastor William W. Chu to this ministry full-time effective January 1, 2016. Pastor Chu is respected in the campus ministry milieu and was elected as President of the Religious Advisors Association at Michigan State University. This year he also trained with Eric Law and the Kaleidoscope Institute and has become a KI Catalyst for Intercultural Dialogue and Holy Currencies, Models for Sustainable Ministry.

Board Reorganization – This summer we implemented initiative two by reorganizing the board under a new set of bylaws. This new structure is modeled following a single board of governance design, with a board of directors who each lead teams of non-board volunteers who have a passion for ministry of young adults. The board meets quarterly to direct the work of the teams that meet regularly to support this mission.

Ministry Reorganization – Using the Registered Student Organization Constitution MSU Wesley has begun to democratize the ministry so that it is more student lead and driven. Students shaped by your ministry to Michigan State University have received a number of **awards and grants** that have been used to serve around the world including: Keeley Davenport, Semester of Shalom for a mission to Haiti; John Suddard-Bangsund, University United Methodist Church Endowment Committee for Engineers Without Borders Health Project to Nicaragua; Megan Grohnke, Lambertville United Methodist Church Mission grant to Jamaica; Courtney March, University United Methodist Church Endowment Grant for small group development, Lauren Niswonger, Mini-Next Grant for Statewide Retreat. Chris Mathis, Matthew Hoshal, Michelle Hoshal and Sean Griffin Mini-Next grant for Church in a Pub Launch.

The West Michigan Annual Conference continues to raise Christian Leaders, improve global health, eliminate poverty, and create new places for new faces through your investment with the Wesley Campus Ministries at Michigan State University. Praise God for your passion for ministry with young adults. **Please remember to fully participate in the Ministry Shares and stay connected to us at msuwesley.org.**

William W. Chu, Campus Minister

COMMITTEE ON HISPANIC / LATINO MINISTRIES

The vision of Hispanic/Latino Ministries in the West Michigan Conference is to be a vibrant connection of disciples of Jesus Christ transforming our church and our communities by intentionally training leaders to be engaged in the creation of faith communities who are responsive, inclusive, multicultural, multigenerational, and proactively practicing social justice.

Hispanic Youth Leadership Academy: June 24-27, 2015 in Adrian College, Adrian, Michigan.

High School students from the La Nueva Esperanza United Methodist Church, El Buen Pastor United Methodist Church, Grace and Peace United Methodist Church and other churches in the country participated in the three-year program for High School Hispanic/Latino students for leadership development in The United Methodist Church, discernment, and college preparation.

Satellite Workshop in Spanish on Leadership Formation and Church Multiplication: August 14, 2015 in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Leaders from La Nueva Esperanza United Methodist Church and El Buen Pastor United Methodist Church participated in a satellite workshop in Spanish on leadership formation and church multiplication by Dr. Josmar Alvarez in partnership with the School of Congregational Development.

New Church Start Reach Event: October 16-17, 2015 Workshop and Yearlong Network groups starting in 2016 in Lansing, Michigan.

Members and clergy of Non-Hispanic/Latino Churches of the Michigan Area participated in “The Reach Across Vision” workshop focused on being in ministry with different social-economic groups.

Pentecost Journey: October 24, 2015 in Traverse City, Michigan.

Members and clergy from churches in the Traverse Bay District and the Heartland District participated in order to develop a comprehensive ministry plan for the local congregation in which effective programs are planned and carried out by taking into account the intercultural context of Hispanic/Latino ministries in the United States, and the Traverse City Bay and Heartland area.

Hispanic Christian Academy, Collaboration with United Theological Seminary, via the Internet: August 10, 2015 – October 11, 2015; October 19, 2015 – December 20, 2015.

Lay Members from La Nueva Esperanza United Methodist Church are participating in a three-year program of online biblical and theological courses through United Theological School in Ohio.

Continued support of:

JFON-West Michigan

St Johns – Neighbors outreach, ESL, Spanish worship service

La Nueva Esperanza – VBS, La Posada

Stacy Mabus Caballero, Chair

LAKE LOUISE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY, CAMP and RETREAT CENTER

VISION

A sanctuary empowering personal growth, faith, and knowledge within community.

Mission

We offer an environment and provide leadership for opportunities promoting healthy relationships, personal wholeness and spiritual well-being.

Ministry

To nurture faith and equip Christian children, youth, families, adults and community leaders to live and work from a place of wholeness, and in so doing, they shall be bearers of promise and hope as they transform the world.

Core Values

- ❖ Sacred space and time
- ❖ Diversity and Inclusiveness
- ❖ Community and Hospitality
- ❖ Knowledge and Understanding
- ❖ Spiritual Growth and Renewal
- ❖ Our Heritage and our Future

Lake Louise came into being in 1934 through the generosity of the Horner family of Eaton Rapids as a gift “to all the Methodists of Michigan.” The Horners had acquired a large tract of cut-over timberland after the logging era of Michigan was over. As the Great Depression descended upon the country, the Horners approached their pastor, Rev. Stanley Niles, with the idea of giving 5,500 acres away. The idea of a church youth camp began to take shape. Through the action of a group of visionary people, the plan culminated in the creation of the Lake Louise Christian Community, encompassing a youth camp and creating cottage sites around the lake upon which clergy families could build a place of their own. The Lake Louise Christian Community would hold the land in trust for the two Michigan conferences. Christian camping began at Lake Louise in 1935 and has continued without interruption ever since. Approximately half of the original gift was sold to the State of Michigan in 1935 to provide for the development of the site. LLCC still holds title to 2,400 acres of the original gift. The land is managed under the Conservation Forestry Act and the Forest Legacy Conservation Easement, providing for the sustainable harvesting of timber and insuring the undeveloped character of the land and the lake.

Lake Louise is a cottager community of 126 families connected to a camp, retreat and conference ministry affiliated with both West Michigan and Detroit conferences of The United Methodist Church. Lake Louise is governed by a 15-member Board of Trustees, including four members appointed by

Detroit Annual Conference and four members appointed by the West Michigan Annual Conference. By Lake Louise bylaws, trustees generally serve three (3) three-year terms, for a total of nine (9) years.

Lake Louise's summer camping ministries continued to make an impact on hundreds of youth, teens, adults and families each summer. In the summer of 2015, there were four high school camps, a family camp, a multiage Choir Camp (grades 4-12), five elementary camps and a middle school camp, in addition to a variety of volunteer groups, adult retreats, and a training experience for mission interns from Detroit and West Michigan conferences.

Lake Louise's year-round retreat ministry continued to grow in 2015, serving pastors, lay people and youth from the Detroit and West Michigan conferences, regional Protestant and Catholic parishes and the local community. The Boyne Country Service Project provides mission and ministry opportunities in various projects around Charlevoix and Otsego counties. BCS is a week-long work mission experience for youth groups. Groups stay at Lake Louise and work each day with community service agencies around our area. We are currently accepting reservations for our 2016 Boyne Country Service schedule. If your youth group is looking for an exciting work mission project within Michigan, we invite your participation.

Lake Louise is excited to announce new programming initiatives for 2016 based upon the work of Parker J. Palmer and the Center for Courage & Renewal. Facilitators use the Circle of Trust® approach and invite participants to examine their lives and souls through new eyes, allow their "inner wisdom" to guide them, and grow ever more beautiful becoming the person God created. Courage & Renewal work supports both personal and professional development of individuals, and by extension, communities. We hope you will be able to join us and experience this life-giving work. Please check out our website at www.lakelouisecommunity.org for full descriptions of each program.

Lake Louise continues to pursue a scheduled program of facility improvements supported by major gifts from donors and volunteers from churches. We are indebted to work groups from Mason, Alden, Holland First, Dearborn First, Traverse City Central and Epsilon United Methodist churches. These groups gave countless hours. These cabins form a new camping village with modern and self-contained facilities.

Lake Louise is proud of its heritage as a "gift given to all the Methodists of Michigan." We remain an asset to churches, clergy, ministry professionals and community groups seeking a place of rest and renewal in a beautiful natural setting. We invite all members of the two United Methodist conferences in Michigan to pay us a visit, to join us for a retreat, to send their children to our camps, and to volunteer as a counselor or work camp volunteer. We are glad to be partnering with you in this ministry.

Jim Willford, Executive Director

MICHIGAN AREA COMMUNICATIONS

The purpose of Communication Ministry is to witness to the world the ministry of the Michigan Area of The United Methodist Church and enhance the connection of our members through communication so that we might carry out the mission of making and empowering disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

2015 marked a new level of demand for Michigan Area Communications (MAC). With increased need for communications and new challenges, the communications team considered this to be a banner year for reaching increasing numbers of United Methodists in Michigan.

Director of Communications (DOC) Mark Doyal, Editor/Senior Content Manager Kay DeMoss, and MIconnect Editor Valerie Mossman-Celestin welcomed three new servants to the team: Social Media Interns Paul Reissmann and Grace Choi, and Administrative Assistant Kristen Gillette. The entire team worked to balance time and commitments to communicate thousands of messages on a wide range of initiatives and news stories in 2015. The group also celebrated the work and offered words of appreciation to departing Web Administrator Jim Searls, who provided excellent support to the Michigan Area for many years.

MAC continues to be guided quarterly by a task force established in 2014 by Bishop Kiesey. It is comprised of the Assistant to the Bishop, Lay Leaders from both annual conferences, Conference Leadership Team chairs and the Directors of Connectional Ministries. Daily feedback from readers is also included and used to guide MAC.

Here are some of the highlights of 2015:

MIUMC

In January, MAC began a three-year initiative to develop a gold standard of data management/web system for the Michigan Area. In partnership with the General Council on Finance and Administration (GCFA), the new system has linked with Ezra, the data management of the denomination. Lanio, a Grand Rapids based innovation company, was retained to complete phase one of the plan to launch a major new website, migrate all integrated data into a new data management system and sync Michigan data with GCFA Ezra data.

In August, a new area website MichiganUMC.org was launched. The new site features significantly improved navigation and multiple new sub-sites to enhance the user experience for local church and conference leadership. Creating this new doorway to “all things United Methodist in Michigan” required the relocation of more than 18,000 pages of data. The full move is expected to be complete in 2016 with every conference ministry area receiving new pages or sites. Already, MichiganUMC.org has garnered the attention of other annual conferences who have expressed interest in pursuing our conference web design model.

In September, Lanio completed a redesign of the EZRA church dashboard, working to make it easier for local churches to enter key data and tables as required by GCFA. The project, part of a partnership between the Michigan Area, East Ohio and Florida conferences, and GCFA was deemed a success.

In November of 2015, Rock RMS was launched. Rock is the new integrated data system for the Michigan Area replacing Brick River. The goal of this powerful system is to allow for conference leadership and the local church to gain access to key ministry information and data. The new system is expected to reduce data entry for local churches, improve conference connections and speed up annual conference journal production. Michigan Area Communications would like to acknowledge the enormous contribution of our conference and district administrative assistants who gave countless hours this year to the design and implementation of this new system. Training on the new system will continue throughout 2016.

MIconnect

Guided by award-winning Editor/Senior Content Developer Kay DeMoss, MIconnect, the weekly digest of United Methodist life in Michigan, nearly doubled subscribership in 2015. Each week more than 9,200 people are reached with news, information, resources and inspiration. A vastly improved news site, news.michiganumc.org, events of significant interest to the Michigan Area, and the decision to create a single state-wide edition are reasons credited for the growth. MIconnect continues to have an open rate of more than 60%, compared with an industry average of 40%. Additionally, the click through rate continues to beat the industry standard by more than two times. In 2015, the General Church reprinted 10 MIconnect stories and another six Michigan stories, authored by others, were pulled off the website and featured in Daily News.

Social Media

The Michigan Area social media effort continues to see significant growth. Facebook Pages include the Michigan Area, Detroit Annual Conference Mission & Ministry, Michigan Area Vital Church Initiative and Praying for Detroit. Reach increased 65% in 2015. One reason for this massive growth is the use of a daily editorial calendar that assures content every day of the year. This work has been made possible through the addition of communications interns who develop content under the direction of the DOC and MIconnect Editor.

Education

Training is an area of increasing development through MAC. In addition to providing marketing support to the various ministry training events throughout the year, MAC also led three website training events for over 160 local churches, monthly technology training for area administrative assistants, and small group training events for church leadership. This is seen as an important growth area for the local church.

Identity Development

In January 2014, MAC partnered with United Methodist Communications to develop an integrated brand strategy. This included new logos for the Michigan Area. The work was completed and launched in 2015 and included logo developments of all ministry areas across the Michigan Area.

Consulting

Supporting the work of conference and district leadership and local churches, 2015 brought with it an unprecedented level of communication and crisis management. Guided by the DOC, leadership, committees and various mission and ministry teams in both conferences received training and individual counseling as events unfolded. By August, the DOC was spending upwards of four days a week managing communication issues and offering crisis communication consulting. Consulting hours also included time on branding, marketing, communication strategy and public relations. This significant increase in consulting hours was attributed to continuing differences of opinion within the church on polarizing issues combined with an expected increase in conflict as General Conference approaches in 2016. Consulting hours are expected to increase again in 2016.

Annual Conference

MAC managed eight days of live annual conference coverage in 2015, in addition to hundreds of pages of materials, power point presentations and videos. Daily News, a daily recap of each annual conference, was shared electronically to over 3000 people.

In 2016, the two annual conference program committees agreed to share a week of worship, fellowship, learning and mission work. This was in response to the Detroit Annual Conference needing to find a new week for annual conference after losing their traditional week in May due to General Conference in 2016. As leadership protocol for this first-of-its-kind event did not exist, the DOC agreed to bring the two program committees together to find a venue and plan this historic six-day conference. Following a statewide, multi-city bid process, the Jack Breslin Student Events Center at Michigan State University was selected. This special team also worked out a 6-day schedule and plan. The groups met regularly and will continue to do so into 2016. A new team has been assembled to address combined annual conferences beginning in 2017 and beyond.

KEY STORIES IN 2015

Conversations on a Journey

In September 2014, Bishop Kiesey launched a statewide listening tour to engage members in a discussion of what might be possible in the creation of a new annual conference in Michigan. In January 2015, a live webcast reaching an estimated 1000 viewers took place in Grand Rapids. Another listening session was held in Northville in February. Thousands followed these conversations on social media. These led up to the historic vote revealed in "Count Day," a live webcast in June that was viewed across the state and around the world.

Design Team

In July, Bishop Deb named a panel of individuals to develop the plan to create a new conference in Michigan. Communications helped facilitate the communication of this team and the launch and management of a new website Design.MichiganUMC.org. Going forward, MAC will work to provide a transparent view of the work of this team.

Human Sexuality

Divisions over the subject of human sexuality and the church resulted in protests through much of the summer and fall in Michigan. Those stories were picked up by local, regional and national news agencies and United Methodist news agencies. The DOC worked with reporters to provide background and context for these events and connect media with representatives from both sides of the issues. The MAC team is committed to being a trusted source for news and information on these issues.

Leadership Changes

There were significant leadership changes in 2015, including the retirement announcement of Bishop Deb, the reduction of a District Superintendent and departure of the new Assistant to the Bishop. This came in addition to normal changes of leadership across Michigan.

OTHER

In August, DOC Mark Doyal was elected Vice Chair at the Annual Board Meeting of the United Methodist Association of Communicators in Indianapolis. Mark is working with fellow communicators to rebuild the organization to focus on connecting people and resources. The UMAC conference, typically held in October each year, has been moved to January 2016. For this reason, there were no awards presented by UMAC in 2015.

Mark Doyal, Director of Communications, Michigan Area

MICHIGAN AREA COMMITTEE ON THE EPISCOPACY

The North Central Jurisdictional Committee on the Episcopacy asked all conferences within the jurisdiction to evaluate their bishop. The process for our committee began in April with the selection of 80 people in the Michigan Area who would participate in an on-line survey. The survey was completed by the end of July, compiled, and presented to Bishop Kiesey by December 1. After this report was completed, Bishop Kiesey announced her retirement. While her return to the Michigan Area would have been welcomed, especially in this transition time, we support Bishop Kiesey's decision completely. Her leadership will be missed. We are deeply grateful for the four years that we will have had with her and look forward to the new episcopal leadership that God will bring to the Michigan Area.

In July we said farewell to the Clergy Assistant to the Bishop, Rev. Dr. Bill Dobbs. The Michigan Area is grateful for his wisdom and guidance. Bishop Kiesey appointed Rev. Melanie Carey as the new Clergy Assistant to the Bishop. She has served the area with integrity and compassion. Rev. Carey has requested an appointment to the local church and has been granted that request by Bishop Deb. Rev. John Boley has been appointed to be the next Clergy Assistant to the Bishop.

The North Central Jurisdictional Conference will meet in Peoria, Illinois in July to conduct business and elect bishops. At that time the Michigan Area will be assigned a bishop who will assume those duties in our area in September. We will have an opportunity to honor Bishop Kiesey at Annual Conference in June. She will be moving to Iowa.

Bishop Deb has brought a spirit of healing and hope that was much needed. She came to Michigan listening to our needs. Her gentle, steady and wise guidance has allowed all to have a voice and be heard. She has been attentive to and open to the movement of the Holy Spirit. The Michigan Area has been blessed by Bishop Deb and we wish her all of God's blessings as she retires.

Genie Bank, Chair

MICHIGAN AREA INDIAN WORKERS' CONFERENCE (IWC)

IWC Executive Committee

Chairperson: Fran Church-Pratt (Salem)

Vice Chairperson: Judy John (Greensky Hill)

Secretary-Treasurer: Valerie Maidens (Northport)

Detroit Conference: Rev. Jerry DeVine, Director of Connectional Ministries

West Michigan Conference: Rev. Benton Heisler, Director of Connectional Ministries

Grand Traverse District Superintendent: Rev. Anita Hahn

2015 Meeting Dates:

April 10-11 at Saganing Native American Center (Standish, MI)

October 2-3 at Northport Indian UMC (Northport, MI)

IWC Church Delegates:

Phyllis John – Kewadin

Charlene John – Northport

Carol White Pigeon – Mt Pleasant Chippewa

Lillian DeKoning – Bradley

Judy Johnson – Greensky Hill

Betty McBride – Salem

Native American Church Pastors:

Terry Wildman – Northport

Jonathan Mays – Greensky Hill

Owen White Pigeon – Mt Pleasant Chippewa

Nancy Boelens – Bradley and Salem

Sandra VandenBrink – Kewadin

Church Reports:**Bradley Indian UMC – Lillian DeKoning**

Bradley and Salem combined worship services during the cold winter months to save on propane heating costs. Both churches enjoyed their time together. Following worship, Salem hosted a morning brunch the first Sunday of the month and Bradley hosted a brunch the third Sunday. A combined Christmas Eve Service with eight costumed children and four adults was enjoyed by all. Following the service, goodie bags of fruit, candy and cookies were distributed to 75 people in attendance. Two Sundays were cancelled due to inclement weather. Good Friday was a combined service and Easter Sunday was celebrated at the Luella Collins Community Center followed by an Easter brunch. Sacrament of Holy Baptism was administered to Pastor Joe Sprague's great grandson, Isaac Joseph on January 25th. It was a powerful event. Bradley had a great summer even with the attendance low after Salem returned to their own Sunday worship. Our summer camp meeting had another great turnout. The attendance keeps growing every year. A special thanks to Faith Way Church, The Gun Lake Tribe, Salem and our members for their financial support. Next summer camp meeting dates are August 25-28, 2016.

Salem Indian UMC – Fran Church Pratt

Salem had combined services with Bradley for four months to help cut down the propane heating costs. We returned to our church building on April 11th. We are very appreciative to the Bradley membership for their generosity and love. We switched to natural gas and purchased a new furnace. Thank you to IWC for their help in providing funds to purchase the furnace. Faith Way, Bradley and Salem are preparing for fundraisers and donations to host our third Jijak Camp Meeting in August. Phoebe Hall made it possible for us to hold our camp meetings at Jijak Campgrounds through the Gun Lake Tribe's resolution. Phoebe Hall passed away October 15, 2015. Phoebe's memory will always be kept alive as we celebrate the All Nations for Christ Camp Meeting each summer. Fall activities included a yard sale to raise funds for kitchen necessities, and cleanup around church and grounds. Bible study sessions have started.

Greensky Hill – Judy Johnson

We continue with two worship services on Sunday; 9 am and 5 pm, averaging 40 people in the morning service and 15 people at the evening service. Pastor Jonathan Mays ministers the Sunday morning services and Native American pastors share the evening services: Sam McClellan, Tom John and Bob Dominic. George Pamp offers to fill in the fifth Sunday. Sunday school sessions are held in both services, with Sarah Dominic-Shafer doing the morning classes and Judy Johnson does the evening classes. Our main focus during the past year has been our summer Heritage Youth Action Camp held in July. It was a huge success as attested by the children and instructors. We had to limit the number of attendees to 20 instead of our usual 40 due to not being able to secure enough counselors. 20 attendees was the magic number for a successful youth camp. Activities included Bible lessons, Native language, lacrosse, swimming and Native dancing. Arts and crafts included lessons in beadwork, shakers, moccasins, black ash bracelets, corn husk dolls, chokers, fry bread making, men and women hand drums, and dream catchers. Evening speakers were educational and faith-based ending each day. We are thankful to IWC for their help in providing the funds to purchase the camp meals. LTBB and Mt. Pleasant tribes also contributed as well as RELC funding. We are planning on another youth camp for 2016. Our summer camp meeting was postponed due to renovations on our outdoor tabernacle. Two down-state church groups along with our church members are completing the work with cedar shakes and it looks awesome. The young adult worship program called Mishomis Wigwams (Grandfather's House) was also postponed and will restart in 2016. Three teen girls and Judy Johnson attended the Youth 2015 Event in Orlando, Florida in June. There were close to 4,000 youth from around the country having a Christ-filled experience. The workshops were great, the worship was uplifting, the music was loud, the youth were well-mannered, and the small groups were eye opening. Thank you to IWC, Greensky Hill UMW, West Michigan Conference and our church fund-raising in providing the monies to make this awesome trip possible.

Kewadin Indian UMC – Phyllis John

Pastor Tom John retired June 30th. Pastor Sandy VandenBrink is the current pastor. Sunday worship service at 9:30 am. Continue to host monthly pot luck dinners for penny roll. The penny roll supports our Guatemalan girl. Successful Easter revival in March with Mona Bearshield and Anthony Banderas as our evangelist speakers. Well attended summer camp meeting held in July with Edwin Taylor (Lennox Taylor's son) as our evangelist speaker. He is very fluent in the Native language. Our fall revival in November was well attended and Pastor Joseph Gilbert was our speaker. Youth mission team from

Chillicothe, IL came at the end of June to do work around the church and campgrounds. New church windows were purchased and installed. Thank you to IWC for providing the funds for purchase of windows. They are beautiful and will help cut down on heat loss during the cold months. We are up-to-date on our monthly obligations and Ministry Shares to West Michigan Conference.

Northport Indian UMC – Charlene John / Valerie Maidens

Pastor Tom John retired June 30th. Pastor Terry Wildman is our new pastor. Sunday worship service starts at 11 am with a Coffee Hour at 10:15 am. On Sunday, July 5th our new pastor gave his first sermon and with the help of District Superintendent Anita Hahn, baptized eight children: Valerie's grandchildren – Draven (14), Breanna (10), Cody (8) and Tyson (3) – and niece Monica Anderson's three children – Dennis (10), Brooke (9), Bella (4) – were baptized. Plus a 14 year-old young man came forward and asked to be baptized – K.J. Williams. He also became member of our church. It was truly an awesome and spirit-filled Sunday. Easter Revival in March was well attended with Sam McClellan as our speaker. Our Easter Sunday service included a dinner and an Easter egg hunt for the children after worship. Central UMC mission team came to help for the 11th year with the spring cleanup at our campgrounds in May. Our church busy bees provided a luncheon for the work group. First VBS held July 15-17 at our campgrounds led by Pastor Dave Hiser and members of the Antrim Community Church. There were 15-20 children in attendance. Annual camp meeting held August 13-16 and Edwin Taylor of Canada was our speaker. He is an awesome spirit-filled evangelist and fluent speaker of the Native language. Sam McClellan and Terry and Darlene Wildman provided the music. Spirit Journey held their second youth camp on our campgrounds August 17-21. 40 children were in attendance and it was a fun time for everyone. Fall revival meeting was held in November with Sam McClellan as our speaker. We ended 2015 with our third Christmas Eve service with Pastor Terry and Darlene providing the message and music. It was an awesome evening filled with the spirit of singing God's praises and joy. We are current with our monthly obligations and Ministry Shares to West Michigan Conference.

PaWaTing MeGedwin Kikaajik Native American Elders Program – Pastor Sandy VandenBrink

PaWaTing is a program that provides meals to the Elders of Grand Rapids on Tuesday and Thursday each week. Each Elder is able to take home an extra meal so they receive four meals a week. Average attendance is 40 but on some days we serve 100 people. The program also provides health screening with senior nursing students from Calvin College taking blood pressures and blood sugar screenings twice a month. We have regular visits from a representative of the Department of Human Services and Native American Community Services who provide information on housing, jobs, counseling, addiction treatment and other services requested by the Elders. On a regular basis there are requests for prayer and pastoral counseling for participants who are struggling with family and personal issues. Hospital and nursing home visits are made where prayer and spiritual support is provided. In addition to the delicious home cooked meals, one the most frequent comments we get is that "senior lunch" is the place where people connect and find support. We are a program that hosts Native Americans who are on probation and are court ordered to participate in community service. At any given time, we have 1-4 people who we supervise and send reports back to the court on their participation with PaWaTing. We have a pool of 8-10 volunteers committed to sharing their time. Without these volunteers, we would not be able to function. They give their time freely. We also offer transportation to the program for those who need a ride. Last year (2014), we transported 629 people. On average, we transport 10-20 people each day.

Fran Church-Pratt, IWC Chair / Valerie Maidens, IWC Secretary

MICHIGAN AREA LOAN FUND of The United Methodist Church Missions & Church Extension Trust Fund

2015 was a landmark year for the Michigan Area Loan Funds in spite of pressures from the weak economy, the regulatory climate, and struggles for congregational finances. New records were established both in amounts invested and amounts loaned to churches. The Loan Fund operations continued steady and met the challenges of both investor and borrower relationships.

Dr. Wayne Barrett, CFP®, serves as Resident Agent of the Fund. He serves as Chief Executive of the Fund and brings certification in financial planning and a Series 63 securities license from the State of Michigan. He directs the operations of the Fund from his Grand Rapids office.

Rev. Denny Buwalda serves as Loan Officer. Rev. Buwalda handles all loan inquiries as well as providing the linkage between the several parties involved in processing church loans.

Office operations are directed by Marian Coles and Kay Yoder from the Grand Rapids office. Ms. Coles handles correspondence and operational management while Ms. Yoder is staff accountant.

Our website, www.michiganarealoanfund.com, is being used by prospective investors and borrowers alike. You are invited to visit our site for updates on interest rates.

Investors were rewarded during 2015 with a rate of return that was attractive in comparison to many similar investment options. Investors earned 2.75% on their investment accounts. Larger accounts (\$100,000 or more) earned 3.00%. This fund offers investment opportunities for both congregations and individuals within the state of Michigan and a loan source for the 900 congregations of The United Methodist Church in Michigan. Mortgage loans are available with a variety of amortization schedules and a current rate of 4.74%. Promissory notes are also available for smaller funding needs at a rate of 5.24%.

The Fund is registered with the Securities Bureau of the State of Michigan and is managed by its Resident Agent. As of December 2015 the loan portfolio included 35 loans and mortgages with a total value of approximately \$11,351,000. Investments burgeoned during 2015 and exceeded \$12,923,422, highest level in the fund's history.

A complete audit of the Fund is available upon request from the administrative office, PO Box 6247, Grand Rapids, MI 49516.

The future of the Fund looks strong in spite of weakened loan demand. The financial strength of the Fund should be secure as the net corpus of Fund assets continues to grow and allow the Fund to serve the needs of Michigan United Methodist congregations. The Board continues to look for ways to expand our fund base so we may be competitive in the broader loan market. Congregations as well as individual United Methodists are invited to invest in our Fund.

The Fund is grateful for the leadership of a fine volunteer Board of Trustees that guides the vision of our ministry.

Charles Veenstra, President
Dr. Wayne Barrett, Resident Agent

MICHIGAN AREA UNITED METHODIST CAMPING BOARD

Update of Annual Conference Vote: The year 2015 was an exciting and event filled year for camping ministries. Through the actions of the 2015 West Michigan and Detroit annual conference sessions, we set into motion the events which will bring the camping ministries of the West Michigan and Detroit conferences together as one. Through this action we will be one camping and retreat ministry impacting the whole state of Michigan on behalf of The United Methodist Church. It is exciting to think of all the ways we can reach families and people of different ages with the love and Gospel of Jesus Christ in order to make disciples for Jesus Christ.

New Board of Directors: In our movement toward creating a new and powerful ministry for Christ, we have established a new Michigan Area United Methodist Camping Board of Directors. This new board is comprised of United Methodist volunteers from various business and ministry backgrounds, who have all committed to do everything in their power to develop a new, strong, organized ministry which will provide solid Christian teaching in a safe, loving Christian environment. Their work, along with the work of Interim Executive Director Rev George Ayoub, has been challenging. The steps taken have brought new vision and strength to our ministry.

Name Your Camps: The year 2016 will bring United Methodist camping experiences for all ages and families at the following (9) camp and retreat centers around our state: Albright Park Camp and Retreat, Camp Kinawind, Crystal Springs Camp and Retreat, Myers Lake Campground, Lakeview Campground, Lake Michigan Camp and Retreat, Lake Huron Retreat Center, Judson Collins Camp and Retreat, and Wesley Woods Camp and Retreat Center. Visit us on the web for more information: www.umcamping.org

Here to serve: We are here to serve you and your church. Without a connection with the local congregations we serve, we will not be able to fulfill our mission. We invite you to contact the camp or retreat center of your choice to share with us ways in which we can connect and be in ministry with you. We are sure the churches, individuals and families who have an experience at camp or on retreat will be blessed and grow in their faith. Camp changes lives! Help us help you and your church grow in faith... experience the change. Give us a call or contact us through the web www.umcamping.org or 888-217-1905.

Camp Facility Updates: Through the year we continually make repairs and upgrades to our facilities. We invite you to stop by and visit... to see our progress. Some of the big projects this year included a new roof on the 3,000 seat tabernacle at Crystal Springs, new roofing on buildings at Lake Michigan and Albright Park, one new cabin at both Lakeview and Myers Lake Campgrounds, two new cabins at Lake Michigan Camp, a new building at Camp Kinawind, and new siding on the dining hall at Lake Huron Retreat Center. Stop by for a tour of camp... we would love to have you! Just give us a call.

New Buildings: We continue to strive toward completing the new dining room at Wesley Woods Camp and Retreat; however, the bids for building were so high we had to make changes and submit for re-bid. Our hope is that this project will be able to begin soon, but we cannot begin until we have an affordable cost established and builder under contract. The board has found the same problem with the new Acorn Lodge proposed for Judson Collins Camp and Retreat.

Volunteers – Our main support: Our thanks to the many volunteers who worked on some of the improvement projects. Without you we would not be able to do what we do. Volunteers serve in many different capacities throughout the year. Our camp deans provide strong leadership for our programs and the counselors they bring inspire both campers and parents with their commitment to Christ. Whether it is in the kitchen, in maintenance, doing housecleaning or tending the gardens and lawns, we appreciate those who give the gift of service so we can be here to share in ministry.

Changing Lives Fund Update: Over the year you have hopefully heard something about the Changing Lives Fund. This fund will provide much needed funds to support ministry and undergird the ministry for the future. Through this fund the summer scholarship program will receive the funds necessary for future grants. Your gifts will help campers come to camp in the years to come and experience the life changing events that happen each week. In addition, this fund will support the ongoing maintenance needs of the camps and provide the opportunity for some of our camp directors to focus on the ministry and not have to work two jobs to make ends meet. We will be sharing more at Annual Conference, so be on the lookout for us!

If you have already given... Thank YOU! If not... would you prayerfully consider giving a gift that will change a life?

The Michigan Area United Methodist Camping Ministries are moving ahead full of excitement and new ideas for making disciples of Jesus Christ. We take our mission and our commitment to work with our local church family seriously. We are a unique ministry which can change lives... one at a time... for Christ!

We invite you to join us in our mission!

The Michigan Area United Methodist Camping Board and Your Camping Staff
George Ayoub, Interim Executive Director of Camping Ministries

NEW CHURCH ESTABLISHMENT AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

We help multiply healthy faith communities so that new disciples of Jesus Christ are made for the transformation of the world.

Realignment of Directors Position

As a result of the conferences voting to create one Michigan Area conference, we are making some subtle but significant shifts in key responsibilities. These adjustments have been made in consultation with Bishop Kiesey, the Detroit and West Michigan Personnel committees and the personnel directly affected by the changes.

To help us be more intentional and to utilize our gifted areas we are making the following shifts:

Dirk Elliott will have the Michigan Area responsibility as Director of New Church Development & Congregational Excellence (70%/30%).

Gary Step will have the Michigan Area responsibility as Director of Congregational Excellence & New Church Development. (70%/30%)

This shift will begin January 1, with Dirk beginning to take on the decision-making in the area of New Church and Gary taking over the responsibilities of VCI in the Detroit Conference. Dirk will assume the responsibilities related to the pastors in the planter pool, current plants in progress including the

stakeholders meetings, tracking grants and benchmarks as well as overseeing the New Church Team. Gary will be responsible for recruiting and implementing all phases of VCI in the Detroit Conference. Naomi García will have the Michigan Area responsibility of Associate Director for Discipleship, which includes overseeing all aspects of training and implementation of the VCI process.

Communicate the vision of new church development to the conference

We seek to be successful in inspiring (and equipping) congregations in the West Michigan Conference to be as creative as possible in reaching new people for Jesus Christ. This includes explaining the importance of church planting as the most effective way to reach people for Christ and communicating our vision to the annual conference in a variety of ways.

Plan for future new faith communities in the West Michigan Conference

A strategic plan was created by our New Church Team based on the four strategic areas of New Church foci: Annual Conference Meals, Grants, Reach Summit, and Tracking. These sub-teams are part of a comprehensive plan created to change our conference culture from a passive involvement to active participants; this includes encouraging and equipping congregations to play a key role in planting or helping launch new faith communities. In the fall of 2015 the New Church Team moved to a governance model to allow the sub-team leaders the freedom to lead and make decisions.

New Church Sub-Teams

The Annual Conference Team - Sponsored Meals

The Annual Conference team led by Pastor Matt Stoll in 2015 sponsored four meals. These meals targeted certain groups with training and resources that were pertinent to their church and setting. Each year the meals focus changes to target different groups giving fresh ideas and resources as needed. This past year the team targeted:

- New Church grant recipients
- Smaller churches under 50 average worship attendance
- Clergy and Churches with new appointments
- Newly commissioned, ordained, & certified pastors

The Grant Team

The Grant team function is to assess and evaluate applications for New Church grants. The Grant Team headed by Pastor Bill Chu has developed a one-page grant application to aid churches in starting new faith communities. An important part of the grant process is a pre-conversation with the pastor and their teams in order to first discern if the grant fits into to New Church funding criteria. Grant applications are available for multi-sites, vital mergers, adoptions, restarts and any other creative new church ideas that God gives us to reach new people for Christ. There is a simple application available on request.

Reach Summit Team

The **REACH SUMMIT** which started in 2014 was a collaboration with Detroit Conference New Church Committee (see reachsummit.org). The Reach Summit Team comprised of team members from both conferences, helped design and organize the second annual 2015 **REACH SUMMIT**. The **REACH SUMMIT** is designed to spark creativity and inspire the leadership who are ready to attract new members, make new disciples and take a leap of faith to become a vital and growing ministry. There were five vision tracks offered:

- Out | Starting a New service
- UP | Reaching Unchurched
- In | Developing the most effective church systems
- Forward | Exploring the Vital Church Initiative to Grow Your Church
- Across | Developing a Missional Ministry in your Community
- Across | Reaching Youth

The most unique feature of the event were the subsequent **REACH Network Groups** that begin meeting in 2016, to dive deeper into one of the vision tracks they attended. The Network Groups have approximately 90 lay and clergy meeting throughout the year. Ultimately, it is our goal to follow up with as many pastors and laity after the **REACH Summit** weekend by having them join one of the five **Network Groups**. **We believe that this** will be a major catalyst to help transform our United Methodists churches in the Michigan Area to **REACH** new people with the good news of Jesus Christ!

Within these Network Groups we hope to identify pastors and laity who are feeling called to become planters. Once the planters are identified and trained, the NCED director will work closely with the cabinet in their appointments.

Tracking

The tracking team is led by Pastor Heather McDougall in conjunction with the Director and the office administrator. This team tracks the finances and develops a budget, oversees the grant benchmarks and payments, tracks progress for pastors in the discernment process and updates the website.

New Church offered two important tools: the **Readiness 360 Survey** and the **MissionInsite** program. *Readiness 360 Multiply Your Impact* is a comprehensive, user-friendly, cutting-edge online data collection tool. This survey informs the pastors and congregations whether they are ready to launch a new worshipping community. *MissionInsite* is a tool for churches to study their surrounding demographics. The *MissionInsite* programming, in addition, helps identify opportunities and the prime mission fields that God is calling churches to reach. Both The *Readiness 360* survey and *MissionInsite* are available conference-wide from the New Church Team for any interested churches.

In August the New Church Team attended the School of Congregational Development (SCD). The team was joined by potential church planters and cabinet members. The training at SCD allows those attending to be exposed to the most current developments in church *planting*.

Planting

Planting continues to become more organic, missional and multidimensional. Organic, meaning that churches are beginning to raise up laity who are being called to *planting*. The churches that are being planted are much more focused on disciple making and being missional in nature. *Planting* has moved away from creating just a unique worship experience. It is now more Wesleyan – by engaging the people of God on a distinct path to discipleship, ministry is moved from insular communities out into the wider world.

We have had some very exciting developments in New Church Starts in 2015. Partnering with **Cornerstone Church led by Brad Kalajainen**, New Church helped with the adoption of South Wyoming United Methodist Church just outside of Grand Rapids. This became Cornerstone's second multi-site venue. This launch was coordinated by Pastor Ken Nash and Site Pastor Marcus Schmidt. Cornerstone South Wyoming was launched in the fall of 2015 with over five hundred in attendance. Attendance in 2016 remains robust at over four hundred. In the past year we continued our financial support for a restart at **Dansville just southeast of Lansing led by Pastor Jeremy Wicks**. Read about this exciting new ministry at: <http://news.michiganumc.org/2015/12/jesus-lives-in-dansville/>.

Another exciting development in Holt south of Lansing was led by **Pastor Tom Arthur at Sycamore Creek**. They relaunched their church into the heart of Lansing by purchasing an existing older church. The next investment was at **Traverse City Christ restart led by Pastor Paul Cole**. Sunday worship has been put on hold beginning January 1st 2016, and Paul is using the existing congregation to form a launch team. This team will work through 2016 to grow this launch team with the goal of launching a new congregation in the fall of 2016. We also have invested in a unique restart at **Stockbridge Avenue United Methodist Church led by Pastor Lisa Batten and Matt Weiler**. Lisa and Matt are forming a launch team as they continue to look to God for a vision in this diverse and economically depressed area in Kalamazoo. Finally, we invested in our Hispanic church **La Nueva Esperanza, led by Noheми Ramirez**, as they work toward multiplying their ministry in other communities.

It is a steep task we assign ourselves: finding talented and imaginative people to take up the challenge of creating new paths of worship; evaluating, training and equipping these apprentices to plant new ideas; and encouraging United Methodists to expand their range of options for building avant-garde worship communities beyond traditional platforms and comfort zones. John Wesley put it best when he said: "Do all the good you can, in all the ways you can, to all the souls you can, in every place you can, at all the times you can, with all the zeal you can, as long as ever you can." With this sentiment to light our way, it is possible to measure a new row for planting and cultivating God's harvest.

Gary Step, Director of New Church Development
and Congregational Transformation
Tom Arthur, Chair

BOARD OF ORDAINED MINISTRY

The Board of Ordained Ministry (BOM) is made up of 42 members in accordance with the requirements of the *Book of Discipline* and the Conference Plan of Organization. Though our work is focused on matters pertaining to clergy, both ordained and licensed, one-fifth of our members are lay persons. Clergy members include elders, deacons, and local pastors. Most live out their ministry in the parish; some are serving in extension ministries. This makes for a rich diversity of perspectives. In 2015 we welcomed seven new board members, each bringing new gifts into our midst. I am thankful for all of these individuals and the contributions they make to our common task.

The work of the board is most visible in our recommendation of candidates for commissioning and ordination. This past year we affirmed five new members in full connection and celebrated their ordination, four as elders and one as a deacon. In addition, we received seven provisional members (six elders and one deacon) who were commissioned. In the coming year, we look forward to receiving nine new full member elders. This is one of the largest ordination classes we have had in recent years. In addition, several candidates will be coming to interview with us for provisional membership this spring. It will be exciting to hold our ordination and commissioning service jointly with the Detroit Annual Conference for the first time this year.

These are significant points of entry into the covenant relationship of ordained ministry. And yet, this is not the only work completed by the Board of Ordained Ministry. Our board is also responsible for providing care, support, and guidance for clergy throughout their years of service to the Church. The following sub-committees attend to these matters:

Conference Relations Committee responds to changing circumstances in the lives of ordained elders, deacons, associate members and local pastors. This committee tracks all changes in clergy status, recommending leaves of absence, family leave, medical leave, transfers, locations and retirements. In the unfortunate event of an administrative complaint, it functions as a hearing body. Mark Erbes is our Conference Relations chair.

Support Committee looks for ways to be supportive of clergy members and their families. Under the direction of Harris Hoekwater, this committee offers assistance with continuing education, promotes opportunities for spiritual growth, and administers funds for counseling.

Registrars Committee includes all of our registrars: Dean Prentiss (registrar for full membership), Kathy Kursch (registrar for provisional membership), Marty Culver (registrar for local pastors), Lyle Heaton (registrar for candidacy) and Pat Brook (registrar for specialized ministry certification). In the coming year, we are preparing for leadership transition as Julie Greyerbiehl will become registrar for full members and Jodie Flessner will become registrar for local pastors. Through these individuals, the Board of Ordained Ministry works closely with ministry candidates at all levels and with the district committees on ministry. The registrars plan our interview weeks which are held twice a year. They receive and organize a large amount of written material, including theological papers, sermons, Bible studies, transcripts, evaluations, psychological assessments and background checks. These items are reviewed carefully by board members and used, along with the interviews, to assess "fitness, readiness, and effectiveness" for ordained ministry.

Recruitment Committee strives to help people hear and respond to God's call to ministry. We want to promote a "culture of call" within our conference, in partnership with local churches, campus ministries, church camps, and other ministry settings which are all fertile fields for developing the pastors of tomorrow. Contact is made with persons who respond to the bishop's invitation at the ordination service during annual conference. Visits are made to seminaries in order to form connections with persons who are from West Michigan and with others who may not have determined where they will serve following graduation. This committee also trains mentors and organizes group mentoring experiences for those who have been newly commissioned. Mary Ivanov chairs the committee.

Seven college students from our Wesley Foundations attended "Exploration" this past November through funding provided by our board. This three-day event, held in Orlando and sponsored by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, was designed to give young adults (ages 18-26) the opportunity to hear, discern, and respond to God's call to ordained ministry and to explore their gifts for service as a deacon or elder in The United Methodist Church.

Our BOM treasurer, Diane Gordon, manages funds made available to the BOM through the annual conference and the Ministerial Education Fund of the General Church. These financial resources allow us to provide loans to seminary students and local pastors in the Course of Study, support the Michigan Area Licensing School and the School for Pastoral Ministry, subsidize a variety of continuing education opportunities, renewal leaves for pastors, and more. We want to thank all the congregations of the West Michigan Conference who sustain these ministries by their faithful payment of Ministry Shares.

One of the things we celebrate from this past year is the re-establishment of a partnership with the United Methodist Foundation. Thanks to generous gifts from individuals and local churches, and effective fund management by our United Methodist Foundation, scholarships totaling \$47,000 were awarded to our West Michigan seminary students. As the average debt of seminary students climbs higher every year, we are so grateful for this generous assistance in financing the theological education of our clergy here in West Michigan.

One of our biggest projects for the coming year will be the launch of our first Candidacy Summit for the Michigan Area, to be held August 12-13 at St. Francis Retreat Center in DeWitt. This is a joint program of the BOMs from both the West Michigan and Detroit annual conferences. A task force co-chaired by Lyle Heaton and Scott Harmon (from the DAC) has been hard at work making plans over the past year. At this event, ministry candidates from across the state will: worship together, complete an Orientation to Ministry (required by the *Book of Discipline*), attend workshops on the various forms of ministry, take the psychological assessment, and begin a group mentoring process. We envision much potential for this new way of discerning within community, and we believe it will provide greater consistency for our candidates as they move through the process. Of course, as with any new venture, there will be issues which need to be worked through as we adapt to this new model for candidacy. Leaders from our six district committees on ministry were invited to a Roundtable last fall so that we could discuss together our hopes for the Candidacy Summit and work collaboratively to ensure its effectiveness.

These are exciting times for United Methodists in Michigan as we prepare to come together as one. We appreciated the invitation of the Detroit BOM extended to our West Michigan BOM executive committee to attend their fall retreat in September 2015. We learned from the stimulating presentations by Dr. Lovett Weems, Director of the Lewis Center for Church Leadership, about various ministry trends within The United Methodist Church and strategies for BOMs to consider in promoting clergy excellence. Best of all, we enjoyed the warm hospitality offered to us and the opportunity to begin forming relationships with colleagues on the "other" side of the state. Early in 2016, our two executive committees are planning to meet together once again for consultation on various issues of mutual concern as we prepare to form one united Board of Ordained Ministry in the future.

Finally, I would note that our board works closely with Lynn Pier-Fitzgerald, chair of the Order of Elders, Greg Lawton, chair of the Order of Deacons, and Jeremy Wicks, chair of the John Wesley Association of Local Pastors and Associate Members, to facilitate shared ministry within our conference.

The board is assisted in all of this work by our administrative assistant, Sus'ann Busley. We so appreciate her remarkable gifts for organization and her servant's heart.

I am also tremendously grateful for the guidance given to me by the executive committee of the BOM, made up of many of the individuals named above. Please pray for us as we continue our work with the clergy of the West Michigan Annual Conference.

Sherri Swanson, Chair

ORDER OF ELDERS

This year I helped develop a Guideline for Continuing Education for full and part time pastors serving under appointment. The Guideline was adopted by the Board of Ordained Ministry. The Guideline calls for pastors under full time appointment to earn 2.0 CEUs each year. Part time pastors are expected to earn continuing education units consistent with their % of full time service; for example, a pastor serving ½ time would be expected to earn 1 CEU. Pastors who are attending school or Course of Study would be exempt from this requirement. The hope is to encourage pastors to be lifelong learners in the skills and practice of ministry and to encourage staff parish relations committees to support their pastor in continuing his or her education.

Secondly, I have met with the chair of the Order of Deacons and the chair of the John Wesley Association. We have sought to find common ground and plan ways to invite our various groups to meet together. The creation of a new annual conference with Detroit Annual Conference means that there will be the formation of a new Order of Elders and a new Order of Deacons and a new Fellowship of Local Pastors and Associate Members. We have reflected on how we might guide our respective groups toward that new reality. We have offered a proposal to the bishop which we hope will take shape within the next two years.

One part of my responsibilities as chair of the Order of Elders is to serve on the Board of Ordained Ministry. I value this experience highly. These are times when it is challenging to be the church and to lead in the church. Yet, as I encounter people who God is calling into ordained ministry and hear their stories of call and observe their commitment and their gifts, it is clear to me that God is at work reviving and renewing the church through the elder and the deacon candidates who come before us. I praise God for that.

J. Lynn Pier-Fitzgerald, Chair

ORDER OF DEACONS

In 2015, the Order of Deacons offered themselves in ministries of Word, Service, Justice and Compassion throughout our conference and across the denomination. Our Deacons serve as teachers and leaders, journalists and writers, mental health professionals, social justice advocates, therapists, community organizers, hospital chaplains, youth and young adult ministers, musicians, and pastoral care providers. We advance God's preferred community both within our local churches and beyond their walls.

We gathered together to learn and support each other at our annual day with Bishop Deb, which included encouraging words from Rev. Dr. Margaret Ann Crain, and at our meal at annual conference. We also tried video conferencing since schedules make meeting face to face difficult. In June we celebrated the commissioning of Rev. Caleb Williams and the ordination of Rev. Cheryl Mulligan.

As chair, I have paid special attention to those who are considering seeking Deacon's Orders as they develop their ministry skills. This brought wonderful conversations with five different persons of all ages.

Deacons offer their gifts for the service of the church in the name of Christ, who calls everyone to lives of faithful devotion.

Gregory W. Lawton, Chair



CANDLER SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY – Atlanta, Georgia – www.candler.emory.edu

For more than 100 years, **Candler School of Theology** at Emory University has prepared *real* people to make a *real* difference in the *real* world. Since our founding in 1914, over 10,000 students have graduated from Candler, where they have been shaped as Christian leaders who put faith and love into action, transforming the world in the name of Jesus Christ.

One of 13 official seminaries of The United Methodist Church, Candler is also one of seven graduate professional schools of Emory University, a top-tier research institution offering extensive resources and a rich context for study. Our location in Atlanta provides a learning environment that reflects the highly diverse communities of the 21st century. Simply put, there is no better place for ministry preparation that addresses our major denominational priorities: developing leaders, starting and growing churches, ministry with the poor, and improving global health.

In order to keep pace with the needs of the church and the world, Candler now offers 17 degrees: seven single degrees and ten dual degrees pairing theology with bioethics, business, development practice, law, public health, or social work. One of our newest degrees is a retooled Doctor of Ministry that is 90 percent online, so students can remain in their places of ministry as they study – and apply what they learn in real

time. We've also partnered with the University of Georgia's School of Social Work to create an MDiv/MSW where students learn to maximize their effectiveness by combining pastoral skills such as spiritual counseling with social work practices such as family therapy and community assessment.

Our student body continues to reflect the diversity and breadth of the Christian faithful. 466 students are enrolled, with 48 percent women, 34 percent people of color (U.S.), and a median age of 29. Students represent 44 denominations, with 51 percent coming from the Methodist family. 82 percent of students are seeking a degree to prepare them as ministry professionals.

Candler has a deep commitment to alleviating student debt and employs a multi-pronged approach to tackle this issue. In 2015-2016, we awarded nearly \$5.5 million in Candler scholarships, with 92 percent of MDiv students and 84 percent of all students receiving support. And our comprehensive financial literacy program teaches money management skills that serve our students now and will continue to serve them – and the churches they serve – well into the future.

At the end of the 2015-2016 academic year, Candler says goodbye and Godspeed to a handful of noted faculty as they retire: Barbara Day Miller, Luke Timothy Johnson, Steve Tipton, and Bishop Woodie White. Yet even as these legends take their leave after distinguished careers of scholarship and service, we look forward to welcoming a new crop of scholar-leaders who will join us in the coming months and grow with us in the coming years. We are especially pleased to welcome Bishop Larry Goodpaster, who will join the faculty as bishop-in-residence in the fall of 2016.

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

Jan Love, Dean and Professor of Christianity and World Politics



GAMMON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY – Atlanta, GA – www.gammon-itc.org

Gammon Theological Seminary is the United Methodist constituent member of the Interdenominational Theological Center (ITC), a consortium of six historically African American theological schools. Gammon/ITC is a co-educational, professional graduate school of theology. Its faculty personifies vigorous scholarship, rigorous academic discipline, and significant research in the service of the church and other communities in the world. Gammon/ITC is the world's premier resource for black church scholarship and faith-based solutions to the spiritual and socio-economic challenges confronting the African American community and beyond.

Founded in 1883 by the Methodist Episcopal Church and with assistance from the Freedman's Aid Society, today Gammon Theological Seminary is one of the 13 theological schools of The United Methodist Church. The faculty and administration of Gammon/ITC create an environment in which critical thinking, investigative reflection, decision making, and responsible action are fostered. Gammon/ITC is a member of the Atlanta University Center Complex, the world's largest enterprise of African American higher education. It is also a member of The University Center of Georgia and the Atlanta Theological Association. The school is fully accredited by the Association of Theological Schools and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.

Gammon/ITC offers the following degree programs: the Master of Divinity, the Master of Arts in Religious Education, the Master of Arts in Church Music, the Doctor of Theology (Th.D.) in Pastoral Counseling, and the Doctor of Ministry (D.Min.). There are also a number of dual degree programs offered in cooperation with seminaries and schools in the Atlanta Theological Association. Admission is open to qualified men and women of The United Methodist Church.

Because of the support of this annual conference, Gammon/ITC students carry on a proud tradition. They are taught to think independently and communicate effectively. They are also challenged to become involved in finding solutions to problems that affect the human condition, and to become active in the community beyond this campus. Additionally, graduates of this institution are encouraged to maintain a lifelong desire for intellectual growth, spiritual development, and the acquisition of skills for the practice of ministry.

Gammon/ITC has had a very exciting and busy year living out its mission, which is to recruit, support and educate pastors and leaders for The United Methodist Church. There are several significant ways that we have lived out our mission and furthered our vision:

1) Strengthened and Diversified the Board

Added eight new members from various industries and professions, including a former Vice President for the Coca Cola, a former Executive Vice President for United Way of Metropolitan Atlanta, a former Vice President for Grants and Sponsored Research at Grambling State University, et. al. These individuals, along with Gammon's current board members, bring a wealth of gifts and talents that will enable Gammon to re-position itself to weather the formidable storms occurring in theological education.

2) Strategic Realignment of Resources

After significant negotiation and numerous rounds of discussion, the Gammon Board approved the strategic realignment of the institution's resources by selling a significant piece of property to the Friendship Baptist Church of Atlanta. The proceeds from the transaction, nearing \$4.5 million, have enabled Gammon to significantly increase its endowment.

3) Reaffirmation by SACSCOC

At the December 2015 annual meeting of the Southern Association of Schools and Colleges Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC), the ITC's reaccreditation was fully reaffirmed without any further recommendations or sanctions. This is joyous news for Gammon and the ITC, and this announcement follows four years of warning and probation status for the ITC. ITC's successful reaffirmation by SACS was due in large part to a substantial gift from Gammon in the amount of \$500,000 to help shore up the ITC's finances.

4) Implementation of the Pathways Program

Over the course of the summer, Gammon began the implementation phase of the Gammon Pathways Program by welcoming five Pathways Scholars to campus. These scholars included students from Wiley College, Rust College, and Paine College. The students spent six weeks of the summer serving in internships in the following churches and agencies in Atlanta: Central United Methodist Church, Warren Memorial United Methodist Church, Impact United Methodist Church, and BMCR.

5) Ebony Exploration

This past October, Gammon welcomed 65 undergraduate seniors and pre-seminary students from Bethune-Cookman University, Claflin University, Paine College, Rust College, Wiley College, Alcorn State University, the North Georgia Black Church Development Office, and the Baltimore-Washington Conference for its first ever Ebony Exploration. This was an innovative event for young African Americans (ages 18-35) to hear, discern, and respond to God's call to ordained ministry and to explore their gifts and graces for service in The United Methodist Church. Gammon, as the epicenter of black leadership for this denomination, is reasserting its historic role in producing principled and called leaders for the church and society.

Gammon Theological Seminary is extremely grateful to the West Michigan Annual Conference for your support of theological education, and for your commitment to ensuring that God's church will be served by persons who are called and trained to lead us forward.

Albert Mosley, President-Dean



GARRETT-EVANGELICAL THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY – Evanston, Illinois – www.garrett.edu

The 2015-2016 academic year has been dedicated to these priorities:

- Strengthening the school's commitment to public theology through the engagement of a feasibility study and continued focus on environmental sustainability, racial equity and non-violence work, and child advocacy as we sponsor a 2016 summer Freedom School.
- Creating a Black Sacred Music and Worship program.
- Developing a new strategic plan.
- Assessing the level of racial equity and diversity inclusion in the institution.
- Engaging new patterns of worship in chapel.
- Implementing a generational stewardship plan for theological education.
- Revising the MDiv curriculum.

Public Theology Lecture Series

The 2015-2016 series are held in honor of the 45th Anniversary of the Center for the Church and the Black Experience with a focus on racial equity and diversity inclusion:

- September 22, 2015: "Ferguson at the Intersection of Faith and Justice." Dr. Leah Gunning Francis (G-ETS 2009), Assistant Professor of Christian Education, Eden Theological Seminary. Her book, *Ferguson & Faith: Sparking Leadership and Awakening Community*.
- November 3, 2015: "Freedom in Blackness: Exploring Theology and Self-Identity in the Midst of Activism." Rev. Dr. Pamela Lightsey (G-ETS 2005), Associate Dean for Community Life and Lifelong Learning and Clinical Assistant Professor of Contextual Theology and Practice, Boston University School of Theology.
- February 23, 2016: "Race Matters through the Lenses of a Local Pastor." Rev. Dr. Michael Nabors, Senior Pastor, Second Baptist Church of Evanston, Illinois.
- March 22, 2016: "Fearless Dialogue: Overtures of a Movement." Dr. Gregory Ellison, Associate Professor of Pastoral Care and Counseling, Candler School of Theology.
- April 5, 2016: "What to Make of White People: Theological Reflections on Black Lives Matter." Rev. Dr. Stephen Ray, Neal F. and Ila A. Fisher Professor of Systematic Theology, Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary

Black Sacred Music and Worship

Following careful consultation with national leaders and musicians, we have announced the launch of a program that will not only honor and help to preserve the historical contributions of the black church to sacred music and worship, but that will also train contemporary church musicians to incorporate the gifts of the black church into a variety of liturgical styles. Rev. Dr. Cynthia Wilson is the Director of this new program, and Rev. Dr. Bobby McClean will chair the Board of Advisors.

Strategic Plan

Our 2016-2021 Strategic Plan was approved by the Board of Trustees on October 22, 2015. It is based upon extensive dialogue with students, alums, faculty, administrators, staff persons, trustees, bishops, pastors, and community leaders. The Plan is sensitive to the changing landscape of theological education and recognizes both the exciting and challenging nature of these days. The times require innovation that is responsive to shifting needs. We believe the plan embodies our call to be a servant seminary for the church, the world, and the academy and to attract students with a relevant and robust 21st century theological education.

Racial Equity and Diversity Inclusion

We have engaged external consultants, working with a representative task force, to do an assessment of the school through interviews, focus group discussions, and surveys. A report of findings will be given in the spring. As a result, training processes that address identified needs for growth and improvement will engage the *whole* community.

New Patterns of Worship for Chapel

We welcomed a new dean of the chapel this year, Rev. Dr. Tércio Junker. Recognizing the variety of worship dynamics and traditions present at the school, we are establishing new chapel times and experiences that will allow more options for our community. We affirm and welcome expressions of this diversity in our worship life together.

Thank you for your continued interest in our work. We are grateful to serve The United Methodist Church and the church at large. For more information about Garrett-Evangelical, I encourage you to visit our website, www.garrett.edu, and to visit us on campus.

About Us

Garrett-Evangelical is the result of the interweaving of three institutions:

1. Garrett Biblical Institute, the first Methodist seminary in the Midwest, was established in 1853 by largely the same church people who founded Northwestern University.
2. Chicago Training School, established in 1885, was an important force for women in ministry and for developing service agencies throughout Chicago. Chicago Training School merged with Garrett Biblical Institute in 1934.
3. Evangelical Theological Seminary, located in Naperville and founded as a seminary of the Evangelical Church (later the Evangelical United Brethren) in 1873, joined with Garrett Theological Seminary in 1974 to form Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary.

Garrett-Evangelical is committed to making seminary education affordable as reflected in the awarding of more than \$2.5 million in scholarship aid to students each year. Garrett-Evangelical also leads all United Methodist seminaries in the Dollars for Scholars program with 45 recipients.

Lallene J. Rector, President



METHODIST THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL IN OHIO – Delaware, Ohio – www.mtso.edu

Thank you for this opportunity to bring you an update from MTSO.

Keeping seminary affordable

As part of MTSO's continuing commitment to make theological education a financial reality for promising students, we announced the creation of the Bishop Judith Craig Scholarship Endowment. Bishop Craig, who led conferences in the Michigan and Ohio West areas, is MTSO's bishop in residence and visiting professor of church leadership. One in three full-time MTSO master's students receives a full-tuition scholarship, and our average non-load aid award is \$8,600 per year.

Working for sustainable justice

This year offered continuing evidence that social justice and the care of creation are core values for MTSO. We hosted "Faithful Justice: Confronting Mass Incarceration" in February and the Institute on Organizing and Preaching for Social Justice in April. A newly installed solar array began providing energy to Gault Hall, our main academic facility. And the Interfaith Center for Sustainable Development identified Methodist Theological School in Ohio as one of 25 exceptional North American seminaries (out of 231 surveyed) for faith and ecology. MTSO courses addressing ecotheology and sustainability include: Ecological Religious Education; Food, Land and Faith Formation; and Dialogues in Faith and Science.

Celebrating 30 years of educating counselors

Over the past three decades, hundreds of men and women have earned graduate counseling degrees with unique depth from MTSO. Our Master of Arts in Counseling Ministries degree integrates psychological and behavioral sciences with wisdom from religious tradition. The second most popular MTSO degree, the MACM offers tracks in Pastoral and Professional Counseling, Pastoral Care and Counseling, and Addiction Counseling.

Danny Russell, Director of Communications



UNITED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY – Dayton, Ohio – www.united.edu

United Theological Seminary continues to educate a significant number of pastors and local church leaders for the West Michigan Conference of The United Methodist Church.

United has always focused on developing faithful, fruitful, inspired and inspiring pastors and local church leaders. 83% of the 2015 graduates of United are now serving in local congregations. 53% of the 2015 graduates from all other seminaries affiliated with the Association of Theological Seminaries are serving in local congregations.

Furthermore, 44% of the current 449 students at United are African American which makes United one of the most racially diverse seminaries in the United States. An average of 12% of the student body at most seminaries in the United States are African American. 43% of the students at United are female compared to an average of 33% at other United States seminaries.

United is one of the most racially and gender diverse seminaries in the United States and produces a higher percentage of local church pastors than most other seminaries in the United States.

United is also in the process of leadership transition. In November 2015 Wendy Deichmann resigned as president and, after a well-deserved sabbatical, will return to serving as Professor of History and Theology. Under President Deichmann, United was listed as one of the 12 fastest growing seminaries in the United States, largely because of the growing Doctor of Ministry program and our online degree programs. 44% of United's students are in the Master of Divinity program, 41% are in the Doctor of Ministry program and 15% are in other degree or certificate programs.

In January 2016 the United Board of Trustees selected Dr. Kent Millard, former pastor at St. Luke's United Methodist Church in Indianapolis, as interim president while they search for a new president.

St. Paul wrote to his young friend Timothy these words of advice:

"I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands." [2 Timothy 1:6]

United Theological Seminary along with the other 12 United Methodist seminaries in the United States is committed to helping persons "rekindle the gift of God that is within" to provide educated, inspired and inspiring spiritual leaders for The United Methodist Church throughout the world.

Kent Millard, Interim President



WESLEY THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY WASHINGTON, DC

WESLEY THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY – Washington, DC – www.WesleySeminary.edu

Called. Answered. Sent.

Wesley Theological Seminary has been equipping and sending forth enlightened servants of God into ministries of all types around the world. Their fundamental call is to point to the Light even as they themselves reflect it.

Wesley Students Are Answering the Call to Point to the Light

Wesley provides **more than \$2 million dollars annually in scholarships** to our students thanks to the consistent support of graduates, congregations and friends of the seminary. Here are a few of our many current students who are called to innovative ministries helping others discover Christ in unexpected ways and places.

- **Patrice Gerideau** is an actor, playwright and second-year Master of Divinity student. Patrice has a burning passion for women who have suffered domestic abuse and whose voices have been silenced by fear and shame. Her ministry project in her Urban Fellows class is to give these women the opportunity to tell their stories. She is providing them a safe communal space where they can rediscover their voice and experience healing redemption in their lives.
- Two Master of Divinity students have joined forces to create new worship experiences in downtown D.C. among people who ordinarily would not consider going into a church. **Zach Spoerl** and **Matt Wilke**, working at Mt. Vernon Place United Methodist Church and Asbury United Methodist Church respectively, are starting a ministry project. Their project, Spirit on Tap, is based at a local, landmark restaurant in D.C. They hope to draw spiritual-but-not-religious folks into a community of spirit-filled conversation and worship.
- Having worked with Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance, Master of Theological Studies student **Jane Adams** is working with denominations and congregations on issues of poverty and hunger in the U.S. She provides religious organizations with tools to build on important charitable activities such as food pantries and backpack ministries. She is expanding the scope of ministry in religious communities toward advocacy that changes structures and policies on behalf of the least of these.

Christian leadership must reinvent itself, innovate for greater faithfulness, and be able to engage the full diversity of people within our society. The people named above – as well as so many more of our students – exemplify these aims. Read more about our students at www.wesleyseminary.edu/stories.

Mourning the Loss of a Christian Leader

With profound sadness, we remember one of the luminous students at Wesley whose life was snuffed out, with eight other souls, in his congregation, Mother Emanuel AME Church in Charleston, South Carolina. The Rev. Clementa Pinckney was a Doctor of ministry student at Wesley in the Leadership Excellence track. **He exemplified the spiritually powerful and prophetic leadership that is at the core of our mission.**

Our response to the assassination of Pinckney will go beyond remembrance. Wesley is working with partners in South Carolina and elsewhere to respond faithfully and vigorously to:

- the social forces of hate and bigotry,
- the social conditions of poverty and racism, and
- the banal spirituality that sustains civic deterioration.

Wesley is determined Pinckney will be remembered and emulated. We will award scholarships in his name to other pastors seeking the Doctor of Ministry degree and preparing to be the kind of pastoral leaders who empower their congregations and engage their communities after his example.

Additionally, **Wesley has developed a Doctor of Ministry concentrated on exploring the intersection between public life and church leadership.** This degree focus encapsulates Wesley's mission and, we hope, will raise up leaders to continue Pinckney's legacy. This degree offers students the opportunity to engage theologians, public officials and church leaders in Charleston, South Carolina, and Washington, D.C.

Seeking Connection

We are on this journey of faith, this spiritual quest, together. **Following Jesus Christ, may the Spirit lead us to discover and experience the Light where we least expect it and where it is most needed. And may we lift that Light ever higher so that others may find the Way, the Truth and the Life.** Learn more or connect with us at wesleyseminary.edu. Graduates can share news with fellow classmates at www.wesleyseminary.edu/notes. Let us know about someone you feel has the potential for Christian leadership and who would benefit from a transformative education by emailing us admissions@wesleyseminary.edu.

David McAllister-Wilson, President

BOARD OF PENSION AND HEALTH BENEFITS

Greetings! The Conference Board of Pension and Health Benefits (CBOPHB) is organized under the authority of the *Book of Discipline* (2012 BOD ¶ 639) as the conference auxiliary to the General Board with the responsibility to provide for the pensioning of clergy, and other conference employees. The annual conference has also given authority to the CBOPHB to administer the conference health care plans.

We are pleased to report that the changes in the denominational pension plans and the related policies adopted by the conference have been implemented successfully, and the conference health care plans are in good financial footing.

The following changes approved by the 2012 General conference and the Annual Conference in 2013 remain in effect:

Changes to CRSP Eligibility

West Michigan Annual Conference has elected to continue CRSP participation by part-time clergy appointed by the bishop at half-time or three-quarters time.

Changes to CRSP Defined Contribution (CRSP DC)

January 1, 2014 church contribution has been reduced to 2%. Clergy will have the opportunity to earn up to an additional 1% CRSP DC contribution by contributing at least 1% of their plan compensation to United Methodist Personal Investment Plan (UMPIP). So if a clergyperson contributes at least 1% of plan compensation to UMPIP, the church's contribution to his or her CRSP DC account will be 3%. (Plan Compensation is the sum of clergy cash salary and housing allowance. If the clergy is provided a parsonage, Plan Compensation is the cash salary multiplied by 1.25.)

Changes to CRSP Defined Benefit (CRSP DB)

- Beginning January 1, 2014, the multiplier has been reduced to 1.00% from 1.25%. This change only applies to service on or after January 1, 2014. Benefits already earned are not affected.
- Surviving spouse benefit – Married and unmarried participants currently receive the same initial benefit amount (assuming all other factors are the same). 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. This change only applies to service on or after January 1, 2014. Benefits already earned are not affected.
- Disabled adult child as secondary contingent annuitant – Beginning January 1, 2014, CRSP allows participants to designate a disabled adult child as a secondary contingent annuitant, so the disabled child can receive a reduced benefit after both the participant and spouse die. As with spousal coverage, the participant's initial benefits will be reduced to pay for this extra benefit.

West Michigan CRSP and UMPIP Billing Procedures Effective 2014

1. Half-time to Full-time Clergy appointment: The church will be billed the usual 12% for CRSP (9% for DB and 3% for DC). The 3% will be billed instead of the 2% on the assumption that our clergy will avail themselves of the maximum 1% matching by the church. In the unlikely event that a particular clergy does not qualify for the church's matching contribution, the 1% or the amount paid by the church will be reimbursed to the church by the conference.
2. Less than Half-time appointment:
 - a. Clergy with less than half-time appointment are not eligible to participate in CRSP, but their participation in the United Methodist Personal Investment Plan (UMPIP) shall be encouraged and supported, by churches matching their personal savings in UMPIP up to 1% of the clergy's plan compensation.
 - b. So that clergy in this category can make personal savings in the United Methodist Personal Investment Plan (UMPIP), the local church should have a plan adoption agreement with the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits (GBOPHB) directly, and the clergy must complete the UMPIP Participant Contributions Agreement form. The local church will be billed by the General Board based on the completed agreement and the church will remit the amounts withheld from clergy salary. The matching amount up to 1% of clergy plan compensation will be billed to the conference by GBOPHB.
 - c. The Conference will bill churches with less than half-time clergy appointment the amount of 1% of the clergy's plan compensation. In the unlikely event that a particular clergy does not make any savings in UMPIP and fails to qualify for the church's matching contribution, the amount paid by the church to the conference will be reimbursed to the church.

Comprehensive Protection Plan (CPP)

The Comprehensive Protection Plan (CPP) provides additional benefits for active and retired pastors in the form of group life and long-term disability insurance. When the clergy participant is not able to perform ministerial duties due to disabling medical reasons for at least six months, application for CPP benefits may be submitted for review by the Joint Committee on Medical Leave. CPP Benefits takes effect upon approval by the GBOPHB. The 2012 General Conference approved a number of changes intended to strike a balance between maintaining adequate benefits for clergy and ensuring long-term plan sustainability through reduced costs, while aligning the UMC plan with comparable plans of other major denominations and with insurance industry standards for disability and death benefit plans. These changes are effective January 1, 2013, except where another date is indicated.

CPP Benefits

- Benefits are payable upon the death of an active or retired participant, his or her spouse or surviving spouse, and his or her children under the age of 19. Benefits also may be payable for a child over the age of 19 if the child was disabled prior to age 19, or if the child was receiving a surviving child educational benefit.
- Supplemental benefits for surviving spouses may be available upon the death of an active participant.
- Educational benefits for surviving children may be available upon the death of an active or retired participant.
- Comprehensive disability benefits include:
 - monthly benefit payments,
 - annual increases,
 - continued retirement contributions,
 - enhanced return to work program, and
 - assistance with application for Social Security disability benefits.
- The current CPP benefits summary is published annually and is available at the Conference Treasurers's Office or on the conference web site.

Payments to Annuitants and Beneficiaries Report

There were 653 participants and dependents who received benefits and total payments to annuitants were \$8,620,974 in 2015. A detailed report showing payments to individual beneficiaries is available upon request at the Conference Treasurer's Office. These annuities consist of payments from MPP, Pre-82 or DBSM, CRSP and CPP Disability Benefits.

Ministers' Reserve Pension Fund (MRPF/Pre-82)

The MRPF was the Clergy Pension plan covering service years 1948 to 1981. The General Board of Pension reported that the Pre-82 Plan Valuation Final Results for 2015 showed our pre-82 Pension Fund is funded at 113%, therefore no contribution was required. The Pre-82 Plan account had a balance of \$43,940,289 with a surplus of \$4,892,945 based on the Past Service Rate of \$726 and 85% surviving spouse benefit. For various reasons, it is possible that the funded status may be reduced and contributions required due to lower investment income than originally projected in this actuarial study. For example, actual participant demographics, investment returns, benefit rates, or other reasons may vary from assumptions.

HEALTH CARE PLANS

Benefits Guides

Each participant is given a copy of the Health Care Benefits Guide or summary plan document of the health care plans. The same are posted on the conference web site and additional printed copy will be provided by the Conference Treasurer upon request.

Self-Funded Medical Benefits for Clergy on Active Status and Lay Conference Employees

The Active Health Care Plan provides medical, prescription drugs, dental and vision benefits for active pastors and their dependents, as well as eligible retirees and spouses under age 65. The premium for active clergy is shared by the pastor and the local church. In our effort to continue to provide a high level of benefits at a time when industry and other conferences are cutting back, the board secured concurrence of the annual conference to implement a Self-Funded Medical Plan for clergy and lay in active service who are under age 65 effective September 1, 2009. Benefits remained unchanged with the exception of medical coverage for auto related injuries in order to protect the plan from potentially excessive claims. Each participant is provided a copy of the Benefits Guide for this Plan. It is also posted on the conference web site and a printed copy is available from the Treasurer's Office upon request.

The implementation of the Self-Funded Plan has mitigated the cost increases to the Plan. The Plan pays claims up to a certain limit (i.e., \$100,000 for an individual) and beyond the limit, insurance is secured to protect the Plan from excessive risk, additionally, insurance beyond the aggregate claims limit is also secured. There have been opportunities to reduce cost in a Self-Funded Plan due to lower administrative costs and avoidance of profit upcharge.

Medtipster Drug Benefit Program

The Medtipster Drug Benefit Program provides free eligible generic drugs to participants. It was introduced to the Active Plan in 2011 and to Postretirement Health Care Plan in 2012. The Medtipster Drug Program has been very successful in helping our participants and the Plans have realized significant annual cost savings in prescription drug expenditures over the past years.

Postretirement Medical and Prescription Drug Benefits

Retired clergy and lay who are eligible under Medicare (age 65 and older) and those on Medicare qualified disability status are placed in the Retiree Plan. The Retiree Health Plan provides coverage for medical and prescription drugs. Medicare has primary coverage under Parts A and B (physician and hospitalization), and our Plan provides supplemental coverage equivalent with the United American Insurance Company.

Significant changes in the Postretirement Medical Benefits will take effect starting January 1, 2013. These changes were communicated to participants and churches in meetings and by mail. More detailed information is posted on the conference web site. The 2013 modifications in the age and service requirements to the conference's Post-retirement Medical and Prescription Drug Benefit programs are illustrated in the following table:

HEALTH INSURANCE PREMIUM COST SHARING FOR RETIREMENT COVERAGE

Eligibility Age 60 with 25 years of service, age 62 with 20 years of service or age 63 with 15 years of service.

**Consolidated Schedule of Post-retirement Premium/Funding Contribution Percentage
Payment Levels for Retired Participants and their Eligible Dependents under the Early
Retirement and Normal Retirement coverage Programs of the West Michigan Conference
Of The United Methodist Church Effective January 1, 2013**

Participant's Age Level at Retirement Date

Early Retirement Coverage						Normal Retirement Coverage
Years of Credited Service at Retirement	Age 60 (Minimum 25 years)	Age 61 (Minimum 20 years)	Age 62 (Minimum 15 years)	Age 63 (Minimum 15 years)	Age 64 (Minimum 15 years)	Age 65 & Over (Minimum 15 years)
Below 15 years	Not Eligible	Not Eligible	Not Eligible	Not Eligible	Not Eligible	Not Eligible
15 years	N/A	N/A	N/A	55%	55%	60%
16 years	N/A	N/A	N/A	52%	52%	58%
17 years	N/A	N/A	N/A	49%	49%	56%
18 years	N/A	N/A	N/A	46%	46%	54%
19 years	N/A	N/A	N/A	43%	43%	52%
20 years	N/A	N/A	50%	40%	40%	50%
21 years	N/A	N/A	47%	38%	38%	48%
22 years	N/A	N/A	44%	36%	36%	46%
23 years	N/A	N/A	41%	34%	34%	44%
24 years	N/A	N/A	38%	32%	32%	42%
25 years	50%	40%	35%	30%	30%	40%
26 years	48%	39%	34%	29%	29%	38%
27 years	46%	38%	33%	28%	28%	36%
28 years	44%	37%	32%	27%	27%	34%
29 years	42%	36%	31%	26%	26%	32%
30 years	40%	35%	30%	25%	25%	30%
Over 30 years	40%	35%	30%	25%	25%	30%

Footnotes:

- (1) Early Retirement Coverage is provided under the WMC Self-funded Medical and Prescription Drug Benefit Plan.
- (2) Normal Retirement Coverage is provided under the WMC Post-retirement Supplemental Medical Benefit Plan and/or the WMC Post-retirement Prescription Drug Benefit Plan.

- A maximum monthly premium support of \$300.00 per month for each retired participant and/or eligible spouse (i.e. \$3,600.00 per year) will be established to limit the funding payments by the churches and the Conference to provide the post-retirement medical and prescription drug benefit coverage for both current and future retired participants and their covered spouses under the Normal Retirement Coverage (i.e. after age 65). This maximum annual support is effective January 1, 2013 and for future plan years.
- The premium funding payments by the churches and the conference for the Post-retirement Dental and Vision Care Benefit Programs will be eliminated for both current and future retired participants and their eligible dependents beginning in January 2013.
- For future retirements only, working spouses of retired participants under the Conference's post-retirement medical benefit plans (i.e. both the early and normal retirement coverage), who qualify for post-retirement medical and prescription drug benefit coverage through their employer, will **not** be eligible for the post-retirement medical and prescription drug coverage maintained by the Conference. This exclusion provision for working spouses only applies to future retirements (i.e. early and normal retirements) effective after January 1, 2013; and,
- Certain benefit coverage provisions of the post-retirement medical and prescription drug benefit programs will be subject to revision as needed for future plan years.

Medical Benevolence

The Board has established a medical benevolence fund to assist both active and retired health care participants who are in financial distress brought about by medical needs up to a maximum of \$5,000 in a calendar year. Application form is available upon request from the conference treasurer's office.

Postretirement Health Care Funding

Our Health Care and Pension Reserve Fund at the end of 2014 was \$17,435,369. Unfortunately, the investment market was unfavorable in the later part of 2015 and value went down to \$15,874,247. (If needed a portion of this amount may be used to contribute to any unfunded liability in pension funds as the General Board will determine.) An actuarial study has been conducted by Watkins Ross, a certified actuary, to take into account changes in the benefits coverage or plan design and increases in participants' and churches' contributions. This actuarial study is important to assure that the board is properly guided in its commitment to provide a sustainable health care for our clergy and conference employees during their retirement years.

Financial Report of the Health Care Benefits Programs for the year ended December 31, 2015

<u>Health Care Operation</u>	<u>12/31/2015</u>	<u>Retiree</u>	<u>Active (pre-</u>
Revenue:			
Premiums collected	\$4,991,076	\$418,037	\$4,573,039
Receipts from Redirected CRSP DB	1,298,581	1,298,581	
Other Income	95,837		95,837
	<u>\$6,385,494</u>	<u>\$1,716,618</u>	<u>\$4,668,876</u>
Expenses:			
Benefit Claims	(\$3,546,718)		(\$3,546,718)
Medicare Supplemental and Pharmacy	(1,135,760)	(1,135,760)	
Dental Insurance (Active Plan)	(235,438)		(235,438)
Vision Insurance (Active Plan)	(31,727)		(31,727)
Self-funded Stop-loss insurance	(225,276)		(225,276)
Administrative Expenses	(1,441,570)	(84,826)	(1,356,744)
	<u>(\$6,616,489)</u>	<u>(\$1,220,586)</u>	<u>(\$5,395,903)</u>
Increase/(Decrease) in Assets	(230,995)	496,032	(727,027)
Transfers		(370,000)	370,000
Net Asset, beginning of year	862,027	475,271	386,756
Net Asset, end of year	<u>\$631,032</u>	<u>\$601,303</u>	<u>\$29,729</u>

Comprehensive Benefits Funding Plan

A Comprehensive Funding Plan is a new requirement that describes how to pay for benefit obligations, including those obligations that are dependent on the conference continuing its current benefit programs. This plan balances benefit design with benefit funding, realistically aligning design expectations with funding patterns. As a result, the conference is better able to plan for the payment of all benefit obligations. After review and approval by the General Board of Pension and Health the conference Funding Plan will be published in the conference journal, volume 2.

We gratefully acknowledge the leadership and dedication of the board members: David Dekker, Kevin Dick, Deborah Fennell, David Hills, Joseph Huston, Al Minert, Ken Norton, Jennifer Loding, Kelly Potes, Eric Simmons, Walter Urick and Vondie Woodbury. Representatives from the Cabinet and the General Board were John Boley and Ross Lundstrum, respectively. We also recognize the support of the Conference Treasurer's office staff, John Kosten, benefits coordinator, our consultants Michael Anthes and Ronald Stoll, and Professional Benefits Services, our third-party administrator for the health care plans. As always, we thank God for the support of our churches in providing for the health care and pension needs of our clergy and lay employees, and for the opportunity to serve those who serve.

Conference Board of Pension and Health Benefits
Louis Grettenberger, Chair
Pros Tumonong, Treasurer and Benefits Officer

CONFERENCE PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

The Conference Personnel Committee worked together with Rev. Benton R. Heisler, Director of Connectional Ministries, to encourage our conference staff, to realign staff, and clarify and review processes. Bishop Deborah L. Kieseey and her Clergy Assistant Rev. Melanie Carey are supportive of the work of this committee and the conference staff.

During 2015:

- Benton Heisler provided updates, informed us, and consulted on items on his agenda as well as items from other groups, such as the Conference Leadership Team, that might affect personnel and their assignments. We encouraged him in his plan to take a renewal leave. We have begun working with Rev. Heisler on understanding and supporting the changing personnel roles and staffing that the new conference will require.
- Gary Step, Director of New Church Development and Congregational Transformation, has reported his work with new church and VCI.
- Naomi García, Ministry Consultant, has seen her role change as the needs of the conference transform. She has been training, consulting and writing training materials for the VCI process among other work.
- George Ayoub, Interim Executive Director of Camping Ministries, also provided us updates throughout the year on the emerging ministry opportunities in camping across the Michigan Area. As of 2016, Rev. Ayoub will no longer be reporting to this committee, but rather to the Area Camping Board.
- In October, this committee began meetings with the Detroit Area Personnel Committee to determine the ways in which we can and will work together in the new conference. We have developed a covenant to describe our working relationship and have begun researching conference personnel policies from throughout the jurisdiction to determine best practices for personnel policies.
- Introduced legislation at the 2015 Annual Conference, which was adopted, to update the West Michigan Conference Family Leave policy to provide a more consistent leave policy for birth and adoptive leaves for both parents. This also lengthened the time available for leave for maternity leaves.

The Conference Personnel Committee and I want to thank our committed staff and committee for all they do to support our conference vision, mission, and ministry.

Ellen K. Zienert, Chair

PRISON MINISTRY AND RESTORATIVE JUSTICE CONCERNS

The Conference Committee on Prison Ministry and Restorative Justice Concerns focuses on three main areas:

- Ministry to the incarcerated
- Ministry to the families of the incarcerated
- Support to local churches interested in Prison Ministry

Ministry to the incarcerated takes many forms. This includes ministry to those confined in county jails as well as state prisons. Some of the ways this is done is through Bible studies and visits to the incarcerated. Another important way is through Keryx Ministries, which is similar to the Emmaus Walk, but takes place for inmates inside the prison walls who are ready to further their faith journey.

The families of the incarcerated suffer from the incarceration of their loved ones, especially the children. This committee supports Angel Tree, a program of Prison Fellowship which provides help for prisoners to give Christmas presents to their children, thereby helping them maintain a connection. One of our programs is Camp New Day, a one-week camp for the children of incarcerated parents held at Camp Albright. We had thirty-nine campers in 2015, combining our two age groups, 9-14 and 14-18. The campers who come back show growth each year. This past year four returning citizens and their mentors spoke to the children. They shared how they knew that they had not made the best choices but that they still loved their children. This made a big difference to the campers and how they thought of their own situations.

As a conference committee we represent local churches and serve as a resource for those engaged in or interested in becoming engaged in prison ministry, which we define as ministry to those on the way to being incarcerated, those who are incarcerated, those who have returned home from being incarcerated, and their families. We are prepared to share our knowledge and experience. We can assist any local church interested in becoming an Angel Tree church. We can guide any local church in how to start a jail ministry.

Our goal for 2016 is to compile a list of all the local churches and their members who are engaged in any form of prison ministry to serve as a resource and networking guide.

Victor D. Asbury, Jr., Chair

RACIAL ETHNIC LOCAL CHURCH COMMITTEE (RELC)

Purpose: To support and strengthen racial ethnic churches in the West Michigan Conference and build conference-wide support for special ministries in outreach, evangelism, and discipleship with diverse people and communities.

Our emphasis and responsibility as a Conference committee changed focus effective at the Annual Conference June, 2015. Responsibility for the resource funding for the Native American congregations was transferred to the Michigan Area Indian Workers Conference

We continue to serve the following churches:

- Baldwin United Methodist Church
- Grand Rapids Vietnamese United Methodist Church
- Lansing Grace United Methodist Church (South Lansing Ministries)
- Lansing Mount Hope United Methodist Church
- Lansing Korean United Methodist Church
- La Nueva Esperanza United Methodist Church
- Washington Heights United Methodist Church

Our goals and timeline for future support of these vital ministries:

- A. We will continue to review the needs of each ministry to provide their financial support.
- B. We will continue to visit the above churches to show our physical support and encouragement for their ministries.
- C. Provide "An Act of Repentance toward Healing Relationships with Indigenous Peoples" which will be held at the joint 2016 Annual Conference (West Michigan and Detroit) to recognize and repent of actions taken against Native peoples of all nations. Planned prior to the separation of funding for Native American Churches to the Michigan Area Indian Workers Conference.

Mary Lou Fassett, Chair

COMMISSION ON RELIGION AND RACE

The work of the Commission on Religion and Race is to create a Church, which at all levels reflects the values and diversity of God. We hope to build the capacity of The United Methodist Church to become contextually relevant and reach more people, younger people and more diverse people as we make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. We do this through work in three core areas.

Institutional Equity

We will critically examine expressions of ethnic, racial and cultural injustice in local and global contexts: setting goals for overcoming them, intentionally measuring progress, and resourcing culturally competent leaders to promote and sustain systemic equity.

Intercultural Competency

We will partner with leaders in the denomination to develop inter-culturally competent leaders who are engaged in ministry that promotes and honors intentional diversity and equity.

Vital Congregations

We will work with the churches in the conference to create churches which reflect the diversity of the community in which they are located. We hope that churches will initiate holy conversations about race, cultural diversity and systemic equity. We will share the results of these conversations in the hope that they will grow a movement that honors all of God's creation.

We believe that local churches will grow when the members of those churches engage in conversations with members of the community that are not connected with a church home. These conversations do not start with an invitation to church, but with a genuine desire to get to know another person. Getting to know more people, younger people and persons unlike oneself should be the goal. These conversations may lead to an understanding of something missing in the program of the local church, a possible place for new disciples to become connected in ministry.

We would pray that local churches would seek us out for ideas on how to start these conversations.

Michael Johnson, Chair

TRUSTEES, WEST MICHIGAN CONFERENCE

The Board of Trustees of the West Michigan Conference is incorporated in the state of Michigan and is organized and functions under the mandate of the *2012 Book of Discipline*, ¶2512.

We are pleased to report and celebrate with you a brief review of activities in 2015:

1. The Board of Trustees diligently cared for conference property and equipment with acquisition value of \$5.8 million and \$2.1 million net after depreciation. The board holds the deeds of all conference real property including all the five camp sites (Albright, Crystal Springs, Lakeview, Lake Michigan and Wesley Woods) that are operated by the Board of Christian Camping. Other conference real property directly managed by the board includes five parsonages (in Lansing, Kalamazoo, Grand Rapids, Traverse City and Mt. Pleasant), the Conference Center in Grand Rapids, and the bishop's residence in DeWitt Township, which is jointly owned with the Detroit Conference.
2. Sold two district superintendent parsonages in Kalamazoo (March 2015) and Heartland (November 2015), netting \$141,432 and \$210,237 respectively.
3. Significant refurbishments included new carpeting in the Tricklewood, Forest Hills parsonage for the Director of Connectional Ministries parsonage, and replacement of the south flat roof over the main entrance of the Conference Center .
4. Bishop residence: fireplace was repaired and the mold problem from a roof leak has been fixed in the amount of \$45,000 from the area capital fund.
5. The former Plainfield United Methodist Church property was sold in July to an independent congregation on a land contract for \$350,000, with \$100,000 down and \$200,000 to be paid in 12 months and the remaining \$50,000 payable in five years.
6. The addition of an airlock to the Area Ministry Center entrance was completed at the cost of about \$30,000.

7. In conjunction with the Detroit Annual Conference Board of Trustees, the journey toward a new Michigan Conference has started. The process will involve significant changes in the legal structure of the new corporation.

I take this opportunity to acknowledge with deep appreciation the service of current members who serve faithfully in carrying out the functions of the board: Mark Baker (vice president), Lyle Ball (secretary), Pros Tumonong (Treasurer), James Baker, Michael Belt, David Bloss, David Apol, James LeBaron, Cliff Radtke, John Scott, Deborah Skinner, Jo Sommerville, Carolin Spragg, Kennetha Bigham-Tsai (Cabinet representative), and Benton Heisler (Director of Connectional Ministries).

William Gehman, President
Pros Tumonong, Treasurer

UNITED METHODIST FOUNDATION OF MICHIGAN

The United Methodist Foundation of Michigan is privileged to serve so many congregations and United Methodist organizations throughout the Michigan Area. The Foundation has continued to partner with an ever-growing number of churches. Together with these local churches, we seek to assist and to inspire congregations in fulfilling their ministry. The Foundation offers a wide continuum of financial stewardship, socially responsible investment management, and donor-focused services for local churches, districts, conferences, agencies, and institutions and their constituents.

During the past year, we have experienced some significant signs of growth and depth for the Foundation. We are experiencing both our services reaching a wider constituency and penetrating the Church at a deeper level. United Methodist Foundations across the United States are making a difference collectively in the lives of constituents. Our focus is on furthering the mission and expanding the vision of the Church. One of the ways we are able to accomplish this goal is by asking, "How may we help you?" We ask across the many cross-sections of the Church. We have witnessed micro-grassroots ways and macro-denominational invitations to walk alongside the Church. Consider some of the ways our staff has been helping:

- Coaching in the areas of leadership and financial stewardship.
- Facilitating church leaders with strategic planning and visioning for their local church.
- Educating new pastors on personal finance, clergy taxes, and the denominational pension plan.
- Setting policies for long-range fund development with conference-affiliated ministries.
- Serving on the Design Team for the new United Methodist conference to be created in Michigan.
- Teaching pastors nearing retirement about retirement planning, housing, and pension investments.
- Aligning with VCI churches as they develop financial sustainability plans.
- Striving to make a difference in the lives of young and new clergy – offering multiple seminary scholarship grants, partnering with the United Methodist Higher Education Foundation, promoting and providing direct grants for Michigan Area clergy to attend Revitup! and the Clergy Benefits Academy.
- Launching the inaugural Wayne C. Barrett Steward Leader Award and recognizing six local churches demonstrating outstanding stewardship practices.
- Adding an interactive platform to our website which is helpful to individual constituents exploring planned giving opportunities and which provides an excellent opportunity for churches to link to these resources at no cost.
- Working with Lilly Endowment, Inc. and the General Board of Pensions and Health Benefits to address clergy personal financial literacy.
- Answering the request from the North Central Jurisdiction bishops to be a partner in leadership training for the North Central Jurisdiction College of Bishops.

We are grateful to be a ministry partner with pastors, laity, and local churches. Together we shall be stronger. Together a difference is made for the glory of God. Together we are "making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world."

David S. Bell, President and Executive Director

UNITED METHODIST WOMEN

WEST MICHIGAN CONFERENCE UNITED METHODIST WOMEN
TREASURER'S REPORT
December 31, 2015

CONFERENCE PLEDGE TO MISSION 2015		<u>\$159,481.00</u>
MISSION GIVING – 2015		
Pledge to Mission	\$120,345.36	
Special Mission Recognition	6,055.00	
Gift to Mission	2,876.00	
Gift in Memory	4,436.00	
World Thank Offering	<u>13,493.23</u>	
TOTAL MISSION GIVING		\$147,205.59
MISSION GIVING PLUS – 2015		
Call to Prayer and Self-Denial	\$5,692.36	
Supplementary Gifts	93.00	
National Missions	2,700.00	
UMCOR	<u>5,487.02</u>	
TOTAL MISSION GIVING PLUS		\$13,972.38
TOTAL 2015 REMITTANCE TO UNITED METHODIST WOMEN, INC.		<u>\$161,177.97</u>
ADDITIONAL AMOUNT COLLECTED FOR UMCH MAINTENANCE	\$31,043.02	
ADMINISTRATIVE and MEMBERSHIP DEVELOPMENT*		<u>\$70,278.25</u>

*Amount retained by Conference for Conference/District Expenses

Julia Paradine-Rice, UMW Treasurer