

**2019 MICHIGAN ANNUAL CONFERENCE  
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## 2019 RESOLUTIONS

### **R #1 – Authorization for CBOPHB to address claims**

It was resolved by the Michigan Conference:

The Michigan Conference Board of Pension and Health Benefits moves to:

Authorize The Conference Board of Pension and Health Benefits (CBOPHB) to negotiate, compromise, or submit to arbitration any claims for benefits that may arise under the Michigan Conference Health Care Plan, the Michigan Conference Lay Employee Welfare Plan (death and disability), the United Methodist Retirement Plans (Pre-82, Ministerial Pension Plan, Clergy Retirement Security Program, United Methodist Personal Investment Plan), the United Methodist Clergy Welfare Plan (Comprehensive Protection Plan); and for that purpose to retain legal counsel as needed. The CBOPHB will be considered the final appeal and have final authority to decide any issue in the event of a dispute or disagreement by a participant.

### **R #2 – Establish the Housing/Rental allowance for retired clergy or clergy on medical leave**

It was resolved by the Michigan Conference:

The Michigan Conference Board of Pension and Health Benefits moves to establish the Housing/Rental Allowance for retired or clergy on medical leave status in the Michigan Conference as follows:

1. An amount equal to 100% of the pension/disability payments received during the year 2020 is hereby designated as a rental/housing allowance for each retired and disabled ordained or licensed minister of The United Methodist Church who is or was a member of the Michigan Conference at the time of his or her retirement or disability;
2. This rental/housing allowance shall apply to each retired and disabled ordained or licensed minister who has been granted the retired relationship or placed on medical leave by the Michigan Conference and whose name and relationship to the conference is recorded in the Journal of the Michigan Conference or in other appropriate records maintained by the conference;
3. The pension/disability payment to which this rental/housing allowance applies shall be the pension/disability payment resulting from all service of such retired and disabled ordained or licensed ministers from all employment by any local church, annual conference or institution of The United Methodist Church, or from any other employer who employed the minister to perform services related to the ministry and who elected to make contributions to the pension and welfare funds of The United Methodist Church for such retired minister's pension or disability benefits;
4. The amount of the housing/rental allowance that may be excluded is limited to the lesser of: a) the amount designated as the housing/rental allowance, or b) the amount actually expended for housing/rent, or c) the fair rental value of housing, if required by law.

**R #3 – 2020 Comprehensive Benefit Funding Plan**

It was resolved by the Michigan Conference:

The Michigan Conference Board of Pension & Health Benefits moves to approve the 2020 Comprehensive Benefit Funding Plan as affirmed in the “letter of opinion” from Wespath Benefits & Investments.

*[NOTE: Due to Wespath’s timeline, their review and “letter of opinion” cannot be completed by the conference deadline for submitting resolutions. The “letter of opinion” will be available online and in the final printed materials once it is received from Wespath.]*

**R #4 – Establish Past Service Rate**

It was resolved by the Michigan Conference:

The Michigan Conference Board of Pension and Health Benefits moves to establish the 2020 Past Service Rate (PSR) for the Ministers’ Reserve Pension Fund (Pre-82) at \$843 in the Michigan Conference(s) prior to 1982. The surviving spouse benefit shall remain at 85 percent.

**R #5 – Hire & Support Returning Neighbors**

It was resolved by the Michigan Conference:

Taking on our role as a “Healing Community,” one of the tasks of United Methodists is to welcome our neighbors returning from incarceration in prisons and county jails. In this regard, we urge our United Methodist brothers and sisters and congregations to contact and implore our legislators to pass legislation, lifting a ban on professional and trade licensing for parolees returning to our neighborhoods.

**R #6 – Redefining what it means to be “Handicap Accessible”**

It was resolved by the Michigan Conference:

The Michigan Conference calls upon all congregations to evaluate and increase the level of accessibility in their church as well as the parsonage in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. The Conference will assist by making churches aware of financial assistance for upgrades to meet current regulations and standards. In so doing, churches should particularly be mindful to assess the need for automatic door openers and ramps so that persons with limited mobility are not hindered in their attempts to enter our churches or parsonages.

**R #7 – Covenant of Ministry Partnership with Liberia Annual Conference**

It was resolved by the Michigan Conference:

The Michigan Conference approve the Michigan Conference Liberia Ministry Partnership task force working with the Liberia Annual Conference to develop a new *Covenant of Ministry and Working Understandings* to guide our continuing work together. The new covenant would update and replace the previous covenant of 1998 between the Detroit Annual Conference and the Liberia Annual Conference and would be brought before both the Liberia Annual Conference and Michigan Annual Conference in 2020 for approval.

### **R #8 – Reaffirmation of Michigan Conference Support for Camping Ministry**

It was resolved by the Michigan Conference:

The Michigan Area Conference United Methodist Camping moves that Michigan Conference churches, ministries, laity and clergy be challenged and encouraged to support Michigan Conference United Methodist Camps through prayer, volunteer service, promotion and financial gifts.

Further, be it resolved that clergy understand the support of camping ministry, as volunteer and advocate, is part of their pastoral service and their time devoted as volunteer staff to the camping ministry will not be counted as vacation.

Be it further resolved that clergy and laity help recruit persons to be on paid or volunteer staff for our camps as needed, contact being made through the Michigan Area Camping office or a camp Site Director.

Be it further resolved that each local church be encouraged to hold a camp promotion Sunday to encourage participation and celebrate our Michigan Area United Methodist camps.

### **R #10 – A Call to Reunite Families Separated at the Border**

It was resolved by the Michigan Conference:

The Michigan Conference strongly encourages all area United Methodists, local congregations and ministry groups to contact President Trump’s administration, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), and the Department of Justice (DOJ) to:

- Immediately terminate its family separation and “zero tolerance” prosecution policies that rip families apart and prevent family reunification.
- Make every effort to protect and unite children and their families.
- Respect international and U.S. law and ensure asylum seekers have an opportunity to seek protection.

### **R #11 – Revise Ministry Shares Calculation – Adoption Merger Churches**

It was resolved by the Michigan Conference:

The Council on Finance & Administration and New Start Team/Board of Congregational Life of the Michigan Conference of The United Methodist Church jointly recommend the following change to the Ministry Shares Calculation.

Calculation of Ministry Shares for adoption merger churches: a new classification of merged churches will be “Adoption Mergers.” In an Adoption Merger, a larger, healthy congregation (known as the parent congregation) agrees to partner with a smaller, usually struggling congregation (known as the partner congregation), assuming leadership and all assets and liabilities of the partner church, with the intention that the partner church is absorbed by the parent church, but remains open and the church becomes a multi-site congregation. The adoption will be approved by the New Start Team, the District Superintendent, and the District Committee on Church Building and Location. The Ministry Shares for churches involved in the Adoption will be calculated as follows: 1) the year the Adoption becomes effective the Ministry Shares calculation will be calculated on the parent church only, using the standard calculation of a four-year rolling average, 2) the second year the Ministry Shares will be calculated on the parent church’s expenses for the four preceding years, which will include one year of the combined expenses of both campuses,

3) the third year the Ministry Shares will be calculated on the parent church's expenses for the four preceding years, which will include two years of the combined expenses, 4) the fourth year the Ministry Shares will be calculated on the parent church's expenses for the four preceding years, which will include three years of the combined expenses. The church must submit to the District Superintendent, the Conference Treasurer's office and the Director of Benefits and Human Resources a plan for managed debt repayment for any conference pension or health care arrearages. This action is retroactive to 2019 Ministry Shares.

### **R #12 – Revise Ministry Shares Calculation – Merged Churches**

The Council on Finance & Administration of the Michigan Conference of The United Methodist Church recommends the following change to the Ministry Shares Calculation.

Calculation of Ministry Shares for merged churches: the statistics of the merging churches will be added together before calculating the Ministry Shares of the newly formed church for the ensuing year. Reasons for departure from this procedure will be reviewed by CF&A upon appeal, and adjustments may be made on a case-by-case basis after the merger of the churches is finalized.

### **R #13 – Older Adult Ministries Team**

It was resolved by the Michigan Conference:

Be it resolved that the Board of Congregational Life will establish an Older Adult Ministries Team. The Older Adult Ministries Team will be accountable to the Board of Congregational Life. The Older Adult Ministries Team will align and coordinate the ministries of the team in order to fulfill the core purpose and goals of the team in ways consistent with the Board and Conference values and boundaries.

The Older Adult Ministries Team will not have a position on the Board of Congregational Life, which would be representative governance, but instead will be an autonomous group related to the Board of Congregational Life. The budget for the Older Adult Ministries Team will be allocated from the budget of the Board of Congregational Life. A member of the Congregational Vibrancy Team will be the staff member relating to the Older Adult Ministries Team.

### **R #14 – Guidelines for Equitable Compensation Support**

It was resolved by the Michigan Conference:

The Commission on Equitable Compensation moves the Conference Guidelines for Equitable Compensation Support for 2020.

1. Local congregations shall conduct an annual stewardship campaign. Congregations receiving Equitable Compensation support are expected to participate in ongoing stewardship education and planning through programs such as the Stewardship Academy offered through the United Methodist Foundation of Michigan, the Vital Church Initiative (VCI) or a Paragraph 213 Review as provided in ¶213 of the United Methodist Book of Discipline.
2. Local congregations receiving Equitable Compensation grants shall annually counsel with the District Superintendent concerning levels of pastoral support.
3. Churches should be grouped, where feasible, in a denominational or ecumenical grouping so as to provide an average attendance of at least 134 under the

care of one pastor. The 134 figure is calculated using average giving, salary packages, church expenses, and ministry share totals as submitted in Tables I, II, and III.

4. Multi-church charges that become single-point charges will not be eligible for financial assistance from the Commission unless the church seeking assistance has an average attendance of at least 134.
5. Local congregations requesting equitable compensation support shall voucher pastors' travel and business expenses according to the guidelines of the Council on Finance and Administration.
6. Local congregations may receive Equitable Compensation support for up to four consecutive years, reducing the original grant amount by 25% each year. Equitable Compensation funds shall not be used to fund more than the Conference minimum salary.
7. Congregations receiving Equitable Compensation shall pay Ministry Shares in full.
8. Churches receiving or applying for Equitable Compensation that have planned or are planning to enter into building or remodeling projects that require permission of the District Board of Church Location and Building, or which exceed 10% of the total annual budget of the local congregation, shall not proceed with proposed projects and/or related capital campaigns until such time as a plan for ending Equitable Compensation support has been presented and approved by the Commission on Equitable Compensation and the district superintendent. Exceptions to this guideline shall be given greater consideration when proposed projects are related to building accessibility.
9. Exceptions to these guidelines may be considered upon recommendation of the Bishop and the Cabinet.

### **R #15 – 2020 Minimum Salary Schedule**

It was resolved by the Michigan Conference:

The Commission on Equitable Compensation recommends the following Minimum Salary Schedule be adopted for 2020.

In addition, the Commission asks that churches budget a mandatory minimum of \$1,500 for professional expenses and continuing education, exclusive of mileage reimbursements, for each full-time clergy person under appointment. In cases of less than full time appointment, it is recommended that the budgeted amount be prorated in accordance with the appointment (i.e., ½ Time = \$750, etc.)

In accordance with ¶625.3 of the 2016 *Book of Discipline*, the Minimum Salary Schedule reflects the mandatory minimum cash salary which pastors shall be paid based on their status and years of service. While not mandatory, local congregations are strongly encouraged to give consideration to paying pastors with more than 10 years of service an additional 2.8% of the tenth year minimum for each additional year of service they have completed. As examples: A Full Member with 15 years of service must be paid a minimum of \$47,684, but the congregation is encouraged to consider paying an additional \$4771, for a total of \$52,455 based on 5 additional years' service. A Local Pastor with 20 years of service must be paid a minimum \$40,763, but the congregation is encouraged to consider paying an additional \$8157, for a total of \$48,920 based on 10 additional years' service.

Counting Years of Service To Determine Minimum Compensation

Pastors serving under appointment full or part time will have years of service counted equally for the purpose of moving through the salary schedule. Pastors serving more than six months under appointment in a year will be credited with a full year's service for the purpose of moving through the salary schedule. Pastors serving six months or less under appointment in a year will remain in the year of the salary schedule they are in. When an additional full year of service is completed, pastors will move to the next year in the salary schedule. For salary schedule purposes, years of service are carried over equally from one category to another as clergy status changes.

Years	Local Pastor		Associate Member		Provisional Member		Full Member	
	2019	2020	2019	2020	2019	2020	2019	2020
1	\$36,375	\$37,394	*	*	\$40,593	\$41,730	**	**
2	\$36,739	\$37,768	*	*	\$40,997	\$42,145	**	**
3	\$37,104	\$38,143	*	*	\$41,403	\$42,562	\$43,313	\$44,526
4	\$37,467	\$38,516	*	*	\$41,810	\$42,981	\$43,755	\$44,980
5	\$37,832	\$38,891	\$39,539	\$40,646	\$42,215	\$43,397	\$44,194	\$45,431
6	\$38,197	\$39,267	\$39,931	\$41,049	\$42,620	\$43,813	\$44,629	\$45,879
7	\$38,560	\$39,640	\$40,324	\$41,453	\$43,025	\$44,230	\$45,025	\$46,286
8	\$38,924	\$40,014	\$40,721	\$41,861	\$43,432	\$44,648	\$45,505	\$46,779
9	\$39,289	\$40,389	\$41,123	\$42,274	\$43,838	\$45,065	\$45,946	\$47,232
10	\$39,653	\$40,763	\$42,463	\$43,652	\$44,244	\$45,483	\$46,385	\$47,684

Recommended (Years 11-40)

11	\$40,446	\$41,578	\$43,312	\$44,525	\$45,129	\$46,393	\$47,313	\$48,638
12	\$41,240	\$42,395	\$44,162	\$45,399	\$46,014	\$47,302	\$48,241	\$49,592
13	\$42,033	\$43,210	\$45,012	\$46,272	\$46,900	\$48,213	\$49,169	\$50,546
14	\$42,827	\$44,026	\$45,861	\$47,145	\$47,785	\$49,123	\$50,097	\$51,500
15	\$43,620	\$44,841	\$46,711	\$48,019	\$48,670	\$50,033	\$51,026	\$52,455
16	\$44,414	\$45,658	\$47,561	\$48,893	\$49,556	\$50,944	\$51,954	\$53,409
17	\$45,207	\$46,473	\$48,410	\$49,765	\$50,441	\$51,853	\$52,882	\$54,363
18	\$46,001	\$47,289	\$49,260	\$50,639	\$51,326	\$52,763	\$53,810	\$55,317
19	\$46,795	\$48,105	\$50,110	\$51,513	\$52,212	\$53,674	\$54,738	\$56,271
20	\$47,588	\$48,920	\$50,959	\$52,386	\$53,097	\$54,584	\$55,667	\$57,226
21	\$48,382	\$49,737	\$51,809	\$53,260	\$53,982	\$55,493	\$56,595	\$58,180
22	\$49,175	\$50,552	\$52,659	\$54,133	\$54,868	\$56,404	\$57,523	\$59,134
23	\$49,969	\$51,368	\$53,508	\$55,006	\$55,753	\$57,314	\$58,451	\$60,088
24	\$50,762	\$52,183	\$54,358	\$55,880	\$56,639	\$58,225	\$59,379	\$61,042
25	\$51,556	\$53,000	\$55,208	\$56,754	\$57,524	\$59,135	\$60,308	\$61,997
26	\$52,349	\$53,815	\$56,057	\$57,627	\$58,409	\$60,044	\$61,236	\$62,951
27	\$53,143	\$54,631	\$56,907	\$58,500	\$59,295	\$60,955	\$62,164	\$63,905
28	\$53,937	\$55,447	\$57,756	\$59,373	\$60,180	\$61,865	\$63,092	\$64,859
29	\$54,730	\$56,262	\$58,606	\$60,247	\$61,065	\$62,775	\$64,020	\$65,813
30	\$55,524	\$57,079	\$59,456	\$61,121	\$61,951	\$63,686	\$64,949	\$66,768
31	\$56,317	\$57,894	\$60,305	\$61,994	\$62,836	\$64,595	\$65,877	\$67,722
32	\$57,111	\$58,710	\$61,155	\$62,867	\$63,721	\$65,505	\$66,805	\$68,676
33	\$57,904	\$59,525	\$62,005	\$63,741	\$64,607	\$66,416	\$67,733	\$69,630
34	\$58,698	\$60,342	\$62,854	\$64,614	\$65,492	\$67,326	\$68,661	\$70,584
35	\$59,492	\$61,158	\$63,704	\$65,488	\$66,378	\$68,237	\$69,590	\$71,539

36	\$60,285	\$61,973	\$64,554	\$66,362	\$67,263	\$69,146	\$70,518	\$72,493
37	\$61,079	\$62,789	\$65,403	\$67,234	\$68,148	\$70,056	\$71,446	\$73,446
38	\$61,872	\$63,604	\$66,253	\$68,108	\$69,034	\$70,967	\$72,374	\$74,400
39	\$62,666	\$64,421	\$67,103	\$68,982	\$69,919	\$71,877	\$73,302	\$75,354
40	\$63,459	\$65,236	\$67,952	\$69,855	\$70,804	\$72,787	\$74,231	\$76,309

## GENERAL CONFERENCE PETITIONS & RELATED BUSINESS

### GCP #1 – Add Domestic Violence to List of Chargeable Offenses

It was resolved by the Michigan Conference:

¶ 2702.1 A bishop, clergy member of an annual conference (¶ 370), local pastor, clergy on honorable or administrative location, or diaconal minister may be tried when charged (subject to the statute of limitations in ¶ 2702.4) with one or more of the following offenses: or (l) fiscal malfeasance; or (m) domestic violence.

Additionally:

For the purposes of this provision, domestic violence--also called intimate partner violence (IPV), domestic abuse, or relationship abuse--shall be defined as a pattern of behaviors used by one partner to maintain power and control over another partner in an intimate relationship. Domestic violence includes behaviors that physically harm, arouse fear, prevent a partner from doing what they wish or force them to behave in ways they do not want. It includes the use of physical and sexual violence, threats and intimidation, emotional abuse, and economic deprivation. Many of these different forms of domestic violence/abuse can be occurring at any one time within the same intimate relationship.

### GCP #4 – Create Central Conference in North America ¶ 28

It was resolved by the Michigan Conference:

“There shall be central conferences for the work of the Church with such duties, powers, and privileges as are hereinafter set forth. The number and boundaries of the central conferences shall be determined by the Uniting Conference. Subsequently the General Conference shall have authority to change the number and boundaries of the central conferences. The central conferences shall have the duties, powers, and privileges hereinafter set forth”.

### GCR #2 – Aspirations for the Michigan Annual Conference

It was resolved by the Michigan Conference:

Faced with uncertainty after the 2019 Special Session of General Conference, United Methodists in Michigan look to Jesus’s model of gracious welcome and evangelical inclusion to guide us. As we look forward to how the global church re-structures and new Methodisms emerge, the Michigan Annual Conference aspires to live into an expression of Methodism that:

- includes LBGTQIA people in the full life and membership of the United Methodist Church;



- creates time and space for reflection, forgiveness, and reconciliation among our siblings who believe differently as we move into the future;
- organizes itself in faithful, just, and equitable structures that resist oppression, while acknowledging and undoing its complicity in systems of racial and economic inequity; and
- spends our time and financial resources on mission for the sake of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, especially with vulnerable communities in Michigan and around the world, and not on church trials, investigations, or bringing charges against clergy based on sexual orientation, gender identity, and/or gender expression or related actions.

### GCR #3 – Conduct a Poll

It was resolved by the Michigan Conference:

The 2019 Michigan Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church will conduct a non-binding straw poll on the following question: If the Michigan Conference of The United Methodist Church were offered the opportunity to choose a direction for its future, should that direction be: (1) a United Methodist Conference whose policies allow for but do not require clergy to officiate at same-gender weddings, allow for consideration for ordained ministry of persons regardless of sexual orientation, and in which appointments are made with consideration given to the full range of contextual realities; or (2) a United Methodist Conference whose policies include the current Book of Discipline language on “homosexuality,” same gender marriage and LGBTQIA+ ordination along with enhanced enforcement of these policies determined constitutional by the Judicial Council. If agreed to, this non-binding straw poll will be taken without further debate.

The taking of the straw poll was approved.

The conference supported item #1 by a vote of 789 (69%) to 350 (31%).



## CABINET DEAN'S REPORT

"The Mission Imperative"

By Rev. Dr. Charles S.G. Boayue, Jr.

June 2019

Michigan Conference – The United Methodist Church

Bishop & Mrs. Bard; Fellow Members and Guests of the Michigan Conference; I greet you in the precious name of Jesus Christ, our risen Savior and Lord. I am grateful for the privilege to have been Dean of the Bishop's Cabinet this memorable year. It is a joy to serve alongside our Bishop, and these extraordinary superintendents.

This is a unique year to give the Dean's Report and, in some ways, a unique kind of a dean – a dean born outside this country who brings a unique set of eyes, ears, and perspective to any conversation. In this one year, 2019, the Michigan Conference came into being and the denomination is deeply involved in conversations about schism. At a time like this, what would you expect me to say about the Michigan Conference and the work of your Cabinet? While I could spend this time lamenting all the sad commentaries on the collective behaviors and divisive rhetoric that characterize the current climate across our Church, I would like to take another approach.

Yes, we are not of one mind on human sexuality. Sometimes we think too highly of our minds. Truth is we differ on a range of issues, including race, gender, ethnicity, justice, equality, and guns. Yet, your Cabinet hopes that, despite deep differences, we can still be one in the mission of God. The mission of God is an equal opportunity employer. Progressives, traditionalists, centrists, liberals, conservatives, old, young, women, men, children, youth, young adults, red, yellow, black, and white are all invited to participate in God's mission! The Apostle Paul, in the 12<sup>th</sup> chapter of Hebrews, invites them to lay aside their pre-occupations and set their priority straight. Without clarity of purpose, they would soon be consumed by their divisions. His reminder: you cannot run the race without focus. Put "*first things first*" to avoid "*majoring in the minors while minoring in the majors.*" The race is the mission. Participation requires patient endurance because God gets to call the shots, not us! And people who have wielded power for too long struggle to understand this.

We implore you not to be fearful of the future, but to put your hands in the hands of the One who holds the future. Schisms or not, of one thing we can be certain, that "*neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*" [Romans 8: 38-39 KJV]. This Dean's Report is a reminder that "*crowns and thrones may perish, kingdoms rise and wane, but the Church of Jesus constant will remain.*" Your Cabinet is committed to God's mission as the Church's primary purpose and joins you in conviction that God will bring to completion the good work begun in us.

We became one conference in Michigan for the sake of God's mission, not our own. And in every district across this conference, congregations and individuals are making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world! From the **Greater Southwest District's** 103 congregations where faithful disciples labor day and night to bring hope to the hopeless and salvation to the lost, to the **Central Bay District** where children, youth, and young adults are being shaped for the long journey of life under the protection of God, Michigan United Methodists are on the move to spread scriptural holiness throughout the land.

The 94 churches of the **East Winds District**, organized into 14 Mission Zones, sent a VIM Team to engage hurricane recovery work in Puerto Rico in January 2019, and operate three significant mission sites: Flint Water Recovery and NVEST (which move homeless to housing); South Flint Soup Kitchen; and Blue Water Free Store and Ministry Center.

Building upon two historic Methodist Colleges within the boundaries of the **Heritage District**, ten mission zones (each with ten churches), have been established. A day-long work camp, "*Heritage Goes to Camp*," was held at Judson Collins Retreat Center. Young and older adults came together to clean the campsite and build closer relationships. To assist smaller-member churches with opportunities for their youth, the Heritage District will send a 30-member team of youth and adults on a week-long mission trip to Cass Community Social Services in Detroit this summer.

The **Mid-Michigan District** vision, "*creating the spaces and leaders through which God's hospitality and wholeness can thrive in communities!*" is being realized through three core values: engaging local churches in transformational Christ-Centered Mission and Ministry in their communities; identifying, equipping, supporting and deploying Bold & Effective Leaders; and creating and partnering with processes that form Vibrant Congregations. Missional hub charge conferences, lay leadership forums, clergy praxis sessions, and multiple community engagement ministries are beginning to form across the district.

From Salem Bradley Indian Mission in the South to Pentwater and Barryton Faith in the North, the **Midwest District** seeks to reach new people who hunger for the Lord's presence in their lives. Many churches are active in Kid's Hope, food banks and inviting those who are hungry to share a meal under their roof. Pastors participate in Reach Networks, building relationships and discovering new opportunities for mission. Churches meet to share mission goals. Flat River Outreach Ministries (F.R.O.M.) is one example of how churches work collaboratively with other agencies to help persons in need. Churches realize that the harvest is plenty; but the workers are few.

With focus on Dream, Engage, Inspire, Repeat, the **Northern Waters District** continues to help the local church build effective relationships to make a difference in the lives of the people God has called us to serve. The district seeks to live by the words of John 1:14 from the Message, "*The Word became flesh and blood and moved into the neighborhood.*"

The **Northern Skies District** celebrates Pickford UMC for increasing worship attendance from 90 to 187 in five years; God's Country Cooperative Parish for purchasing, renovating and soon dedicating a local school in Newberry to be its Mission Center; and the Ministry of Pam Quayle, District Administrative Assistant for 25 years of faithful service to the churches of the Marquette and Northern Skies Districts, as she retires this year. The district faces challenges like the Father's Day Floods of 2018 on the Keweenaw and the challenges of navigating a large geography. Connectional support and the use of Zoom technology as a meeting platform have brought people together.

The **Greater Detroit District** vision is "*Preparing People for the next revival.*" As the population, cultural, and industrial center of the State where Michigan meets the world, the annual district conferences bring together 500 local church leaders for training, fellowship, and ministry celebrations. There is excitement for New Church starts at French UMC in Birmingham, Centro Familiar Cristiano in Melvindale, Vietnamese Ministry of Madison Heights, Berkeley: First, Open Door Worship at Rochester: St. Paul's, new worship community at Cass Avenue, building expan-

sion projects at Troy: Korean and at Royal Oak: First, as well as the re-population and redevelopment of the City of Detroit. We are discovering the increasing need for more ways to reach people with the saving Word of God.

Although we see *"in a mirror dimly"* [1 Corinthians 13:12], let's keep the mission alive – alive in young people crying out for time-out from our prolonged doctrinal bloodbaths; alive in daily struggles of small membership churches to connect with persons who long for meaning, purpose, direction, and fulfillment in life. The mission is alive in J-FON offices where immigrants seek help to establish stable lives. The mission is alive where large-membership churches stretch their resources to assist those living on the margins, and wherever the Church reminds the world that red and yellow, black and white are all precious in God's sight! The mission is alive because it is God's mission. Bishop Desmond Tutu once said that *"mission is to the Church as burning is to fire. A church that is not in mission is not the Church."* Whether the UMC splinters into pieces or stays together, one thing is certain – God mission is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow until Christ comes in final victory.

Friends, the world gains nothing from our endless bloodbaths over doctrinal orthodoxy and ecclesiastical control. This broken world hungers and thirsts for relevance, meaning, purpose, direction, fulfillment, life, salvation, and destiny. The Church's mission is make a straight path in the deserts of this world for our God! The hungry and thirsty need the love of God which far surpasses human understanding. This they cannot be satisfied by traditionalism or progressivism. This world needs a faithful Church – anointed by the Holy Spirit to lower mountains of injustice, exalt valleys of dried bones, level playing fields for all people, smoothen crooked places, proclaim release to captives, give sight to the blind, heal broken hearts, set at liberty the oppressed, and declare the acceptable year of God's favor!

This mission is imperative because without it the journey leads nowhere worthy of the travel. Sinners still need a Savior; the sick, healing; the lost, redemption; the oppressed, liberty; and the perishable, imperishability! The mission drives faithful people to justice that rolls like mighty waters and righteousness like ever-flowing streams! It beckons the dispossessed to lift their eyes to the hills; admonishes the learned to *"lean not [their] own understanding;"* encourages the sinner to flee from the wrath that is coming; reminds the sojourner *"this world is not our home;"* and whispers to the ostracized *"God so love the world that God gave God's only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have eternal life!"* God's mission is necessary, urgent, indispensable, and imperative as long as our *imprisoned spirits* lay fast bound in sin and nature's night; as long as we (in the name of traditionalism, progressivism, or any other *isms*) continue to demonize each other while claiming to be brothers and sisters of the same household of faith. One philosopher wondered *"what is the greatest distance a person would have to travel in this life to attain ultimate fulfillment?"* Some said it is the distance from the Earth to the farthest reaches of the galaxies. The philosopher disagreed with this assertion by concluding that *the greatest distance one would have to travel in this life to attain ultimate fulfillment is the distance from the head to the heart.*

Our mission as United Methodists is participation in God's redemptive, restorative, and salvific mission to welcome back home, to that ultimate fulfillment, all who are lost. Sisters and Brothers, we are *"treading where the saints have trod. We are not divided, all one body we. One in hope and doctrine, one in charity."* Let us remain caught up in this amazing mission, realizing that it ain't over till God says, *"It's over!"* Amen!