

ANNUAL REPORT

20

Moving forward with Christ. Seeing and hearing the people around us. Affirming and engaging as a new community.

24



Michigan Conference
The United Methodist Church



Episcopal Leader

At the 2024 North Jurisdictional Conference in Sioux Falls, SD, Bishop David Alan Bard was assigned to lead the Michigan Conference until 2028. Bishop Bard began serving Michigan in 2016. He is also the episcopal leader for the Illinois Great Rivers Conference, a responsibility he shares with Iowa Bishop Kennetha Bigham-Tsai, who was elected from Michigan in 2022.



Annual Report

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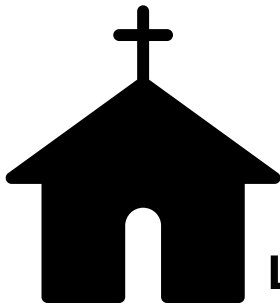


*Beloved, we are God's children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we do know is this: when Christ is revealed, we will be like Christ, for we will see Christ as Christ is.
1 John 3:2 The Inclusive Bible*

Fearless: Embracing a new future

It is time to boldly turn a page and welcome exciting new chapters in our conference journey. A return to the critical missional and ministry needs of the world that surround us. A time to ask how Christ is working in us to be open, innovative, creative, disciplined, and faithful in how we go about creating new and energizing disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

Michigan Conference 2024 Snapshot



590
Local Churches



90,671
Estimated Members

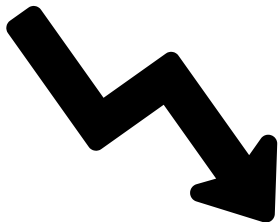


501
Appointed Clergy

Ministry Share
Remittance Rate

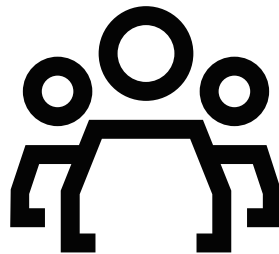


73%



2025 Annual Budget

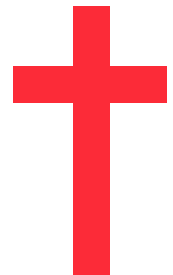
\$8,493,144



38
Conference
Staff

New Ministry Fund

\$3,000,000



God's work for us is still to be revealed

Greetings Friends in Christ!

As we look to the year ahead, I welcome the opportunity to reflect on the current state of The United Methodist Church and our conference. Today, we are at an inflection point, a pivotal moment where we must refocus our energies on the ministry to which we are called by Jesus Christ.

Following the 2024 General Conference, our denomination has embraced greater inclusivity, creating new space for diverse voices while reaffirming our commitment to being a global church. This expansion is not without its challenges; there is lingering pain and concern, particularly among LGBTQ clergy and laity. Not all agree with the General Conference decisions. Yet, this is also a unique opportunity for us to embody the Wesleyan spirit in new and meaningful ways.

Our mission remains clear: to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. Let us concentrate our efforts on this mission. What does discipleship look like in the Twenty First Century? How can we nurture the qualities essential to being faithful disciples? We must critically examine our worship, prayer life, engagement with Scripture, and attention to Wesley's three simple rules, ensuring they lead us closer to Christ and empower us for transformative ministry.

Moreover, as Wesleyan disciples, we engage our minds and hearts deeply in theological reflection. We embrace diverse perspectives on scriptural interpretation, recognizing scripture as inspired by God, rather than inerrant or infallible.

Integral to our future is the cultivation of beloved community. Jesus tore down walls of division, calling us to build relationships across differences. This work is foundational to our discipleship, even amidst disagreements or misunderstandings.

Financial stability is crucial. Budget cuts at the General Conference level necessitate prudent fiscal management locally. We urge each congregation to prioritize connectional giving to sustain our collective ministry effectively.

As we navigate these changes, I acknowledge that some may find this new direction challenging. For those exploring new paths or seeking re-affiliation, policies are being developed to facilitate these transitions with grace and understanding.

Friends, we stand at a moment of divine opportunity. God continues to work through us, calling us to renew our commitment and passion for Christ's mission. Together, let us refocus, reclaim our Wesleyan heritage, and be renewed in God's Spirit.

In the words of scripture, "Beloved, we are God's children now; what we shall be has not yet been revealed." Let us embrace our future with faith and anticipation, knowing that God's work among us is far from finished.


Bishop David Alan Bard

Episcopal Leader of the Michigan Conference

Christ filled

Mission & Ministry

In ministry together



*As we seek ways to grow,
we must be fearless in discovering
new ways to bring God's word and
compassion to a world in need.
Annual Conference staff are here
to help you on that journey.
Here are three examples.*

Advocacy Day

An annual event where hundreds of Michigan United Methodists gather together to make a difference at the State Capital. Our participation leads to peaceful social justice responses in areas of interest to our conference. Past efforts have included accessibility to mental health care and sensible gun legislation.

Readers to Leaders

A fundraising campaign raised \$356,000 to support two ministries: Michigan Freedom Schools, which provides literacy programs in communities where quality academic enrichment programming is limited, and Liberia Scholarship Funds, which allows hundreds of children to complete a K-12 education in Liberia.

Haiti Covenant

Collectively, we support multiple ministries in Haiti, providing health care, education, and other forms of life sustainability in a challenging place. Our gifts make this possible.

Creating Bold & Effective Leaders

Ways we can help



Effective mission and ministry is possible only with bold and effective leadership. Michigan Conference staff are nurturing faith-filled leaders to serve the church. Here are three examples.

Young Adult Discernment Training

A program designed for laity and pastors to gain the tools and resources needed to facilitate young adult discernment practices in their local settings. Participants learn to engage younger adults in life-giving faith formation and vocational discernment. Mini-grant opportunities are also available.

Coaching for Faith Communities and Leaders

Coaches provide just-in-time support by asking questions and challenging the one being coached to set and reach their goals. Using deep listening, coaches ask questions to trigger deeper contemplation, providing a sounding board that allows the coachees to think more deeply and profoundly than they would without coaching.

Intercultural Development Inventory

IDI is an assessment of cultural understanding and intercultural competence. Intercultural competence refers to the ability to adapt behavior and perspectives in response to cultural diversity. There is no grade or perfect score, only a greater understanding of oneself, our organizations, and the necessary work ahead.



Growing Vibrant Congregations

Ways we can help



Vibrant congregations are essential to the creation of disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. The Michigan Conference has essential resources to help you grow! Here are three examples.

Seed to Harvest

A ministry incubation event and active workshop where participants can grow a new or existing ministry idea. This event is designed for small teams from faith communities and non-profits, or individual passion projects.

Lifelong Faith Cohorts and Resources

Cohorts provide community, learning, networking, resources, and “a space where I don’t feel so alone.” Lifelong Faith resources also include training, continuing education, and exploration of current trends in faith formation to equip and empower leaders.

Growing Forward Grants

An opportunity to begin a new mission for faith communities impacted by the process of disaffiliation. Faith communities with a new idea for mission or ministry can request grants of up to \$5,000. District offices have details on how to apply.

Faith & Innovation

A financial update for 2025

Grace and peace to you in the name of Jesus Christ

It is my privilege to collaborate with a remarkable team of leaders dedicated to stewarding our collective resources effectively. Our Council on Finance and Administration (CF&A), alongside our conference CFO Angie Anger, our new Director of Benefits and Human Resources Rev. Joel Walther, and our entire Treasury and Benefits staff, works tirelessly to uphold accountability and transparency in financial management.

This past year has been particularly challenging as we navigated significant budget cuts necessitated by our Annual Conference's decisions. These cuts have required us to restructure staffing and operations amid ongoing church closures and disaffiliations, resulting in reduced resources and anticipated continued decline. Despite these challenges, we have focused on streamlining processes, identifying cost efficiencies, and implementing robust fiscal controls.

Our Treasury staff achieved a milestone by outsourcing a substantial portion of our accounting work, modernizing processes while reducing costs. We've also simplified our chart of accounts, enhanced financial reporting for boards and agencies, and revised policies governing travel, mileage, and moving expenses.

It's crucial to acknowledge the stark realities we face. The 2024 budget included a 20% reduction, leading to staff reductions, program closures, and operational overhauls. Declining attendance and disaffiliation further complicate our financial outlook, necessitating an additional \$600,000 (8.5%) in cuts for 2025.

A persistent challenge lies in inconsistent Ministry Shares payments from local churches and clergy, falling short of our obligations outlined in The Book of Discipline. This financial shortfall underscores the critical need for sustained commitment from all parties to support our shared ministry.

Despite these difficulties, we draw strength from our faith and remain hopeful. The Michigan Annual Conference has prudently preserved capital from disaffiliated and closed churches for three years, culminating in a robust Ministry Innovation Fund approaching \$3 million. This fund, akin to a local church endowment, will sustain and establish vital ministries for years to come.

Looking forward, we embrace a future marked by optimism and innovation. By leveraging creative solutions and bold initiatives, we are poised not only to weather future challenges but to thrive, ensuring the flourishing of God's Kingdom among the Methodists of Michigan.



Rev. Leslee Fritz

Chairperson
Council on Finance and Administration

2025 Budget

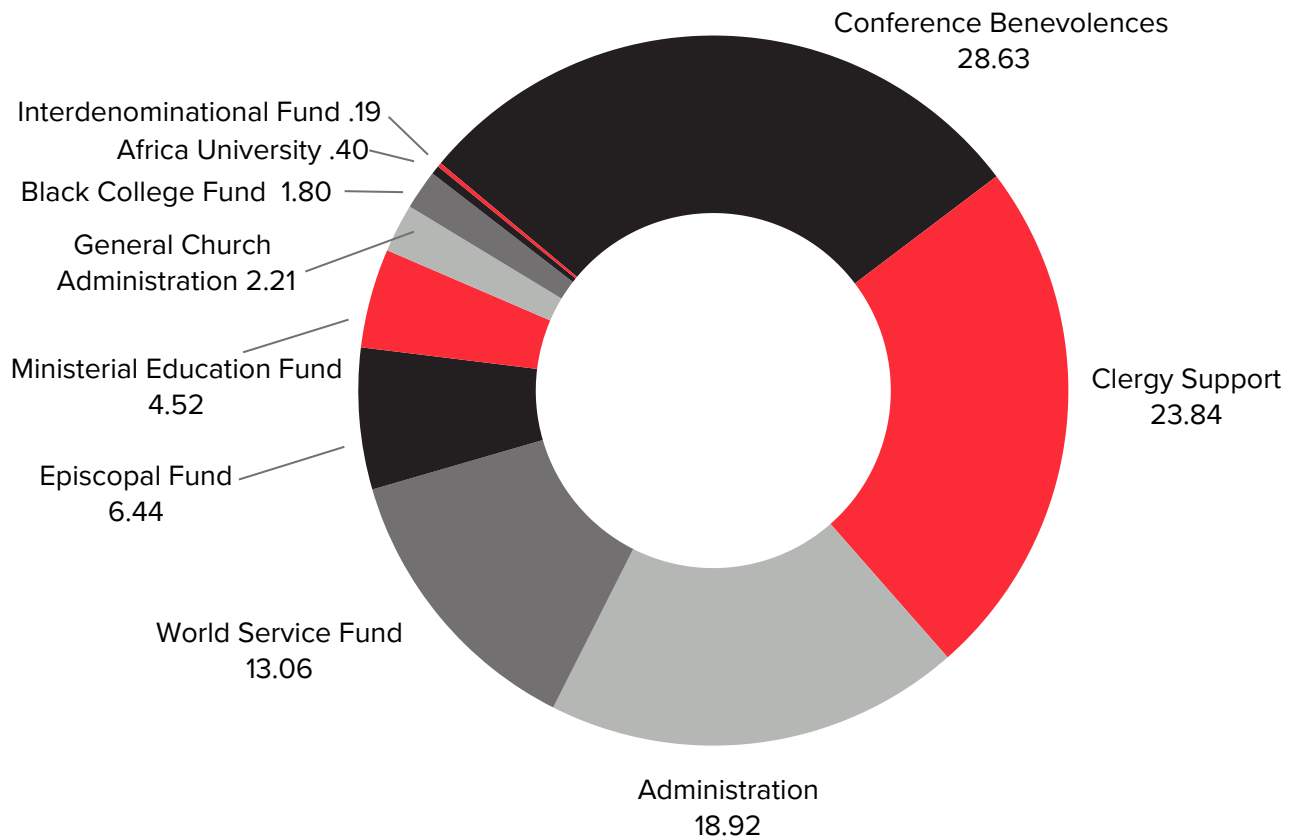
How we use our gifts

Conference Ministry Shares are the funds needed to operate the conference and provide services to our local churches and their members.

Ministry Shares are divided between two large fund groups; Conference Ministry Shares represent approximately 72%, and General Church Apportionments the remaining 28%.

These funds allow us to support local churches, be in mission and ministry globally, and develop new ways of bringing the Gospel to the world.

Your generosity magnifies the mission and ministry of your local church by sharing this mission and ministry.





CATEGORY	AMOUNT	PERCENTAGE
Conference Benevolences	\$2,431,862	28.63%
Clergy Support	\$2,024,525	23.84%
Administration	\$1,606,583	18.92%
World Service Fund	\$1,109,168	13.06%
Episcopal Fund	\$546,727	6.44%
Ministerial Education Fund	\$383,658	4.52%
General Church Administration	\$187,457	2.21%
Black College Fund	\$153,038	1.80%
Africa University	\$34,249	0.40%
Interdenominational Fund	\$15,877	0.19%
TOTAL	\$8,493,144	100.00%

Conference Ministry Shares

Clergy Support

Funds for District Superintendents and regional offices to offer support to the clergy supporting our local churches and their congregations. The fund also provides for Equitable Compensation and support for the expenses associated with moving clergy.

Administration

Providing counsel for local church financial, legal, and IT matters through the operation of the Conference Center, area center administration, treasurer's office, legal fees, and several administrative committees.

Conference Benevolences

Supports local church ministry through operations of annual conference communications, the Board of Global Ministries, the Board of Ordained Ministry, the Board of Congregational Life, the Board of Young People's Ministries, the Connectional Ministry Team, Clergy Excellence, and Congregational Vibrancy. Provides funding for new church starts, Wesley Foundations, grants for missional work, and local church resources for youth and children.



If your church needs help learning how to meet offering and ministry share goals, please visit the Michigan Conference website under the generosity section. You can also get assistance from conference staff and the United Methodist Foundation of Michigan.

General Church

Apportionments

World Service Fund

The essential core of our global outreach ministry is underwriting Christian missions worldwide. Empower United Methodist evangelistic efforts, stimulate Bible study and spiritual commitment, and encourage church growth and discipleship.

Africa University Fund

This vital fund supports the only United Methodist-related, degree-granting university on the continent of Africa, serving students from 21 countries. Africa University provides an excellent quality higher education enriched with Christian values for both men and women, developing visionary leaders of tomorrow.

Episcopal Fund

Bishops have always had a very special role in our church. They are elected and consecrated to speak to and from the church. They shepherd annual conferences.

General Administration Fund

This fund underwrites and finances general church activities that are administrative in nature rather than program-related, like the General Conference, the legislative branch of the church. General Council on Finance and Administration coordinates and administers the finances of the church, receives, disburses, and accounts for the church's general funds, safeguards the denomination's legal interests and rights, compiles and publishes denominational statistics, and maintains the church's records.

Black College Fund

The 11 historically black U.S. colleges and universities supported by the United Methodist Church have played a unique role in U.S. higher education. Between 1866 and 1882, following the Civil War, the former Methodist Episcopal Church organized the Freedmen's Aid Society to help educate black people newly freed from slavery. Between 1866 and 1882, the society established more than 70 schools in the U.S. South and Southwest. In 1972, The United Methodist Church established the Black College Fund to provide a constant, reliable way to support United Methodist-related historically Black colleges. Today, we support more historically Black colleges and universities than any other religious denomination.

Interdenominational Cooperation Fund

United Methodists acknowledge that we are but a small part of the worldwide Christian church - the living body of Jesus Christ. Our unity with other Christian communions is affirmed as we witness a common Christian faith, meet human suffering, and advocate for peace and justice worldwide. Your giving makes shared ministry through Christ's body possible today. Because of this, the United Methodist Church is able to partner with other Christians to witness together the hope we have in Jesus Christ. Jesus prayed to his Father at the end of his earthly ministry that his church would be one.

Ministerial Education Fund

Men and women choose the ministry because God calls them. The Ministerial Education Fund is our way of helping them answer that divine call. Since 1968, the Ministerial Education Fund has helped thousands of men and women become pastoral leaders in The United Methodist Church. It is nurtured and funded by United Methodists to provide: 1) needed scholarships through annual conferences, 2) funding for the support of our thirteen United Methodist seminaries in the United States, 3) programs that encourage men and women to respond to the call to the ordained ministry, 4) continuing-education opportunities for pastors across the connection, and 5) course-of-study education for local pastors.



Where you can learn more

General questions or inquiries about the Michigan Conference

Email contact@michiganumc.org or visit our website www.MichiganUMC.org

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