

Volume I

HISTORICAL REPORTS

Love Boldly
Serve Joyfully
Lead Courageously

2026 Annual Conference
May 29-31, 2026 • Acme, MI

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Michigan Annual Conference Agencies, Boards, Committees, Commissions

African American Ministries

The Committee on African American Ministries is composed of members of organizations that are specifically oriented to African American ministries (Michigan Area Black Methodists for Church Renewal (MIBMCR), Urban Youth Alliance/Urban Camp, United Methodists Black Clergy of Michigan (UMBCM), Black Seminarians, Sacred Sisters [NCJ Black Clergy Women] Freedom Schools), as well as the Lay Servant/Lay Ministers in the Michigan Conference. We continue to collaborate with other minority ministries as well.

We strive to ensure that the African American churches, clergy, and laity are informed on national and jurisdictional events and training with Black Methodists for Church Renewal and Strengthening the Black Church for the 21 Century (SBC21). In addition, we sent out notifications to the black churches and communities about training, activities, and other events that are occurring at the district, conference, and national level.

We want the people to be informed about what's available to them with a focus on mission and ministry, bold and effective leaders and vibrant congregations. and the people are responding. We continue to connect with the MI Conference French Church to assist them in participating in the events and activities in other churches and with our organization. Since many of its church members and the pastors are not from the United States, it has given them exposure to other African American churches, what's going on at the conference and district level, and included them in our community activities.

In addition, we have been notifying our constituents of opportunities for spiritual growth, formation, and development, leadership training, retreats, children, and youth activities, including summer camp (Urban Youth Alliance).

Major accomplishments in 2025:

Provided 60 grants and 4 emergency grants that included funding for development of leaders, sharing God's love and building the beloved community. Funding was also provided for the Michigan Area Black Pastors Initiative, Black Methodists for Church Renewal, Urban Youth Camp and Freedom Schools.

We are looking forward to what God has for us to do in the coming year!!!

Commission on Archives and History

During calendar year 2025 the Commission on Archives and History worked on several different projects aimed at consolidating the former Detroit Annual Conference and West Michigan Conference archival collections into a single facility under a single archivist for collections management.

These past few months have been a period of retrenchment due to the financial difficulties of the Conference because of the downsizing of the denomination in general, causing closures of churches and a large number of churches that decided to disaffiliate.

Compounding the impact of the closures and disaffiliations, we were also running out of collections storage space at our three homes:

- 1) The former Detroit Annual Conference Collection, located at Adrian College in Adrian, Michigan, at the Shipman Library.
- 2) The former West Michigan Conference Collection, located at Albion College in Albion, Michigan, in the lower level of the Stockwell Memorial Library Building. A small amount was stored in the Seeley G. Mudd Learning Center/Library Building
- 3) A Collections overflow facility located in an underutilized strip mall, Clark Corners, on the north side of Lansing, Michigan, in a leased space, where archival materials are stored with other items owned by the Conference.

Archives Processing Center

In the decision made to consolidate the three collections into a single facility to reflect the current structure of the Michigan Conference (formed out of the Detroit Annual and West Michigan Conferences), the Board of Trustees of the Michigan Conference acquired the closed Crossroads United Methodist Church in Williamston, Michigan, near Lansing, which is being rehabilitated into a collections storage facility. Parts of the building, such as the old sanctuary, date back before the turn of the Twentieth Century, while the newest portion, an education wing, dates to the early 2000s.

The new facility, the Archives Processing Center, will serve as the home for the three archives collections, although the Trustees consider this to be a temporary arrangement of five to ten years duration. The Trustees funded the completion of over \$500,000 in building modifications, and the purchase and assembly of shelving as well as setting up an office space for an archivist.

The archival materials from Clark Corners and the former West Michigan Conference collection at Albion College were moved into the Crossroads building in early November 2025, and the intention is to move the Adrian College collection in the Spring of 2026.

Archivist Position

With the transfer of the respective collections at the colleges to the new facility, The Michigan Conference created a single new part-time Archivist position that will work at the new facility.

A new position description was created in July-August 2025 and has been distributed to different colleges and universities with library science programs within the state, and also on the Conference's website. The posting was active until September 1, and with the anticipation of a new Archivist hired by

approximately October 1. No applications for the position have been received to date, and the search process remains ongoing.

We are also in the process of losing our two experienced managing archivists, Rebecca McNitt at Adrian College and Elizabeth Palmer at Albion College, as they decided it would be in their best interest to remain at their respective libraries in their chosen career paths, although each was offered the new position. We wish to thank them both for their service, professional expertise and commitment to preserving and managing the Collections for several years now.

Digitizing Records

Reiterating the past reflections by the former Chair, Pastor Melanie Young, we note that although archivists increase online access to records through digitization, this is not a quick answer to our lack of space for at least two reasons: (1) Some suggest that once materials are digitized, then paper copies may be disposed of. This is not good archival practice, since there would be no backup material if something were to happen to the digital storing mechanisms. Digitization is not a strategy for preserving records, only enhancing their access. (2) Digitizing is expensive. It takes many hours and access to specific software and hardware to upload and store the entire archival collection.

Funding

The CAH works toward financial sustainability by redirecting financial resources. We continue to partner with the Michigan Area UMC Historical Society to solicit funds to supplement the CAH budget through donations from churches and individuals. Donations are sent to the MAUMCHS treasurer and moved to the CAH budget as needed.

Two other priorities the CAH has been working on are distribution of a checklist of document types for churches to retain for the Archives, to be made available at the Annual Conference, and a list of United Methodist historic sites within the state.

Submitted by,
Scott M. Peters, Chair
Michigan Conference Commission on Archives and History

Michigan Conference Communications

Michigan Conference Communications navigated another dynamic and transformative year in 2025, continuing to share mission and ministry stories with local churches across Michigan and beyond. The communications team—led by Kristen Gillette, James Deaton, Valerie Mossman-Celestin, Adrienne Trupiano, and Mark Doyal—worked collaboratively with vendors, freelancers, and volunteers throughout the year. They were supported by the dedicated Communications Commission and its members: Ali Belsky, Bishop David Bard, Dillon Burns, Jennifer Browne, Denny Wissinger, Oneika Mobley, and the Rev. Vickie Prewitt.

Through various mediums—electronic, print, streaming, and video—the team provided crucial support, education, and essential information to every Michigan United Methodist local church community. Their work reached tens of thousands of people each week, spanning over 50 countries worldwide. Despite

facing challenges including staffing adjustments and budget constraints, Conference Communications achieved significant accomplishments in 2025.

Major Accomplishments in 2025

Website Redesign and Launch

In January, the team successfully completed the comprehensive MichiganUMC.org website redesign. The updated site features improved navigation, enhanced search functions, and readability in five languages. District websites were launched by January 10th, with overwhelmingly positive feedback on the bilingual features and streamlined content. The project addressed years of outdated pages and materials, marking a significant milestone in the conference's digital presence.

Advocacy Day at the State Capitol

The team provided comprehensive support for Advocacy Day on March 12th, focusing on auto insurance reform. Communications efforts included producing articles, hosting two live webinars in January and February, designing event signage and webpages, and issuing press releases that attracted both local and statewide media attention. The event brought over 200 United Methodists to the State Capitol to advocate for policy changes.

Gardens of Hope Campaign

A major advocacy initiative, the \$200,000 Gardens of Hope Campaign, was launched to support three existing EngageMI partners plus one new partner. Approved at the 2025 Annual Conference, the campaign engaged local churches through targeted communications to clergy, Annual Conference members, and treasurers. The team promoted the campaign through a dedicated webpage, social media, and a Lunch & Learn webinar introducing the partners. The campaign raised over \$50,000 in the first four months.

Courageous Communities Project

Created by Jack Amick to offer immigrant support resources, the Courageous Communities Project provided vital assistance to individuals and local churches. Communications built a comprehensive webpage with resources, training, and consultation information. James Deaton developed compelling stories about the program's impact, and the team hosted a Lunch & Learn webinar on October 9th to introduce the initiative. The project, led by Sonya Luna and Alice Townley, served as an introduction to the new Immigration Justice Task Force under the Board of Justice.

Bishop's Advent Message and "Spend Christmas at Our House" Campaign

The team produced an Advent and Christmas Eve message from Bishop Bard. In 2024, the "Spend Christmas at Our House" social media campaign, running on Google and Facebook platforms, brought approximately 10,000 visitors to the Michigan Conference website, connecting unaffiliated individuals with Christmas Eve worship services. A survey of 2,000 people yielded 163 responses, with 64% aware of

the campaign and 4.3% confirming attendance from it. However, due to budget cuts to the Conference Leadership Council, the campaign was eliminated in 2025.

Ministry Shares Education Campaign

Addressing decades of ministry share shortfalls, the team launched an intensive education campaign about the importance of connectional giving. With current payment rates at 73%, communications worked to help church leadership understand how ministry shares fund mission and ministry across Michigan. District Superintendents shared information widely through the conference website, and James Deaton produced good news stories showcasing ministry shares in action. Commission members reported hearing much more conversation about ministry shares throughout the conference as a result of these efforts. Additionally, ministry shares increased a little over 2% from 2024. They still are well below the 80% desired target.

UMCOM Website Hosting Transition Support

When United Methodist Communications announced it would discontinue its website hosting program, approximately 44 Michigan churches faced significant challenges. The communications team provided guidance and support to affected churches, helping them navigate the transition to new hosting platforms. Mark Doyal, serving on the UMCOM board, advocated for better communication and support for affected churches, working to ensure local churches had the resources needed for the transition.

Artificial Intelligence Guidelines Development

In response to concerns raised by conference clergy about AI use on the conference website, Bishop Bard formed an eight-member task force including Ali Belsky and Mark Doyal. The group worked throughout the year to develop ethical guidelines and frameworks for AI use in conference communications and ministry. The task force addressed concerns about environmental impact, threats to human creativity, and ethical considerations while acknowledging AI's potential as a tool for efficiency. Communications emphasized that AI is used only as a tool requiring human review and editing, never as a final product without oversight.

UMAC Awards

At the United Methodist Association of Communicators annual meeting in October 2025, the Michigan Conference communications team received nine awards for excellence across multiple categories. The team earned first-place honors in news writing for Rev. Susan Hitts' "Answering a community's prayer," in article series for Cheryl Bistay's two-part tribute, and in non-fiction for James Deaton's "Drawing from ancient wells. Additional accolades included third-place recognition for James Deaton's article on United Methodists' healing ministry, an Earth Day of Action series featuring seven writers, Mark Doyal's Advocacy Day motion graphics, the 2024 Annual Conference campaign, and second-place awards for Faith Green Timmons' article on creating artful memoirs and the conference website refresh. Director of Communications Mark Doyal credited the team's success to extraordinary writers, designers, programmers, photographers, videographers, and editors, as well as church members whose ministry shares make this storytelling work possible.

Ongoing Work and Impact

Beyond major projects, the communications team provided continuous support to local churches with social media assistance, event promotion, and website troubleshooting. They offered crisis communication support for churches facing sensitive situations and produced regular publications reaching thousands weekly.

The team's regular output included:

- 12 issues of the *For Your Benefit* newsletter
- 50 issues of the *MIConnect* weekly e-publication for church leadership
- 50 issues of *MIfaith* for broader community engagement

Twenty Michigan stories of mission and ministry, written by staff and a dedicated team of volunteer correspondents, were picked up by UM News and shared with the rest of the denomination through their Daily Digest e-newsletter and social media. James Deaton wrote nine of those articles, and stringers and other guest writers contributed 11. The team also provided essential support to conference staff, boards, and agencies in promoting their work and events throughout the year. Regular promotional efforts included stories ranging from "Seed to Harvest" initiatives like racetrack ministry and paddles to prayers, Freedom Schools updates in Detroit and Flint, celebration of the United Methodist Foundation's 100th anniversary, Ministry Innovation Fund grants totaling \$100,000, Simplified Accountable Structure webinars, disaster response training through the new Connecting Neighbors program, VIM and ERT training promotions, Board of Laity grants, and recognition of Laity Sunday.

Social Media Growth

In 2025, the Michigan Conference demonstrated strong digital engagement across both Facebook and Instagram platforms. The Facebook page grew to 6,314 followers (a 2.5% increase) and generated 647,581 total views throughout the year, with particularly impressive video engagement—3-second views increased 484% and 1-minute views surged 1,093%. Photos remained the strongest content type at 74.4% of all views, with posts about leadership milestones, conference celebrations, and justice initiatives performing especially well. On Instagram, the conference reached 716 followers (adding 82 new followers) and saw engagement double to 677 interactions, representing a 100% increase. Content reached 2,100 accounts (up 6.7%) and generated 14,100 total views. Both platforms showed strong engagement from Michigan cities including Grand Rapids, Detroit, Kalamazoo, and Lansing, with the majority of audiences based in the United States (97.6% on Facebook, 86.7% on Instagram), while also celebrating meaningful global connections from countries including Nigeria, Uganda, Brazil, and the United Kingdom.

Staffing Transitions

Due to ministry share shortfalls, the conference implemented staffing realignments effective January 1, 2026. In communications, Valerie Mossman-Celestin's position was eliminated after years of dedicated service handling newsletter assembly and scheduling. Her responsibilities were transferred to Kristen Gillette and James Deaton, with death notice and tracking duties moved to the benefits office. Sarah Vollmer has remained a part-time employee. The commission worked to ensure Valerie received appropriate recognition for her long-term contributions to conference communications.

Michigan Conference Communications Ministry continues to serve the conference and local churches by providing pathways of communication and connection across the state and beyond. Despite financial constraints and staffing changes, 2025 was a year of significant accomplishment and faithful service. The team remains committed to sharing the mission and ministry of the United Methodist Church and strengthening the bonds of our connectional community. We continue to feel blessed by this ministry.

Submitted by Mark Doyal, Director of Communications.

Conference Secretary of Global Ministries

The Conference Board of Global Ministries, alongside local church partners, welcomed four itinerating missionaries to the Michigan Conference in 2025. Each of these United Methodist missionaries shared about their work of sharing God's love and inspired others in our state to help build God's beloved community together.

In March, Dexter Ceballos, a native of the Philippines, visited several Michigan congregations to share about his work of leadership development, Christian education, and social ministries with the United Methodist Mission in Mongolia, where he serves as country director. Dexter shared stories of cultivating local leadership in the coldest capitol city in the world and helped draw our Michigan congregations into a deeper understanding of how we do the work of sharing God's love in our United Methodist connection.

In April, Charles Mulemena, a missionary from Zambia, also visited churches across the Michigan Conference as part of his global work of building God's beloved community. Charles shared about his ministry of congregational development in the Belize-Honduras District of the Methodist Church in the Caribbean and the Americas, as well as his passion for chaplaincy with young people in the district's schools and college.

In November and December, Dr. Les and Debbie Dornon made a final visit to the Michigan Conference before their retirements in early 2026. Les and Debbie, who are from Ohio and have been supported by the Michigan Conference for many years, shared about their 26 years of missionary work in Nepal. Les, who serves as a physician and training coordinator with the Tansen Hospital, and Debbie, who serves as the hospital's expatriate services coordinator, visited congregations across the state to share about their longstanding mission of health, healing, and sharing God's love.

Both longtime supporters and new partner churches across the conference collaborated to host these itinerating missionaries. We celebrate the hospitality of our Michigan United Methodist Church and are grateful for the ways that our connectional web has been strengthened for future visits.

We also celebrate that, in hosting our missionary siblings, hearing their stories, and learning about their lives and service, United Methodists across Michigan gained deeper insight into how God's love is moving in the world and how they are invited into the work of building God's beloved community together.

Audra Hudson Stone, CSGM

Volunteers in Mission /Michigan Board of Global Ministries

Mission is ;

- *Clothing the poor and hungry
- *Seeing and naming injustice in the world and working to change the systems
- *Reaching out to the hurting in loving compassion
- *Engaging in dialogue with persons of faith
- *Joining with Christians in global partnerships
- *Going into the world to share the Gospel
- From the Mission Team Leader Handbook 2025 Edition

The Michigan UMC Volunteer in Mission program serves domestic and international ministries endorsed by UMC partner churches and non-governmental agencies in cooperation with local hosts. Volunteers work as teams or individuals to provide work and support as requested by mission hosts while building relationships. Mission teams should have a trained VIM leader, register with North Central Jurisdiction and provide insurance for all participants. We carefully monitor the safety levels of an area which determine if a team should travel/work in a location and assist as needed.

Michigan offers three domestic mission sites : Newberry Michigan /GCCM, Randy Hildibrandt Director(rural poverty) ,Cass Community (inner city Detroit) Sue Pethoud Volunteer Coordinator and MoTown Mission(Carl Gladstone) Note the Motown Mission in conjunction with community partners will be the site of the June 2026 Youth Jurisdictional gathering All sites are open to teams from around the US and request calendaring in advance of team participation. Sites are visited on an annual basis and mission team participation numbers are shared across the Jurisdiction .

North Central Jurisdictional Teams 2025 ** Figures are taken from teams requesting insurance and registering with North Central Jurisdiction. Teams work in the categories of construction , health care , long term recovery and Disaster Recovery.

Michigan Conference 2025 Participation Information

Domestic - 50 teams

International : 4

Overall in the Jurisdiction Michigan /East Ohio were both at 24% as having the highest percentage of registered mission journey teams

Early Response Teams register with VIM /purchase insurance, but numbers are reported under a different category .

Five Jurisdictions report data with the Michigan Conference being part of the largest group of volunteers (3,364 and 279 teams)

We are aware via a variety of sources about teams (VIM. Long Term Recovery) that do not register their groups through social media and conference publications Teams are welcome to submit pictures/articles to the Conference web site about their journeys and the NCJ Newsletter also welcomes reports .

Michigan VIM -Long Term Recovery 2025 Training White

Lake /Montague .(27)

CMU and FSU Wesley {8} Chapel

Hill UMC (6)

**One scheduled in fall 2025 was cancelled for low numbers but rescheduled in 2026

Early Relief ,Connecting Neighbors and Volunteer in Mission Training are available as needed by the MI conference trainer . Michigan VIM offers a \$150 scholarship and reimbursement for VIM insurance for first time Michigan Conference mission participants .Teams must have a trained Volunteer in Mission Team leader and apply thru the scholarship process with the MI VIM Coordinator .Information is also on the conference web or by contacting Jody Pratt MI VIM Coordinator , prattgji09@gmail.com .

Michigan also has mission partnerships that operate under a separate structure ,are eligible for VIM scholarships and do receive VIM training as requested.

Liberia: Jon Reynolds

Haiti : Valerie Mossman- Celentine

Donations to the MI VIM First Time International Missioner Scholarship Fund can be made to : Line 4413** , Michigan Conference office. Scholarship funding is also listed as part of ENGAGE MISSION Program ** A special thank you to the churches who donated to the VIM Program Mission Scholarship Fund as we receive close to \$3,000 in 2025 which will in turn be awarded to teams that have completed training with reimbursement up to ten first time participants.

As your Michigan VIM Coordinator, I sit on the Executive Board for the Jurisdiction in the position of Secretary and other committees as designated .Bishop Bard is the Episcopal representative for this group. The September 2025 CONNECT gathering brought all the jurisdictions together in Chicago (

Wespath Headquarters) for a time of meetings, conversations and presentations as to the future of missions in the UMC /UMCOR with CDRC Rev Kayla Roosa and MI VIM Coordinator Jody Pratt attending

Building relationships as we hear, experience, and live out our mission journey is the call Christ placed in our lives. MI VIM Coordinator Jody Pratt can train for Volunteer in Mission-Long Term Recovery or Early Response (ERT) Blessings on your life and as you consider a mission journey. Check the North Central Jurisdiction site listing domestic and international opportunities, the Michigan Conference Mission site or contact MI VIM Coordinator Jody Pratt

Michigan Volunteer in Mission Coordinator, North Central Jurisdiction Board of directors VIM and ERT Trainer
Jody A. Pratt, Middleville UMC

Haiti Taskforce

In 2025, the work of the Michigan United Methodist Haiti Task Force centered on the successful passage and early implementation of the Gardens of Hope legislation. The legislation was approved by an overwhelming majority of members of the Michigan Annual Conference, reflecting a shared commitment to sustained, connectional partnership with the people of Haiti.

Much of the Task Force's work during the year focused on preparing for the Conference vote, including education, advocacy, and interpretation of the legislation's intent and impact. Following passage, the Task Force shifted its efforts toward promoting the Gardens of Hope campaign across the Conference, supporting local churches as they discern how to participate faithfully and meaningfully.

The Gardens of Hope campaign supports four Haitian ministry partners—HAPI (Haitian Assets for Peace International), Grace Children's Hospital, Jeremie Rising, and Grassroots Community Voices Foundation—each of which is rooted in local leadership and long-term community development. Together, these partners address critical needs related to healthcare, education, economic opportunity, food security, and care for displaced and vulnerable populations.

Throughout 2025, the Task Force has increasingly understood its role as serving as a bridge between Haitian communities and Michigan-based United Methodist congregations. This bridging work includes sharing stories from Haitian partners, offering context for the realities facing Haiti today, and providing education that helps churches learn, listen, and engage in relationships that honor Haitian leadership and resilience.

Sharing God's Love with Others

The work of the Michigan United Methodist Haiti Task Force supports this focus by inviting congregations into deeper faith formation through relationship, learning, and shared witness. Through the Gardens of Hope campaign, the Task Force helps churches engage not only through giving, but through listening to Haitian voices, learning the realities facing Haiti today, and reflecting on how God's love is lived out through mutual, global partnership. By sharing stories of resilience, faith, and hope from our Haitian

ministry partners, the Task Force nurtures a renewed understanding of discipleship that is grounded in compassion, solidarity, and shared humanity.

Building the Beloved Community

The Task Force's work also aligns with the Conference's call to build the Beloved Community by centering Haitian-led ministries and modeling partnerships rooted in equity, dignity, and shared leadership. The Gardens of Hope campaign intentionally challenges paternalistic mission models and fosters relationships that honor agency, mutuality, and long-term sustainability. This work contributes to dismantling systemic inequities by reshaping how the Church relates across cultures and borders.

Prepared by Valerie Mossman-Celestin, co-chair of MUMHTF

Connectional Ministries Team

Throughout 2025, the Connectional Ministries Team (CM Team), Laura Witkowski, Kathy Pittenger, Lisa Batten, and Naomi García, continued to launch diverse programs and maintain operational efficiency as we equip and connect our local churches for ministry.

The CM Team successfully fostered spaces for spiritual growth and personal transformation (Sharing God's Love with Others). The Contemplative Cohort was a staff-launched initiative that is now operating as a self-sufficient group with rotating leadership. The Communities of Belonging gatherings remain a cornerstone of our mission, providing safe, inclusive environments where participants experience tangible expressions of God's love. Our work remains rooted in the mantra, "We're making a difference," as we relentlessly address the root causes of issues facing the Michigan Conference.

While we celebrate our inclusive spaces, 2025 was a year of both progress and honest reflection regarding our equity goals (Building Beloved Community). A focused Anti-Bias/Anti-Racism strategy is a continued priority to ensure our work actively dismantles systemic barriers. We acknowledge that progress on the conference's cross-racial/cross-cultural appointment plan was slower than anticipated in 2025. Accelerating this work is an important objective for the coming year. We continue to prioritize 'belonging' in our community gatherings and work, ensuring all voices are heard and valued.

To ensure the long-term viability of our ministries, the team continues to focus on a strategic financial model (Financial Sustainability). Grant Writing and Fund Development 101 workshops were well received and have made an impact in diversifying resources in our local churches. By continuing to pursue partnerships within the jurisdiction and the wider church, we aim to leverage shared resources and increase our collective efficiency.

The newly configured CM Staff have begun a goal-setting framework that ensures every dollar and hour spent is aligned with measurable outcomes and conference-wide priorities. We head into 2026 ready to serve our local churches with renewed focus and dedication.

2025 Connectional Ministries Team

Laura Witkowski, Lead Associate Director of Connectional Ministries

Kathy Pittenger, Associate Director of Connectional Ministries

Lisa Batten, Associate Director of Connectional Ministries

Naomi García, Associate Director of Connectional Ministries

EngageMI

Eighty-four (84) reports were received. Even though ten were not totally complete, all but one had paid 100% of Ministry Shares. All the churches told of marvelous ministries and how each, no matter how small, have been the hands, feet, and voice of God in their communities and around the world. All the congregations, in one manner or another have shared their faith and the love of God by dealing with food insecurities through food pantries, community meals, packing and distributing weekly and holiday food boxes, and community gardens. Many personal relationships have flourished.

Central Bay

Beaverton FUMC, Coleman Faith UMC, , Sanford UMC, St. Luke's UMC Essexville, Lincoln Road UMC Riverdale

East Winds

Bethany UMC Clio, Faith Community UMC Perry, Fenton UMC, Bethel UMC Flint, Court Street UMC Flint, Fostoria UMC, Gaines UMC, Grand Blanc FUMC, Harbor Beach UMC, Howell FUMC, Laingsburg UMC, Lexington UMC, Lincoln Community UMC Ypsilanti, Marysville UMC, Otisville UMC, Owendale UMC, Owosso FUMC, Paint Creek UMC Rochester, Port Hope UMC, Port Huron FUMC, Romeo UMC, United in Christ UMC Clio, Watrousville UMC Caro

Greater Detroit

Big Beaver UMC, Carleton UMC, Orchard UMC Farmington Hills, Ferndale FUMC, Grosse Pointe UMC, St. Matthew's UMC Livonia, Northville FUMC, Utica UMC, Walled Lake UMC, West Bloomfield UMC, Wyandotte FUMC

Greater Southwest

Centreville UMC, Chapel Hill UMC Battle Creek, Gobles UMC, Westwood UMC Kalamazoo, Paw Paw UMC, Scotts UMC

Heritage

Adrian FUMC, Bancroft UMC, Brighton-Whitmore Lake UMC, Delta Mills UMC Lansing, Eaton Rapids FUMC, UMC, Hillsdale FUMC, Holt UMC, Jackson FUMC, Grace UMC Lansing, Milford UMC, Northlake UMC, Oak Grove UMC Howell, Petersburg UMC, Saline FUMC

Northern Skies

Escanaba FUMC, Gladstone Memorial UMC, Hancock FUMC, Trinity UMC Iron Mountain, Wesley UMC Ishpeming, Lake City UMC, Munising UMC, Oscoda UMC,

Western Waters

Georgetown UMC Jenison, St. Paul's UMC Grand Rapids, Grandville UMC, Old Mission Peninsula UMC
Traverse City, Rockford UMC, White Cloud UMC, White Lake UMC

HONORABLE MENTION

Beverly Hills UMC, Colon UMC, Dixboro UMC, Gunnisonville UMC, Marion UMC, Nashville UMC, New
Journey UMC Niles Pinconning UMC Sandusky UMC, West Branch FUMC

Submitted by Laurie Kaufman de la Garza

Committee on Episcopacy

The Committee on Episcopacy (COE) is charged with providing support and guidance with the bishop appointed to the Michigan Conference. We are called to make sure administrative matters, budget and complaints are handled so the bishop can effectively lead. Criteria for our function is provided to the COE through denominational documents and training.

We convene in person or via Zoom, 3-4 times a year as a whole committee. The Chair and Vice-Chair meet up with the bishop for at least one, one-on-one conversation at least once a year. That conversation allows us to listen to the bishop's needs and concerns. The committee meetings allow us to make sure the bishop is relating to staff, leading on task and effectively running church matters. Most importantly, the COE is there to make sure the bishop's living conditions are adequate, his working environment is healthy and his personal self-care is being met.

This past year these meetings took place on schedule. Working with the Bishop's schedule allowed flexibility with timing to account for time needed by the Illinois Great River Conference. We received timely and informative reports from the Bishop and Assistant to the Bishop throughout the year. Updates on the episcopal residence from the Trustees, were also received.

With guidance from the North Central Jurisdiction Committee on Episcopacy, we are in the process of preparing the next steps in episcopal assignments in 2028. A survey was prepared to be done in early 2026, that will tap the pulse of conference leaders on the unique needs of the conference for future episcopal leadership to address.

The COE supports all four of the Conference Foci, by equipping the bishop to be an efficient leader. The COE sustains the bishop in being able to meet the foci goals and develop new pathways when needed.

The COE also provides acts of support to the bishop's family, the Assistant to the Bishop and the Administrative Assistant to the Bishop with expressions of gratitude and support.

The COE will be focusing on the preparation of the bishop's retirement in 2028 and the assignment of a new bishop to the Michigan Conference.

Nichea VerVeer Guy, Chair
Rev. Elbert Dulworth, Vice-Chair

Conference Council on Finance and Administration

The Conference Council on Finance and Administration has been working to encourage increased Ministry Share payments to underwrite the shared ministry of the Annual Conference.

By being the best stewards of the conference's resources, CFA seeks to empower the Michigan Conference to Share God's Love with Others, Build the Beloved Community, Develop Leaders, and achieve Financial Sustainability. Clearly, our work centers first on Financial Sustainability, and to that end, we have begun conversations with churches about stronger remittances of Ministry Shares.

We realize, and need the whole conference to realize, that the reserves of the Michigan Conference are not limitless. We also realize we serve a God of limitless resources and inspiration. We hold these two truths as we make thoughtful, aspirational decisions about our conference's finances. 2025 has been a year of honest conversation and hope for CFA.

Rev. Don Gotham, CFA President

Board of Laity

The Board of Laity's purpose is to:

- Provide support and direction for the ministry of the laity at all levels of the church
- Encourage laity to continue to **LOVE BOLDLY**.
- Foster awareness of the role of the laity in the church and ministry
- Continue to provide ongoing training for lay members to the Michigan Annual Conference
- Provide organizational support for the development of local church lay leadership
- Continue to equip and develop Bold and Effective lay leadership across the Michigan Conference
- Maintain program of making disciples for Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world through our prayers, presence, gifts, service and witness
- Advocate for laity needs across all church levels
- Support the Lay Servant's Ministry Program

The Board of laity once again held two virtual Laity orientation sessions on May 15 and 17, 2025, for Lay Members to the annual conference to share key information, direct participants to conference websites for materials, form connections and answer questions prior to the annual conference. The online sessions were led by members of the Board of Laity in collaboration with the commission on annual conference sessions and provided laity with the tools needed to serve as **Bold, Effective** and **Informed** laity to annual conference.

The Board of Laity was inspired at the Laity Perspective event by stories of Michigan Conference laity as they shared about their new ministry endeavors and how God had strengthened them and led them

forward to reach out in faith, offer healing through art and God's word, and through advocacy and education to promote environmental justice. These stories demonstrated how some of our laity members are becoming Bold and Effective leaders.

On March 12, 2025, Denny attended the 2025 Advocacy Day at the State Capitol which focused on urging the passage of legislation that reverse a 2019 auto no-fault reform care for victims of catastrophic auto accidents.

During the period September 26-28, 2025, Taylorie virtually attended an Association of Annual Conference Lay Leaders (AACLL) conference which focused on going outside the church walls and empowering laity to carry on this work.

During the period October 23-25, 2025, Taylorie and Denny attended the School of Congregational Development (SCD) Laity Bootcamp held at the First United Methodist Church in Kenosha, Wisconsin. This year's theme was See, Create, and Disciple. The three days were filled with speakers who conducted what were called catalyst sessions and workshops on the three topics. On the topic of "See," Ken Willard spoke about Reaching New People and witness, and he provided copies of his book entitled "Beacon of Hope" to all attendees. On the topic of "Create," Dr. Ashley Boggan, the General Secretary of the General Commission on Archives and History, and who will be our guest speaker at the 2026 Michigan Annual Conference, spoke on Lay Vitality as Wesleyan Vile-tality. On the topic of "Disciple," Anne Bosarge spoke on Becoming Mature and Being Disciples Who Make Disciples. Our goal is to share what we gained from the Laity Bootcamp with the Board of Laity, and working on plans on how to share it Conference-wide.

On October 28, and November 11, 2025, we met with Lorene King, the Illinois Great Rivers Conference Lay Leader, at which time much pertinent information was shared on how the lay leaders at both conferences function.

The 2025 Board of Laity Training and Resource Grants (up to \$500.00) were offered for the fifth year to equip leadership, provide continued education and offer the resources for faith formation for the laity. There were 11 applications received, and seven grant recipients were selected and funds approved prior to the end of the calendar year. We thank God for these exciting and diverse ministries supported by these grants. We are looking forward with great anticipation for the summaries this Spring telling of the progress of these new ministries. We continue to pray for God's bountiful blessings upon these ministries and the impact to our communities. Grants awarded include: (1) Newburg UMC (Greater Detroit), Training opportunities for church's lay leaders, specifically for youth leaders and mission trip volunteers; (2) Clare UMC (Central Bay), Update of outdated technology to include streaming of services to reach a greater population; (3) Memorial UMC (Northern Skies), Curriculum for adults' studies to include Adam Hamilton's "The Lord's Prayer" and Amy-Jill Levine's "A Child is Born"; (4) Central Bay District, Leadership training registration fees and textbooks for participants in Lay Servant Ministry classes; (5) South Rockwood UMC (Greater Detroit), Funding to support a subscription to Amplify Media for spiritual growth, education, and outreach; (6) St. Paul UMC (Greater Detroit), Funding for leadership training, the Book of Discipline, Guidelines for Leading Your Congregation, and training for Safe Gatherings; and (7) Redford Aldersgate UMC (Greater Detroit), Amplify Media subscription, leadership development resources, grant writing, and Grantstation workshop, etc.

Additional ministry efforts include the selection of lay equalization members to the 2026 Michigan Annual Conference, and the ongoing support to increase awareness of the Lay Servant Ministry Program.

We will continue to move forward as we work collectively to engage more laity as we “Seek to Make Disciples for Jesus Christ for the Transformation of the World,” through our prayers, our presence, our gifts, our service and our witness. We will also continue to share the love of Jesus by **LOVING BOLDLY!**

MEMBERS WHO JOINED THE BOARD OF LAITY IN 2025

New members were welcomed to the Board of Laity. We gave God the glory for electing two district co-lay leaders and a Scouting Coordinator for the conference as we have much work to do. They are as follows:

Allyn Abel, Scouting Coordinator
Laurie Kaufman, Northern Skies District Co-Lay Leader
Jeannine Page-Tear, East Winds District Co-Lay Leader

MEMBERS WHO DEPARTED FROM THE BOARD OF LAITY IN 2025

We also celebrated the service of one departing member of the Board of Laity as we bid a fond farewell to:

Ruby Anderson, Greater Detroit District Lay Leader
Taylorie Bailey – Conference Co-Lay Leader - Board of Laity Chair
Denny Wissinger – Conference Co-Lay Leader

Board of Ordained Ministry

In 2025, the Michigan Conference Board of Ordained Ministry continued to deepen its work of credentialing called persons for professional ministry, and supporting those working in the great diversity represented in those ministries. All that we do is to drive the Michigan Conference Focus on the “Development of Leaders - Equipped to Lead the Conference in its New Priorities”.

Clergy Session of Annual Conference, with business folded into a worshipful liturgy including singing, affirming the many recommendations of the Board and the District Committees on Ministry doing their work on behalf of the Board. In gratitude we acknowledged 22 Certified Lay Ministers! We celebrated 4 graduates of the Licensed Local Pastor Course of Study. One new Associate Member was received. 5 persons were Commissioned and received as Provisional Members of the Annual Conference, while one Provisional Member transferred into our Conference. 8 persons were Ordained and Received into Full Membership, while 2 Full Members were received as transfers. Once again, the work of Clergy Session moved along well with the continued use of a consent calendar for more “proforma” items in the Clergy Session Business of Annual Conference.

This year, we heard an inspiring report from the BOM Treasurer, Rev. Susan Hitts. Diligent work in recovering “missing” MEF funds has meant that the Board has been able to make sure that all

conference mandated learning will be covered upon completion. This includes Boundary training, ABAR training, Safe Gathers training, and more!

Rev. Kathy Pittenger reported on the progress, approved by Clergy Session in 2024, of Safe Gathering training for all churches AND all clergy.

Rev. Sue Platt and I presented a challenge for clergy to recapture a lost culture of mentoring among clergy. Persons were asked to submit written or digital commitments to take Mentoring training. More than 75 persons signed on!

The Clergy Session concluded with a presentation by Revs. Tania Dozeman and Jeremy Wicks on the covenant document, "Guidelines for Our Life Together". Each person was giving the opportunity to sign the document on site and to post it publicly as a way of supporting, and committing to, the covenant we share.

In the evening, after Clergy Session, we celebrated the retirees who have served so faithfully for so many years. Revs. Mike Desotel and Tim Ziegler were the MCs for a full fun evening of music, poetry, video testimonies of lives and ministries well-lived. assisted by Rev. Caleb Williams, and Rev. Sari Brown providing music. Rev. Jenaba Waggy, Rev. Jeremy Peters, and Rev. Dillon Burns offered thought-provoking poetry, while the retirees gave testimony via video of their lives of faith and service. An awesome reception with desserts and beverages followed the event.

Membership on the Board of Ordained Ministry is in four-year terms, with a two-term run being common and a three-term run being possible with the approval of the Bishop. In 2024-2025, we celebrated the ministries of, and said farewell to, Revs. Mark Thiompson, Greg Lawton, Terri Bentley, Ted Whitely, and Lay Member, Laure Mieskowski. Even as we regretted the loss of these partners in ministry, we welcomed the new voices of Lay Member Taylorie Bailey, and Rev. Steve Perrine.

The Board of Ordained Ministry continues to be about working with individuals who feel the call of God in their lives, to discern whether that call is, indeed, within The United Methodist Church. We understand that this is a sacred trust given to us by the Michigan Conference through Bishop David A. Bard. The work we are about would not be possible without our intentional bathing of that work in prayer and deep trust in the work of the Holy Spirit. On behalf of the BOM, I thank you for the trust you place in us.

Barry Petrucci, Chair

Conference Board of Pension and Health Benefits

MICHIGAN CONFERENCE BENEFITS

The Michigan Conference continues to be positioned financially to be able to provide robust benefits to its members.

Benefits Billings (BB)

Benefits Billings (BB) continue to be billed monthly to every local church to fund current conference retirement and welfare plan liabilities as well as all ministries through the Conference Board of Pension & Health Benefits/Benefits Office (CBOPHB). The amount of the Benefits Billing is calculated using a fixed percentage of each church's clergy compensation. The percentage is determined on an annual basis and adjusted to reflect appointments of half time or less, retiree appointments, or District Superintendent Assignments. The monthly BB amount will be based on a flat rate for a local church with no appointment or assignment.

Health Care

The CBOPHB reaffirms its commitment to providing a comprehensive, sustainable group health care plan for active and retired clergy while annually assessing the financial realities required to provide this benefit. Health insurance expenses are billed monthly to local churches.

2025 & 2026 both saw increases in premiums for our active health insurance program. Additionally, in 2026 the co-insurance amount increased from 10% to 20%. The co-pay for ER visits also increased. All of these steps were taken in order to correct for and attempt to prevent further financial losses in the active plan's reserve.

Commitment to Education

The Director of Benefits, Joel Walther, has made it a priority to educate clergy on their benefits. We already do a pre-retirement seminar each year to prepare people for retirement. Last year we held our first Early Ministry Benefits Seminar at the Annual Conference Session. It was well received and we are continuing that again this year. Rev. Walther continues to attend meetings with whenever he can and is always willing to be available to any group of clergy that would like to learn more about benefits.

The Benefits Office added to its monthly newsletter offerings with a short video each month called 3 Minutes 4 Your Benefit, which are meant to be easily digestible segments of information about benefits for clergy, both active and retired.

New Retirement Plan Kicked Off

The new retirement program, Compass, took effect January 1, 2026.

In July, 2025 the Benefits Office started collecting all personal contributions from clergy in order to prepare ahead of time for that transition which would have happened with Compass January 1. That transition has gone remarkably well.

New Grants for Clergy

Starting July 1, 2026, clergy will be able to apply for two new grant opportunities. These came out of a study that the Director of Conference Benefits did on clergy burnout in our Conference. These two grant programs are 1) Renewal Leave grants available to clergy once every 7 years of up to \$5,000 to cover the costs of being away from their church for renewal leave, for educational/travel expenses and other costs of taking Renewal Leave. When clergy apply, they are offered the chance to work with a coach to make a

Renewal Leave plan and then to propose that plan and the financial need for consideration of the grant.

2) Wellness grants available to clergy of up to \$4,000 per quadrennium. These grants are meant to be much broader, allowing clergy to articulate in the application how the grant will increase their well-being. This grant could be used for things like gym memberships, wellness program subscriptions, etc. These applications will be reviewed by a sub-committee of the CBOPHB.

The CBOPHB has earmarked \$300,000 for these two grant programs for 2026. Grants will be made until those funds are expended.

PRIOR YEAR BENEFITS-RELATED BALANCES

Billings generated by the CBOPHB are directly associated with current liabilities for clergy/employee benefits or deferred compensation. Any payments not reimbursed to the CBOPHB by the local church or other agencies, by default, are absorbed by the CBOPHB and ultimately the Annual Conference for the expenses incurred. Therefore, permanent records of outstanding balances for retirement plan contributions, welfare plan premiums and health care expenses are kept on file by the CBOPHB with the intention to recover the balances in the future.

Historically, BB receipts have been remitted at a high level, usually well above 90%. 2025 was no different with an average collection rate between health insurance and BB of nearly 98%. The CBOPHB is grateful for the continued priority that most churches make BB and health insurance premiums.

The following list includes the balances on record as of January 1, 2026 for both BB and health insurance premiums. Please know that these are to the best of our knowledge. Any past due amount less than \$1,000 has not been noted as these amounts are usually easily resolved and the Benefits Office does not see a need to list them in this report. If you believe there is an error in this list, please contact The Conference Benefits Office.

If left unaddressed, these balances must become part of a local church's financial plan when a local church considers building expansion, merger, separation, or closure. Please contact the Conference Benefits Office to discuss payment options for prior year amounts.

Church	Benefits Billings	Health	Total
Adrian: First	\$4,888	\$0	\$4,888
Algonac: Trinity	\$1,917	\$0	\$1,917
Alma	\$0	\$2,371	\$2,371
Alpena: First	\$1,103	\$0	\$1,103
Bangor: Simpson	\$4,993	\$36,822	\$41,815
Barryton: Faith	\$1,390	\$0	\$1,390

Battle Creek: Christ	\$0	\$22,226	\$22,226
Battle Creek: First	\$0	\$1,003	\$1,003
Battle Creek: Washington Hts	\$1,200	\$13,862	\$15,062
Bay City: Grace	\$1,236	\$2,328	\$3,564
Bellaire: Community	\$15,676	\$0	\$15,676
Birch Run	\$4,575	\$4,764	\$9,339
Blanchard-Pine River	\$4,065	\$0	\$4,065
Blissfield: First	\$528	\$6,344	\$6,872
Bradley: Indian Mission	\$8,757	\$0	\$8,757
Burr Oak	\$1,170	\$0	\$1,170
Burton: Christ	\$1,687	\$0	\$1,687
Burton: Open Door	\$2,698	\$0	\$2,698
Carleton	\$1,950	\$0	\$1,950
Charlevoix: Greensky Hill	\$12,747	\$13,302	\$26,049
Chase: Barton	\$1,908	\$0	\$1,908
Clawson	\$1,813	\$0	\$1,813
Concord	\$6,369	\$13,279	\$19,648
Coopersville: Faith Community	\$6,483	\$0	\$6,483
Crystal Falls: Christ	\$11,757	\$3,449	\$15,206
Dearborn: Good Shepherd	\$5,722	\$3,869	\$9,591
Detroit: Calvary	\$3,491	\$0	\$3,491
Detroit: Centro Familiar Cristiano	\$6,702	\$131,889	\$138,591
Detroit: Conant Avenue	\$18,423	\$0	\$18,423
Detroit: Grace Community	\$11,558	\$41,739	\$53,297
Detroit: Peoples	\$46,516	\$13,818	\$60,334
Detroit: Resurrection	\$17,453	\$0	\$17,453
Detroit: St. Paul	\$33,848	\$20,380	\$54,228
Eaton Rapids: First	\$2,534	\$0	\$2,534
Evart	\$0	\$5,670	\$5,670

Fennville	\$120	\$10,050	\$10,170
Ferndale: First		\$14,392	\$14,392
Flint: Asbury	\$4,734	\$0	\$4,734
Flint: Bristol	\$2,681	\$0	\$2,681
Garden City	\$4,276	\$0	\$4,276
Goodrich	\$1,078	\$194	\$1,272
Gordonville	\$1,825	\$0	\$1,825
Grand Rapids: First	\$2,935	\$0	\$2,935
Grand Rapids: La Nueva Esperanza	\$18,452	\$100,447	\$118,899
Grand Rapids: Northlawn	\$0	\$4,165	\$4,165
Halsey	\$13,695	\$0	\$13,695
Hancock: First	\$0	\$6,438	\$6,438
Harper Woods: Redeemer	\$1,361	\$0	\$1,361
Harrietta	\$641	\$749	\$1,390
Harrisville	\$1,053	\$0	\$1,053
Hopkins		\$2,136	\$2,136
Howarth	\$83	\$14,829	\$14,912
Jackson: Brookside		\$2,177	\$2,177
Jackson: Trinity	\$4,362	\$0	\$4,362
Kingsley	\$1,061	\$0	\$1,061
Lake Ann	\$8,810	\$0	\$8,810
Lake Orion	\$1,753	\$0	\$1,753
Lawrence	\$5,999	\$0	\$5,999
Linden	\$1,404	\$0	\$1,404
Livonia: St. Matthews	\$0	\$2,361	\$2,361
Lowell: First	\$2,607	\$0	\$2,607
Lowell: Vergennes	\$0	\$3,702	\$3,702
Ludington: United	\$0	\$2,519	\$2,519
Madison Heights	\$3,742	\$0	\$3,742

Madison Hts: Vietnamese Ministry	\$5,098	\$0	\$5,098
Manton	\$9,070	\$3,642	\$12,712
Martin	\$13,082	\$17,037	\$30,119
Mesick	\$2,018	\$10,539	\$12,557
Millville	\$1,694	\$0	\$1,694
Monterey Center	\$16,719	\$0	\$16,719
Morenci	\$2,658	\$0	\$2,658
Mt. Morris: First	\$0	\$38,221	\$38,221
Mt. Pleasant: Chippewa Indian	\$1,440	\$0	\$1,440
Mt. Pleasant: Countryside	\$1,931	\$0	\$1,931
Mt. Pleasant: First	\$2,188	\$0	\$2,188
Mt. Pleasant: Trinity	\$1,383	\$0	\$1,383
Muskegon: Crestwood	\$1,655	\$0	\$1,655
Newaygo	\$12,558	\$4,241	\$16,799
Niles: Portage Prairie	\$33,991	\$0	\$33,991
Norwood	\$1,440	\$0	\$1,440
Novi	\$11,708	\$0	\$11,708
Oscoda	\$1,686	\$0	\$1,686
Oshtemo	\$2,675	\$0	\$2,675
Otsego	\$1,595	\$0	\$1,595
Paw Paw	\$5,272	\$28,706	\$33,978
Pigeon: First	\$734	\$2,171	\$2,905
Pinckney: Arise	\$37,489	\$0	\$37,489
Pontiac: Grace & Peace Community	\$1,935	\$17,439	\$19,374
Pontiac: St. John	\$1,400	\$0	\$1,400
Port Hope	\$1,575	\$0	\$1,575
Portage: Chapel Hill	\$0	\$5,364	\$5,364
Redford: Aldersgate	\$1,160	\$0	\$1,160
Rochester: St. Paul's	\$1,954	\$0	\$1,954

Romeo	\$2,063	\$0	\$2,063
Rose City: Trinity	\$2,132	\$0	\$2,132
Salem: Indian Mission	\$18,916	\$3,135	\$22,051
Schoolcraft	\$0	\$2,937	\$2,937
Shepardsville	\$5,715	\$0	\$5,715
Southfield: Hope	\$11,778	\$0	\$11,778
Sunfield	\$1,100	\$0	\$1,100
Vassar: First	\$2,231	\$0	\$2,231
Vicksburg	\$1,447	\$4,203	\$5,650
Wacousta Community	\$930	\$2,153	\$3,083
Washington	\$1,423	\$0	\$1,423
Waterford: Four Towns	\$16,347	\$0	\$16,347
Wayland	\$1,043	\$0	\$1,043
Wellsville	\$2,880	\$0	\$2,880
Wesley Foundation/FSU	\$3,312	\$2,217	\$5,529
West Bloomfield	\$1,181	\$0	\$1,181
Wyoming Park	\$0	\$2,421	\$2,421
Closed Churches			
Detroit: Mt. Hope	\$33,603	\$0	\$33,603
Shelby	\$3,290	\$37,565	\$40,855
Whitmore Lake: Wesley	\$6,467	\$0	\$6,467
Conference Totals	\$619,794	\$683,265	\$1,303,058

STEPS TO RETIREMENT

The following information should be examined by anyone contemplating retirement within the next ten years.

Review the *2020/2024 Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church*, ¶358, pertaining to retirement.

1. Attend a pre-retirement seminar within 10 years of retirement.
2. Confirm your service record with Wespath Benefits & Investments to assure that it is accurate. This is especially important with respect to pre-1982 service and the post-2006 Clergy Retirement Security Program (CRSP) Plans since these benefits are calculated based upon years of service. Often it takes significant time to correct a special situation or service record error.
3. Confirm your Social Security record to be certain that all payments have been properly credited. The Social Security Administration is not required to correct errors over 3 years old.
4. Notify in writing the following persons by January 1 for the following year's July retirement season:
 - a. Resident Bishop
 - b. Your District Superintendent
 - c. Rev. Joel Walther, Director of Conference Benefits & Coordinator of Human Resources
 - d. Rev. Deborah Johnson, Chairperson of Committee on Conference Relations of the Board of Ordained Ministry (BOM)
5. Once your intention to retire is confirmed in writing by the Office of the Bishop, the Benefits Office notifies Wespath Benefits & Investments and materials are sent directly to the participant from Wespath detailing retirement plan payment options. A pension projection is available anytime through the Wespath at 800-851-2201 or www.benefitsaccess.org.
6. Review and update all beneficiary designations on your Retirement and Welfare Accounts at Wespath Benefits & Investments.
7. Health Insurance
 - a. Review the conference eligibility and cost sharing requirements for health care coverage in retirement. It is the subscriber's responsibility to understand the specific rules relating to eligibility for coverage in retirement prior to the subscriber's retirement date. This information is available in the Conference Health Care Policy, printed in the Conference Board of Pension and Health Benefits Annual Historical Report annually. The most recent copy of the Health Care Policy can be obtained by contacting the Benefits Office.
 - b. If you are retiring at age 65 or older, you are eligible for Medicare. You (and your spouse if Medicare eligible) must enroll in Medicare Part A and Part B effective the date of your retirement to qualify for the Conference Retiree Group Coverage. If you opted out of Social Security, you must arrange to purchase Medicare Benefits in order to be eligible for coverage under the Conference Retiree Group Coverage. Send photocopies of Medicare cards for you and your spouse to the Conference Benefits Office as soon as they become available. This is essential in order to coordinate health care coverage and avoid lengthy delays and/or denials of medical claims. If you do not have Medicare

coverage within 30 days after your retirement date, coverage may be terminated and once terminated cannot be reinstated.

- c. If you are retiring earlier than age 65, you (and your spouse) must enroll in Medicare Part A and Part B when reaching age 65 in order to continue health coverage through the conference. Send photocopies of Medicare cards for you and your spouse to the Conference Benefits Office as soon as they become available. This is essential in order to coordinate health care coverage and avoid lengthy delays and/or denials of medical claims. If you do not have Medicare coverage within 30 days after turning 65, coverage may be terminated and once terminated cannot be reinstated.

CONFERENCE HEALTH CARE POLICIES

Introduction: This section describes the provisions and requirements of the Michigan Conference group health care plans. All available benefits are at all times subject to and may be limited, denied, or terminated based on applicable underwriting provisions, contract terms, eligibility rules, and premium payment requirements. All required submissions, underwriting, and payments must be remitted in a timely manner. ***It is the subscriber's responsibility to understand the specific rules relating to eligibility for coverage both while active and in retirement. Questions may be directed to the Conference Benefits Office or submitted in writing to the Conference Board of Pension & Health Benefits. Do not rely on verbal responses to questions raised in informational meetings or provided by representatives other than the Board of Pension & Health Benefits.***

ACTIVE GROUP HEALTH CARE PLAN

Enrollment/Effective Date of Coverage: Health Care eligibility begins the first day of a new appointment/hire, change in appointment/employment status, or a life-qualifying event (i.e. loss of other health coverage), provided all required submissions, underwriting, and payments have been remitted in a timely manner. All available benefits are at all times subject to and may be limited, denied, or terminated based on applicable underwriting provisions, contract terms, eligibility rules, and premium payment requirements. It is the responsibility of the subscriber to submit enrollment forms within the required timeframe. ***If the enrollment process is not completed within 30 days of eligibility, the subscriber must wait until the next open enrollment period.***

Eligible Subscribers: Active Plan eligible classes include the following:

(Full-time for health coverage eligibility is defined as regularly working at least 30 hours per week)

1. Full-time Clergy (Ordained Clergy and Local Pastors) under Episcopal appointment with the Michigan Conference as the responsible agency for providing benefits.
2. Full-time Lay Employees of the Michigan Conference and its approved, related agencies
3. Full-time Lay Employees of a local church (including District Superintendent Assignments) until the employee turns age 65 provided the local church lay employee policy offers health care to all eligible full-time lay employees. All conference eligibility requirements must be observed. The local church is the responsible agency for all lay employee health insurance premiums. Premium-sharing schedules may be determined by local church employee policies but must meet employee affordability requirements as defined by the Affordable Care Act (ACA).

4. Clergy and Conference/Related Agency Lay Employees on Medical Leave receiving disability benefits, provided the subscriber was enrolled in the Michigan Conference Group Active Health Care Plan at the time they were granted Medical leave.
 - a. The subscriber must enroll in Medicare Part A and Part B at the date of first eligibility.
 - b. The subscriber is responsible for submitting a copy of the subscriber's Medicare card to the Conference Benefits Office at the time of Medicare enrollment to assure the proper coordination of benefits.
5. Dependents of deceased Clergy and Conference/Related Agency Lay Employee subscribers provided the dependents were enrolled in the group active health care plan at the time of the subscriber's death.
 - a. Dependents of a retired subscriber will continue health coverage under the same eligibility and funding provisions as the subscriber.
 - b. A surviving spouse that remarries will continue to receive the health care benefit. However, the new spouse is not eligible for coverage.
6. Enrolled dependents of deceased Local Church employee subscribers as allowable by the health care plan if continued coverage is a provision of the local church employee policy, and if the local church maintains responsibility for the health insurance premiums.

Eligible Dependents:

1. Spouse.
2. Children and Legal Dependents under age 26.
3. Qualifying Adult Children with disabilities. (Per insurance regulations, Adult Children with disabilities may not continue on the conference plan after the subscriber is deceased.)

Changes in Eligibility: All changes in appointment, employee, or family status that affect eligibility in health coverage must be submitted within 30 days of the date the change occurs, otherwise loss, lapses, or gaps in coverage may occur. Subscribers are responsible for providing family status changes (including marriages, births, adoptions, legal guardianships) in writing to the Conference Benefits Office. A delay in notification could mean a delay or denial of coverage until the next open enrollment period.

Working Aged 65: Active Clergy under eligible Michigan Conference Appointment and Conference Lay Employees in Conference/Related Agency employment retain eligibility status in the conference active group health care plan.

1. The conference active group plan continues to be the subscriber's primary coverage.
2. Subscribers and dependents must enroll in Medicare Part A at the time they turn age 65, but are not required to enroll in Medicare Part B until the effective date of the subscriber's retirement.
3. The subscriber is responsible for submitting a copy of the subscriber/dependent Medicare card to the Conference Benefits Officer at the time of Medicare enrollment to assure the proper coordination of benefits.

Funding of Active Health Care Policies:

1. Active Clergy and Conference/Related Agency Employees: Health insurance premiums are shared by the salary-paying unit (Michigan Conference, Conference Related Agency, or Local Church) and the subscriber according to the contribution schedule as established by the Conference Board of Pension & Health Benefits action.
2. Disabled Clergy and Conference/Related Agency Employees: Health insurance premiums are paid by the Michigan Conference to the extent established by CBOPHB action.
3. Dependents of deceased Clergy and Conference/Related Agency Lay Employee subscribers: Health insurance premiums are paid by the Michigan Conference to the extent established by CBOPHB action.

Termination:

2. A subscriber may voluntarily terminate a subscriber's health insurance policy by submitting a request in writing to the Conference Benefits Office.
3. Health insurance policies are terminated the date of a subscriber's termination from an eligible Clergy Appointment or Conference/Related Agency employment.
 - a. Coverage for terminated employees cannot be extended since COBRA coverage is not offered through the Michigan Conference.
 - b. Under special provisions of the CBOPHB, a policy will be extended for up to one year for a clergyperson appointed to an eligible leave of absence status. Eligible leaves of absence include Medical Leave and Sabbatical Leave only.
4. Health Insurance policies for a local church employee are terminated effective:
 - a. The termination date of local church employment. Coverage cannot be extended since COBRA coverage is not offered through the Michigan Conference.
 - b. The first of the month in which the subscriber turns age 65.
5. Health Insurance policies will be terminated for non-payment of premiums according to the following schedule:
 - a. Policy may be terminated at six months in arrears.
 - b. In a delinquency situation involving a clergyperson appointed to a local church, a repayment plan must be submitted to and approved by the Executive Committee of The Board of Pension & Health Benefits to extend coverage past the six-month period.
 - c. A terminated policy may be reinstated within 30 days of termination if the outstanding balance has been remitted in full.

Waiver of Coverage:

1. ***Mandatory Enrollment:*** The active group health care plan is generally a mandatory plan for all eligible appointed clergy. Appointed clergy may waive coverage if they have alternate health care coverage from any of the following sources:
 - a. A spouse's employer's plan (must be a group plan)

- b. A military plan
 - c. A former employer's plan
 - d. A Medicaid plan
2. Enrollment of eligible dependents is optional as determined by the subscriber.
3. Eligible Clergy and Conference/Related Agency Lay Employees that waive conference health care coverage must have a Waiver of Coverage form on file in the Michigan Conference Benefits Office.
4. Persons waiving coverage have the opportunity to enroll themselves and eligible dependents in the conference health care plan annually during open enrollment or at the time of a life-qualifying event.

LONG TERM DISABILITY HEALTH CARE PLAN

When a participant moves to long term disability, they are expected to apply for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) through the federal government. While they are in the process of applying for SSI, they and their dependents will remain on the Active Health Care Plan. Once they are approved for SSI, they move to our Retiree Medicare Advantage program and their dependents move to our Pre-65 Plan until they reach the age of 65, at which time they will move to the Retiree Medicare Advantage Program, or they reach the age where they are no longer covered as a dependent.

The participant and their dependents are able to stay on the active plan for up to 12 months while they apply for SSI. If the application process takes longer than 12 months, then after 12 months they and their dependents will be moved to the Pre-65 Plan, unless a dependent is already age 65 or greater, in which case they will move to the Retiree Medicare Advantage Program while the participant and the rest of the dependents under 65 will be on the Pre-65 Plan. The participant will remain on the Pre-65 Plan until their SSI application is complete and then will move to the Retiree Medicare Advantage Program.

If a participant does not plan to apply for SSI for some reason, they and their dependents will be moved to the Pre-65 Plan until they and their dependents reach the age of 65, at which time they move to the Retiree Medicare Advantage Program, or their dependents reach the age where they are no longer covered as a dependent.

RETIREE GROUP HEALTH CARE PLAN

Introduction:

This section describes the provisions and requirements of the Michigan Conference retiree group health care plan. All available benefits are at all times subject to and may be limited, denied, or terminated based on applicable underwriting provisions, contract terms, eligibility rules, and premium payment requirements. All required submissions, underwriting, and payments must be remitted in a timely manner. ***It is the subscriber's responsibility to understand the specific rules relating to eligibility for coverage in retirement prior to the subscriber's retirement date. Questions may be directed to the Conference Benefits Office or submitted in writing to the Board of Pension & Health Benefits. Do not rely on verbal responses to questions raised in informational meetings or provided by representatives***

other than the Board of Pension & Health Benefits.

It is crucial that clergy who have served appointments during their career in Extension Ministries or another Annual Conference are knowledgeable regarding years of service credit, coverage, and cost sharing in order to effectively plan for retirement.

Eligibility and Cost Sharing:

1. The Participant must be a member of Michigan Conference at time of retirement to be eligible.
2. The Participant must have served for the 10 years immediately prior to retirement in Episcopal appointment where the Michigan Conference (or predecessor conferences) is the responsible agency for participant benefits.
3. Participant & dependents must be enrolled in the Michigan Conference active health care plan prior to retirement. In most cases, this means at least since the open enrollment period immediately preceding retirement.
4. Legacy populations have been established for clergy members/conference employees of the former Detroit and West Michigan Conferences for all current retirees and all active participants who are eligible to retire by January 1, 2024. "Eligible to Retire" refers to the definitions as defined by the *2020/2024 Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church*.
5. To be eligible, the Participant must also have the following Total Years of Service:
 - a. Legacy Detroit Conference members = 10 years
 - b. Legacy West Michigan Conference members = 15 years
 - c. Non-legacy Michigan Conference members = 15 years
6. Legacy populations will follow the provisions of their respective former conference that were in place December 31, 2018 in determining post-retirement cost sharing, as follows:
 - a. Detroit Conference Legacy Population
 - Participant premium share based on years of service per legacy policy: pre-2007 (0%-60%) or 2007-post (10%-70%)*
 - b. West Michigan Conference Legacy Population
 - Participant premium share based on years of service per legacy policy (30%-60%)*
7. Post-retirement health care eligibility and cost sharing for participants not included in either legacy population are determined per the health care policy as established by the CBOPHB and are currently:
 - a. Participant premium share will be based on the **lesser** of either:
 - Years of service at time of retirement (30%-60%)*
 - Premium share percentage in effect 12/31/2018
8. If a participant retires under the 20-year rule:
 - a. The requirements the same as early or normal retirement, plus:

- Participant must remain on the conference plan at participant's expense until age 65
 - At age 65, the Michigan Conference pays a portion of premium based on Years of Service*
9. If a clergy person retired or left the ministry for the reason that they are a member of the LGBTQIA+ community, and the stance of the United Methodist Church before the General Conference held in 2024 prevented them from continuing in ministry, then they returned to ministry in the Michigan Conference of The United Methodist Church following the change of the church's stance, their seniority will be bridged in regards to health care in retirement as long as they remain in active service in a Michigan Conference of The United Methodist Church qualifying appointment until they retire and will be eligible for the retiree health insurance subsidy based on those bridged years of service as a total.
 10. Conference Lay Employees must have 30 years of service or reach age 62, and have been employed 15 years immediately prior to retirement to be eligible for health care.
 11. Local Church Lay Employees are not eligible in retirement.
 12. Individuals may contact the Conference Benefits Office to confirm eligibility and specific cost sharing at the time of retirement.

*Years of service in other Conferences are not included when calculating the credit towards post-retirement health insurance.

Enrollment:

Regardless of whether a participant retires under the 20 year rule, early retirement or full retirement as set forth by the *Book of Discipline*, the participant, if eligible, will be enrolled in a plan based on their age at retirement. Participants must notify the Bishop and others as required by the *Book of Discipline* at least 120 days prior to the date on which retirement is to be effective, which is also required by the *Book of Discipline* and also gives the participant enough time to transition to Medicare if needed, or they will not be eligible for Retiree Health Care Coverage. Those that meet the above requirements will be enrolled as follows:

1. If a participant or dependent is under 65 years of age, they will be enrolled in a Pre-65 Retiree plan. This retiree plan includes medical, dental, vision and prescription coverage. The participant and any dependent under the age of 65 will remain on this plan until they turn 65 or they reach the age where they are no longer covered as a dependent.
 - a. Approximately three months before a participant or dependent turns 65, they should apply for Medicare Part A & B for a start date on the 1st of the month in which they turn 65. The Benefits Office makes its best effort to alert people of this transition as it can take at least three months to be approved.
 - b. Once the person turning 65 has received their Medicare Card, they must provide a copy of the card to the Benefits Office prior to the 1st of the month in which they turn 65.

- c. If a person turning 65 is unable to apply for Medicare by the 1st of the month in which they turn 65, they will be allowed a 30 day grace period where they will continue on the Pre-65 Retiree plan. After this 30 day window, if Medicare coverage is not in place, the participant and any dependents' coverage may be terminated and once terminated cannot be reinstated.
2. If a participant or dependent is age 65 or older, they will be enrolled in a Post- 65 Retiree plan. This retiree plan includes medical, dental, vision and prescription coverage.
 - a. Approximately three months prior to the participant's retirement any participant or dependent age 65 or older should apply for Medicare Part A & B, if they have not previously applied for Part A. If they have previously applied for Medicare Part A, they should apply for Part B. They should apply with a start date on the 1st of the month in which the participant is retiring. The Benefits Office begins notifying people of their need to start this application process at least three months before their retirement because it can take that long to be approved.
 - b. Once any participant or dependent who is 65 or older has received their Medicare Card, they must provide a copy of the card to the Benefits Office prior to the 1st of the month in which the participant retires.
 - c. If any participant or dependent is unable to apply for Medicare by the 1st of the month in which the participant retires, they will be allowed a 30 day grace period where they will continue on the Active plan. However, they will be responsible for the full cost of that month of coverage including any portion their church paid on a monthly basis for their health insurance at the time of their retirement as well as the monthly employee premium contribution rate that was in place at the time of that participant's retirement. After this 30 day window, if Medicare coverage is not in place, the participant and any dependents' coverage may be terminated and once terminated cannot be reinstated.

Termination:

1. A subscriber may terminate their health insurance policy during retirement at any time. However, the termination is non-revocable and a subscriber cannot re-enroll at a future date.
2. The health insurance policy of a retired ordained minister whose clergy membership is terminated with the Michigan Conference for any reason will be terminated the effective date of the termination of the subscriber's clergy membership.
3. Health insurance policies will be terminated for non-payment of premiums according to the following schedule:
Policy may be terminated at six months in arrears.
 - a. A terminated policy may be reinstated within 30 days of termination if the outstanding balance has been remitted in full.
 - b. Since termination of a retiree policy is permanent following the 30 day window for reinstatement, subscribers in a delinquency situation are strongly encouraged to initiate communication with the Executive Committee of The Board of Pension & Health Benefits to negotiate a realistic repayment schedule prior to the date of termination.

The Conference Board of Pension and Health Benefits (CBOPHB) is authorized by the Michigan Annual Conference to negotiate, compromise, submit to arbitration, or retain legal counsel regarding any claims for benefits that may arise under the Michigan Conference Benefits Plans. This includes the current Michigan Conference Group Health Care Plan, the Michigan Conference Lay Employee Retirement and Welfare plans, the United Methodist Clergy Retirement and Welfare Plans, as well as other plans instituted in the future. 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.

Presented by The Michigan Conference Board of Pension & Health Benefits

Rev. Amy E. Mayo-Moyle, President

Rev. Joel L. Walther, Director of Conference Benefits

TREASURY OFFICE

The Treasury office continues to work diligently on managing the finances of the Conference.

The Treasury staff also accomplished many tasks in 2025. In addition to the day-to-day workload of the office, the staff continues to work to automate many of our processes.

Some of the Treasury team's major accomplishments for 2025 were:

- Completion of the 2024 fiscal year audit with a clean opinion
- Ongoing upgrade of Donor Direct software for tracking contributions
- Enrolling many local churches in an online donation process
- Attended GCFA Quadrennial Training

Our focus for 2026 will be to work with the Assistant to the Bishop and the Special Assistant to the Bishop for Mission and Budget to improve ministry share collection rates, manage mission church and other Conference expenses, and to continue to seek improvement and streamlining of processes and better fiscal controls.

Campus Ministries

Central Michigan University Wesley Foundation

The Wesley Foundation at Central Michigan University (Wesley at CMU) is a historic, United Methodist campus ministry in Mount Pleasant, Michigan. At Wesley at CMU, our hope is for all people to know themselves as God's beloved and to work to build God's beloved community on earth together.

In 2025, we celebrated our ninety-ninth year of ministry at CMU. We continued our core ministries of creative worship, small groups, free weekly community meals, service and justice projects, connective community-building events, and affordable student housing all while creating new

ministry initiatives for young people to experience God's love, grow as leaders, and build God's beloved community.

In March, CMU Wesley partnered with FSU Wesley House to take nearly thirty college students to Asheville, North Carolina for a week of service and learning. There, young adults learned about recovery efforts in the wake of Hurricane Helene and how people of faith are responding in the way of God's love and mercy. Students engaged with community partners organizing transitional housing and flood relief and United Methodist churches serving as food distribution hubs and places of belonging for people on the margins. Students deepened their understanding of God's love, especially for the suffering and marginalized, and grew as young leaders in our church.

This fall, Wesley at CMU also launched a monthly dinner church called "The Crowded Table," focused on celebrating God's all-inclusive love like Jesus, over a shared table. This ministry collaborates with young adult leaders, artists, musicians, poets, more to co-create this worship space, engaging students from set-up and meal-prep to worship leadership and dishes. This creative and invitational offering has come alongside our existing feeding programs of a mini food pantry and free weekly lunch, all while expanding our work of sharing God's love on campus and developing young leaders in the process.

Throughout the year, Wesley at CMU also engaged in creative partnership building with other communities in our United Methodist connection. Our pastor and students visited several local churches for special mission Sundays, we organized missionary visits for students to broaden their sense of God's love in the world, and partnered with several congregations and United Women in Faith groups, who volunteered to provide food for our free weekly meals and food pantry. Each of those partnerships supported our ongoing work of caring for students in the way of God's love and helping them to grow as leaders.

As we enter into another year of ministry in 2026 (our 100th year!), we celebrate the unfolding of God's love in our midst and commit again to the work of building God's beloved community of mercy, justice, and love on campus.

Audra Hudson Stone, Pastor and Director

Board Leadership: Richard Burstall, Mary Clement, Audrey Cooley, Raymond Francis, Dennis Homminga Jr., M. Rene Johnson, Jacob Salisbury, Allison Strnad, Gerald Sutterfield

Wesley Foundation of Kalamazoo

The Wesley Foundation of Kalamazoo continues to be a place where students encounter a faith that is real and embodied in community. In a campus culture that often feels isolating and uncertain, Wesley is a space where students can show up as their authentic selves. Here, they are fed physically and spiritually. Here, they are known. And here, they are invited to claim their faith as their own. Throughout 2025, we deepened our commitment to forming disciples who understand that faith is not confined to a singular event. Around weekly dinner tables, in small groups designed with and for students, and in late-night conversations about life and calling, we are seeing young adults grow in their spiritual practices

and in their confidence. They are learning not just what they believe, but how to live it, through relationships, acts of service, courageous conversations, and leadership across campus. Wesley continues to cultivate a community where belonging is not assumed but intentionally practiced.

Our Wesley Intentional Living Center is more than a residence hall; it is a formative space where students learn to live across difference, navigate conflict, and build authentic relationships. This fall, our staff committed to engaging the “You Are Here” ABAR materials through The United Methodist Church. The work was challenging, eye-opening, and, at times, uncomfortable. It required honesty about who we are and clarity about who we are still becoming. That sacred work continues as we seek to build a community that reflects God’s justice and expansive love.

At Wesley, students are not simply participants, they are leaders. From planning programs to coordinating hospitality, students are developing real skills in communication, organization, and spiritual leadership. Our Student Engagement and Hospitality Coordinator has strengthened our outreach and digital presence, helping us meet students where they are and connect in meaningful ways. We are intentionally forming leaders who are prepared to serve not only their campuses but also the local church and the wider connection with creativity, courage, and compassion.

We also continue to steward our resources thoughtfully and strategically. Our friendly rivalry fundraiser with the Wesley Foundation of Central Michigan University reconnected us with alumni, expanded our base of support, and reminded us that this ministry has deep roots and a hopeful future. As we look ahead, we are discerning sustainable models of ministry that will ensure Wesley remains a vibrant presence on Kalamazoo’s campuses for generations to come.

The campus landscape continues to shift, but our hopes do not. God is still calling, forming, and sending students through Wesley in Kalamazoo. We are deeply grateful for the partnership of congregations and our conference as, together, we share God’s love, build beloved community, develop leaders, and steward our resources for the work that is still unfolding.

The Wesley Foundation at Michigan State University

The Wesley Foundation at Michigan State University, also known as MSU Wesley had a fantastic 2024-2025 academic year! MSU Wesley entered its second year of ministry with Rev. Sonrisa Cortes serving as Executive Director. MSU Wesley has found its identity and purpose in the East Lansing Community. At MSU Wesley we aim to become a community hub at the corner of Trowbridge and Harrison, known among East Lansing’s young adults, as a progressive and inclusive community providing programs and resources for their emotional, spiritual, and mental wellbeing.

During the summer of 2025 Rev. Sonrisa went on a summer preaching tour, guest preaching to 11 different churches to share updates about MSU Wesley, focusing on the value of safe spaces for improved mental health and trying new creative ideas to show God’s love to students outside of the walls of MSU Wesley.

One of these creative ideas is the continuation of “Study Hall”. “Study Hall” is a collaborative ministry between Blue Owl Coffee, a local coffee shop, MSU Wesley, and University UMC. Every Tuesday from 2-4 pm students are invited to Blue Owl to receive a deeply discounted/free coffee. The only requirement is for them to show an active student ID to receive the discount. Rev. Sonrisa is present at the coffee shop during Study Hall with signs detailing MSU Wesley events, along with coloring pages, crayons, colored pencils, candy and an open chair to chat. She calls this space her “care corner”. We believe that providing the gift of free/discounted coffee is a sign of convenient grace for the student community. A helpful way to say “God loves you, no if’s, and’s or but’s.”

We also offer our weekly gathering, “Monday Meltdown” held at MSU Wesley. Monday Meltdown is a weekly gathering that provides space for students to gather and “melt-down”. We provide home cooked meals, foster fellowship and friendships, engage in honest and empathetic conversations of scripture, mental health practices, spirituality and daily struggles or joys. Students have commented appreciation for the Monday Meltdown space, which they find is comforting, safe, and a place for good conversation.

In 2025 MSU Wesley welcomed our first intern in our rebuilding phase, Izzy! Izzy has been a *tremendous* help in the creation and continuation of our social media presence (Follow us @MSUWesley on instagram!) Izzy has a wonderful way of making connections with students and finding ways to chat with just about anyone! Izzy’s leadership, honesty, strong faith and creativity is a joy to witness, and we’re so thankful for her!

MSU Wesley is still in a “rebuild” phase, and is seeking partner churches to sponsor Tuesday Study Hall, with a commitment of \$650 per sponsored Tuesday. This financial support will help sustain and expand this impactful program, ensuring students continue to have a welcoming space to gather, be heard, and experience God’s love in tangible ways. Or Partner Churches, committing to \$1,000 dollars per year.

If you’d like to learn more about our programming, know a Spartan (or future Spartan) looking for an accepting community, or would like to invite Rev. Sonrisa to speak at your church, please contact her at msuwesley@gmail.com or (734) 489-1224.

Motown Mission

In 2026 Motown Mission will reach an inspiring milestone. This year, hundreds of youth volunteers will help Motown Mission top \$5 Million worth of Christian service and giving through projects alongside the people of Detroit. With economic/environmental justice, housing security, and food sovereignty projects, these young people are courageously leading the United Methodist Church in its role of loving boldly and serving joyfully. Our college student staffers help dozens of church groups connect with a host of local ministries and nonprofits in hands-on Christian discipleship. Thanks for the commitment of area United Methodists in supporting these young people and following them in showing Jesus' love for our neighbors. More at motownmission.org

Serving together in God’s restorative work. *Detroit, Michigan* / 313-718-2275

Sacred Space Campus Ministry at Northern Michigan University

NMU Wesley Campus Ministry is a part of the Sacred Space Campus Ministry collaboration with the ELCA Lutherans and Episcopalians. We are one community and we gather in Marquette Hope United Methodist Connection Center Campus. This space is also where CommonGrounds Coffee House is located. CommonGrounds continues to be an extension ministry of Sacred Space, where we offer a space to hang out, study, and relax with free coffee, free wi-fi, free snacks and occasionally pups to love on.

Sunday Night Dinner and Devotions is our mainstay for the Sacred Space community. We gather and cook a homemade meal together, eat together, clean up together, and then join around the couches for thoughtful conversation and contemplation. Theology on Tap is a favorite for many. We meet at various establishments around Marquette to discuss a topic and how it connects and intersects with our faith and our understanding of faith. This year brought several new topics including saints, spirits and ghosts, and hermeneutics. These conversations are both formational and deliberative for students and their faith.

We dove into community service opportunities in the fall with our Unicorn Halloween Carnival, Make a Difference Day, and hosting the Marquette County CROP Hunger Walk. In the winter semester, we volunteered at the North American Natural Luge Championship by being part of their safety team to keep the track clear. We also went into a Headstart Pre-school and lent a hand for a few days. And we tackled several projects for local churches to help them spruce up their spaces. All of these opportunities nurtured a sense of pride in the greater Marquette community as well as the benefits of giving your time to assist others in a life of servant leadership.

We hosted a new event called Rice and Spice on campus. We taste tested over 16 different spices on plain white rice and had rich conversation around what each spice tastes like and what ways we could use it in our cooking. The core of this event was focused on the void between cooking with real food and being on a budget. The idea was to help students experience a variety of spices and gain excitement around trying new recipes or adding these spices into their favorite dishes without the fear of financial repercussions.

If you have a young adult who is considering attending NMU or is already attending NMU, we would love to get connected with them and welcome them to the Sacred Space community. Reach out to wesley@mqthope.com

United Campus Christian Fellowship

United Campus Christian Fellowship continues to grow and deepen its partnerships with the ELCA, Episcopal Church, PCUSA, and United Methodist Church. This multi-campus, multi-denominational campus ministry shares God's love and serves the students, faculty, and staff at Grand Valley State University, Grand Rapids Community College, and Kendall College of Art and Design. Our collaborative and ecumenical model remains a distinctive strength, allowing us to respond flexibly to student needs

while building strong relationships across denominational traditions. On average, UCCF engages with about 70 students each week through feeding and fellowship ministries and events.

This past year included a significant leadership transition. Pastor Kate concluded her ministry with UCCF at the end of September, and I began serving as Director of Ministries in mid-November. Even in the midst of this transition, the ministry remained steady and deeply supported by our church partners, volunteers, and students. As we move into 2026, we are focused on continuity, relationship building, and renewed vision for the next chapter of UCCF's unique role in providing inclusive and affirming support for all. We seek to continue to build our own expression of God's Beloved Community across four denominations and on three campuses.

Much of our student engagement continues to center on food, hospitality, and community. Each week we host Open Table—lunch for our two downtown, commuter campuses—and then dinner and a lively discussion-based worship experience at GVSU. According to the National Center for Safe Supportive Learning Environments, one in three college students in the United States experiences food insecurity. Our church partners play a critical role in helping us meet this need, offering meals that nourish bodies while creating space for connection, conversation, and belonging.

UCCF also offers special worship services, different Bible study series, a pop-up open space for discussion called The Listening Spot, fun fellowship events, and one-on-one pastoral conversations. UCCF remains the only LGBTQIA+-affirming campus ministry on all three campuses—and the only campus ministry present on two of them. We are also committed to being part of interfaith understanding and cooperation as a vital part of campus life. Our partnerships allow us to be ecumenical, collaborative, and unapologetically inclusive.

In 2026, we are excited to strengthen our existing relationships while also engaging at least four new local congregations in God's mission for campus ministry by inviting them into this shared work of accompaniment, hospitality, and hope.

Thank you, Michigan Conference, for your continued support of UCCF and of campus ministry across the state!

Pastor Laurie Kenyon Woods

The Wesley Foundation at the University of Michigan

The Wesley Foundation at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor seeks to be a spiritual home on campus and a welcoming and nurturing space where students can grow in faith, explore their callings, and build meaningful relationships. Through worship, fellowship, study, and service, we are cultivating an open and diverse Christian community where all are valued and encouraged along their faith journeys.

Our weekly life together includes worship, shared meals, Bible studies, small groups, service opportunities, and plenty of time for conversation and connection. In partnership with U-M Student Life and the new staff member for Religious, Secular, and Spiritual Life, we also offer campus-wide workshops that invite deep and meaningful dialogue across our many differences.

We continue to strengthen partnerships with local churches as we respond to the evolving needs of our community. Through internships, service projects, shared study, worship experiences, and social justice initiatives, students discover their gifts for impactful ministry. This year, we partnered with Cross Connection for an alternative spring break service trip to Boone, North Carolina, where students assisted with rebuilding efforts following recent floods.

A central focus of our ministry is helping students discern God's call in their lives. We encourage them to recognize their unique gifts and graces and to explore how they might live them out faithfully in their communities and beyond.

We are also delighted to continue sharing *Sacred Ink*, our traveling art installation featuring portraits and stories of young adults whose tattoos carry deep spiritual meaning. It has been a joy to bring this exhibit to local churches, small galleries, and nearby theological seminaries.

It is a privilege to witness the ways God is at work in the lives of these young people. As they seek to embody and proclaim God's presence in the world, we invite you to join us in supporting them through prayer, encouragement, and shared ministry.

Thank you for your continued prayers and support.

~ Rev. Tim Kobler, Chaplain

Wayne State University Wesley Foundation and Motor City Campus Ministry

This year, Motor City Campus Ministry, the United Methodist Wesley Foundation at Wayne State University and other campuses around Metro Detroit, celebrates the 80th anniversary of our founding. In that time, students, clergy leaders, and supportive congregations have lived out radical hospitality, creative witness, and conspiracies of goodness for university communities and beyond. In our earliest decades, the Board and leadership of this Wesley Foundation committed themselves to inclusion across racial and economic barriers.

Today, Motor City Campus Ministry lives into our reclaimed United Methodist identity as a church welcoming all, especially young adults in the LGBT+ community. Our ongoing Motor City Hymns project is helping young artists create new worship music for the church at large. And our \$100 mini-grants continue to serve as a catalyst for young people to lead the church into innovative pathways for participating in God's beloved kin-dom. Thanks to the Michigan Conference for continued support and welcome to all the young adults who will help their campuses and the whole Church become what Jesus calls us all to be. More at motorcitywesley.org

Division of Higher Education and Campus Ministry

Thank you for your continued support of our campus ministries in 2025. We covet your prayers and support as we continue to celebrate ministry with young adults around the state!

The Division of Higher Education and Campus Ministry (DHECM) is a part of the Board of Young People's Ministries (BYPM) and is charged with advocating for campus ministry work throughout the Michigan Conference connectional structure to secure primary financial resources and to provide accountability and evaluation for our UM campus ministries. After Annual Conference 2025, Rev. Scott Marsh transitioned from the role of Advocate to Chairperson and was supported by our other members: Lauren Canary, Rev. Mary Ivanov, Rick Miller and Rev. Brian Steele. Ryan Minier joined us as Gordon Grigg's term ended, but Gordon continues in the role of Advocate.

To learn more about how you can partner with our campus ministries and their latest events, check out their websites and social media links below.

- All Michigan United Methodist Campus Ministries:
 - Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/umconcampus/>
 - Website: <https://www.withwesleymiumc.org/>
- Wesley at Central Michigan University
 - Website: <https://cmuwes.org/>
 - Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/wesleyatcmu>
 - Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/cmu_wesley/
- Big Rapids Wesley House
 - Website: <https://www.fsuwesleyhouse.org/>
 - Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/BigRapidsWesleyHouse>
 - Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/fsuwesleyhouse/>
- United Campus Christian Fellowship (Grand Valley State University, Grand Rapids Community College and Kendall College)
 - Website: <https://www.uccfmi.org/>
 - Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/uccfmi1>
 - Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/uccfmi1>
- Michigan State Wesley Foundation
 - Website: <https://msuwesleyorg.wordpress.com/>
 - Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/msuwesley>
 - Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/msuwesley/>
- Motor City Wesley (Metro Detroit)
 - Website: <https://www.motorcitywesley.org/>
 - Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/motorcitywesley>
 - Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/motorcitywesley/>
- Northern Michigan University Wesley
 - Website: <http://www.mqthope.com/nmu-wesley.html>
 - Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/nmuwesley/>
- Wesley Foundation at the University of Michigan
 - Website: <https://www.umichwesley.org/>
 - Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/wesleyatumich>
 - Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/umichwesley/>
- Wesley Foundation of Kalamazoo

- Website: <https://wesleykzoo.org/>
- Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/wesleyfoundationkzoo>
- Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/wesleykzoowmu/>

You can also read each campus ministry's individual report in this volume of the *Conference Journal*. If you would like to give directly to the Division, you can do so by clicking [here](#). Also, information on scholarships for UM students can be found here: <https://www.gbhem.org/scholarships/>

In the United Methodist Church, campus ministries are extension ministries of the Church, as outlined in *The Book of Discipline* (2016, Part IV, 120): "The mission of the Church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. Local churches and **extension ministries of the Church** provide the most significant arenas through which disciple-making occurs." As such, campus ministries are among the Michigan Conference's and the United Methodist Church's most significant disciple-making communities. Intentional UM campus faith communities make bold and effective young adult leaders and disciples for the Church and the world by promoting the healthy spiritual and social development of young adults on campus and beyond.

We appreciate the partnership we have with local churches to extend the ministry of the Church to students. With the support of local churches, the United Methodist Church prepares and equips campus spiritual communities of support and encouragement for young adults to follow God's leading during this important stage of life. DHECM has heard many stories of how when young adults and students visit local campus ministries and churches and experience welcome, they discover that the church has a place for them and that they are accepted as they are. This is a welcome and much needed message in a time when many people feel uncertain about and even unwelcome in faith communities.

Every local church has a role to play in connecting young adults with campus ministry. Local churches report information about their incoming college and university students every year as part of our Church Conference process. These reports go into a database that our campus ministers can use to make personal contact with students to provide spiritual community and guidance as they transition to campus life, maintain connection to a community of faith, and engage in mission and ministry in a new community.

In late 2025, we sent a letter to local churches lifting up the importance of Ministry Shares as a vital part of support for campus ministry around the state. Connectional ministry is a blessing, and it requires faithful connectional giving. We appreciate the commitment of churches to pay their Ministry Shares in full as a part of our shared commitment to campus ministries.

Individual laity and clergy also make considerable impacts on campus ministry. We awarded the Francis Asbury Award to Rev. Curt and Anne Jensen in 2025. They have a history of growth in and connection to campus ministry in Michigan as students, then as appointed pastor and spouse, and now continue to support campus ministry in retirement. The Francis Asbury Award is an annual recognition given by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHECM) which "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. The award is named for Bishop Asbury and is based on his admonition to the people called Methodist to erect a school in the vicinity of every church."

Another important way that United Methodists and our churches can support young adults in ministry is through [United Methodist Student Day](#), which helps to raise funds for scholarships for undergraduate and graduate students. Several of those who have received scholarships are now serving as clergy in the Michigan Conference and beyond. Your gifts truly do make a difference in empowering the next

generation of Christian leaders.

When you give to campus ministries, you are resourcing ministries for students who are seeking spiritual belonging and connection. We celebrate these opportunities on social media, and we know that our support matters deeply to students who are looking for an inclusive community, opportunities to serve in mission, and theological conversations through worship, Bible study, and more. Members of DHEMC continue to be a part of vital conversation and planning to secure sustainable funding for our campus ministries because we know they are vital to people and campus communities.

We're grateful for time at Annual Conference to engage people in specific support for campus ministries, including a golf scramble, the popular snack table, and the Engage Ministry Fair. In 2025, we added a mini-golf tournament, which was a success.

Our work of accountability includes caring for director evaluations received from local boards and completing campus ministry site visits. Our work to encourage directors continues as we commit to raise funds with an annual goal of \$10,000. We continued the practice to distribute matching funds based on each director and ministry setting a specific goal based on a 10% increase in donations/gifts or donors as compared to the previous year. We celebrate the creative ways that directors and boards have set and met their goals this year.

In the coming year, we plan to focus on recruitment - making closer connections to camping ministries to share the opportunities of campus ministries with young people. We also want to provide more support to our local boards with help in training and development.

Since DHECM comes under the umbrella of the Board of Young People's Ministries, we want to highlight the benefit Rev. Cora Glass has brought in providing administrative services to our campus ministers. Rev. Glass will continue to serve, and our hope is that she will assist our directors and local boards in the area of fund development.

The new vision of **The United Methodist Church** says that we **"form disciples of Jesus Christ who, empowered by the Holy Spirit, love boldly, serve joyfully, and lead courageously in local communities and worldwide connections."** The work of campus ministry can easily claim this vision as people find communities rooted in God's love and grace, discover opportunities to serve others in Jesus' name, and claim the call to be courageous in working for an inclusive church that serves everyone. This sacred work is as important as ever in the midst of a world where a clear message of God's grace needs to be both heard and shared.

Without the faith and leadership development that campus ministries provide, our conference will lose a key funnel for current and future participants, members, lay leaders, and clergy. Funding the salaries of

our campus ministers and supporting the communities they serve allows our campus ministers to do the work of Jesus Christ in the world.

We give thanks to God and to you, Michigan Conference, for supporting personal and direct ministry with the most concentrated populations of young adults in our culture.

Grace and peace,

Rev. Scott Marsh, DHECM Chairperson

Rev. Mary L.B. Ivanov, DHECM Member

Districts of the Michigan Annual Conference

Central Bay District

It is the mission of Central Bay District to “Partner with You to Bring People to Jesus.” The staff and leadership of the district work hard to live out this mission in all we do and believe it will be necessary that our mission focus lead us as we step into new things with the restructuring to lesser districts in the coming year.

In January we welcomed Melanie Zalewski as our new Executive Assistant. Melanie is a wonderful addition to our team and, by all accounts shared, a most helpful and pleasant asset to all our pastors and churches.

The Leadership Team design mimics a Simple Accountability Structure at the District Level to streamline decision making and mission focusing. On October 18, the Leadership Team continued to resource our churches at the “Love Reaching Out – 2.0” conference. This time we provided workshops in various areas to bring vitality to the churches as they continued to do and be church.

The District Committee on Ministry, in an effort to oversee the work and progress of the local pastor continue to meet individually with those still in Course of Study (COS). God has provided several very equipped and passionate pastors to our district. For those who have completed their COS, the DCOM is meeting in group which helps develop collegiality to one another and to discern from each other how to Partner to Bring People to Jesus. Key yearly questions along with issues will be discussed for mutual edification.

Organized into Connexion Zones, groups of pastors and churches in regional areas within the district are now fervently seeking to work together, support one another, and resource each other. The “portrait” that each are designing will be different and ever evolving as pastors and churches of their Connexion Zone better seek to live out connecting with each other to better be the church of Jesus. It is expected that the Connexion Zone concept will be a necessary element as the districts become larger.

Our Care (Clergy, Spouse, and Family Support) Team continues to do wonderful work connecting with active and retired pastors serving and/or residing in our district with cards celebrating key life events, honoring the work and service of pastors, spouses, and families, and creating fun and supportive events for clergy and families.

As we live into the reality of change that is taking place in the culture, the conference, and the greater Church, the leadership and District Superintendent are considering how to provide the witness and ministry into community in new and creative ways while discerning how a larger district will need to adapt to best live out our mission of making Disciples.

With God as our guide and stay, we seek to live into our district mission to Partner with You to Bring People to Jesus and look with great anticipation, even as adaptation and change happens so that, together, we can live into our denominational mission to Make Disciples of Jesus for the Transformation of the World.

DS John G Kasper

East Winds District

It is the mission of East Winds District to “Equip Churches to Serve Christ through Quality Communication, Collaboration, and Training.” The staff and leadership of the district work hard to live out this mission in all we do and believe it will be necessary that our mission focus lead us as we step into new things with the restructuring to lesser districts in the coming year.

We began the year with Rev. Dr. Margie Crawford at the helm as our District Superintendent. During the appointive work of the Cabinet and with the Holy Spirit’s guidance, it was discerned that DS Margie would be appointed to serve at Northville UMC beginning July 1. We are so very grateful for DS Margie and her gifts of leadership and guidance over the past couple of years.

Having received word that the 2026 budget to be presented to Annual Conference was considerably less, Bishop Bard discerned not to appoint a new person to be District Superintendent of East Winds, anticipating that approval of the budget would necessitate a decrease in the number of districts moving forward. So, the Bishop asked Rev. John Kasper to serve two Districts, adding East Winds to his responsibilities of Central Bay. After a summer renewal leave, Rev. Kasper stepped fully into his responsibilities of both districts.

On November 1, Bad Axe UMC hosted our 2025 District Conference with a focus on Hospitality in and beyond the local church with keynote speaker Rev. Tara Gay. Workshops on what it means to be United Methodist, and an intro into the Simplified Accountability Structure, as well as an opportunity to get to know the new DS were also offered. Bad Axe was a terrific host and even blessed us with a dessert after lunch featuring their homemade Apple Pies, of which they reserved from their 900+ fund raiser. The pies were delicious.

The District Committee on Ministry transitioned in their oversight of the work and progress of the local pastor. The DCOM continue to meet individually with those still in Course of Study (COS). God has provided several very equipped and passionate pastors to our district. For those who have completed their COS, the DCOM now meets in groups of local pastors which helps develop collegiality to one another and gain discernment from each other how to Equip Churches to Serve Christ. Key yearly questions along with issues will be discussed for mutual edification.

Organized into Mission Zones, groups of pastors and churches in regional areas within the district are organized to work together, support one another, and resource each other. It is expected that the Mission Zone concept will be developed as a necessary element as the districts become larger.

As we live into the reality of change that is taking place in the culture, the conference, and the greater Church, the leadership and District Superintendent are considering how to provide the witness and ministry into community in new and creative ways while discerning how a larger district will need to adapt to best live out our mission of making Disciples.

With God as our guide and stay, we seek to live into our district mission to Partner with You to Bring People to Jesus and look with great anticipation, even as adaptation and change happens so that, together, we can live into our denominational mission to Make Disciples of Jesus for the Transformation of the World.

DS John G Kasper

Greater Detroit District

The Greater Detroit District is a district in motion with churches of every size meeting in urban, rural, suburban places, speaking many languages, and bringing the light of Christ to all in our communities and 2025 was a busy year! Each year we begin with our **MLK Jr. Service**, honoring Dr. King and his legacy. Grosse Point UMC opened their church to our 31st MLK Jr. service where we gave 6 high school students scholarships, presented Commerce UMC, Mount Clemens First UMC, Walled Lake UMC, and Detroit French UMC with Beloved Community Grants, and honored Rev. Elizabeth Hurd and Frank Driscoll with the Drum Major for Justice Award.

In February we moved ahead with the BMCR (Black Methodists for Church Renewal) for a Black History Event at the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History in Detroit, A United Methodist Union Discipleship Event at Nardin Park UMC, and the United Women in Faith Annual Prayer Gathering. March brought a workshop with Rev. Dr. Jill Zundel about how to be in care and solidarity in a time of mass deportations called Sanctuary as Resistance, and a large contingent of our district traveled to Lansing for the 3rd annual Advocacy Day to advocate for changes in policy for care for those catastrophically injured in auto accidents. United Women in Faith held a Women's Day event at Grace Community UMC with President Jeanette Harris as the Keynote Speaker.

Mission and service remain at the heart of the Greater Detroit District, as churches, clergy, laity, and youth lived out their faith through meaningful engagement in their communities throughout 2025. Through "**Hands With Detroit**", members from across the district came together to serve alongside community partners, offering hands-on support through projects that addressed real needs while strengthening relationships throughout the city. This collective day of service embodied the district's commitment to being present, active, and responsive to the needs of Detroit.

Youth engagement remained a vital part of the district's mission through the Urban Methodist Youth Camping experience, which provided transformative opportunities for young people, particularly youth from Detroit. Through worship, leadership development, community building, and service, youth were nurtured spiritually while forming lasting relationships and strengthening their sense of discipleship and call to ministry.

The district also continued to expand innovative approaches to mission through **"The Church Has Left the Building,"** inviting congregations to move beyond traditional worship settings and engage directly with their communities through acts of service, compassion, and grace. By partnering with local organizations and neighbors, churches lived out the gospel beyond church walls, deepening connections and demonstrating faith through action.

At our Annual District Conference held at St. Matthew's UMC in November, we celebrated Ruby Annderson for her many years of service as our District Lay Leader, elected new members of committees, approved a budget, listened to the Classical Bells, clapped along with the Children's choir from Southfield Hope UMC, and heard a wonderful message from Rev. Dr. Charles Boayue. The final gathering for the year was for our Clergy and their families who gathered for breakfast in December.

The Greater Detroit District continued its commitment to **Creation Care Ministries**, recognizing environmental justice as an essential expression of faith and discipleship. Through education, advocacy, and faithful stewardship, churches were encouraged to care for God's creation while addressing environmental challenges that disproportionately impact vulnerable communities. These efforts reflected the district's belief that caring for the earth and caring for people are deeply connected aspects of living out the gospel.

In 2025, the Greater Detroit District increasingly embraced media and technology as tools for ministry, communication, and connection. Through digital platforms, social media, and online communication, the district shared stories of ministry, promoted events and opportunities, and strengthened relationships across congregations and throughout the conference. By leveraging technology, the district expanded its reach, amplified its witness, and ensured that ministry extended beyond physical spaces, fostering greater engagement and collaboration across the district.

The churches in our district engaged in outreach to their communities all throughout the year with Fish Frys in Lent, Community events like Family Fun Day and Community Health Fair, Community Cookout and Canned Food Drive, VBS, summer neighborhood celebrations, school supply drives, food distribution, and feeding programs. We supported Cass Community Social Services, Motown Mission with Meals for their volunteers, and sandwiches and winter clothing items for Noah Project.

The Greater Detroit District is a district in motion. We pray, we preach, we outreach, we serve others, we share love. Want to keep up with us? Check us out on Facebook and Instagram. We are looking forward to what 2026 will bring!

Greater Southwest District

Greetings in the name of Jesus Christ. The Greater Southwest District makes this Historical Report to the Michigan Conference with joy for today and hope for tomorrow.

In 2025, the Greater Southwest District included 91 churches and 9,815 professing members. We honor the gifts and legacy of Saugatuck United Methodist Church, which closed July 15, 2025. We celebrate the new beginning of Burnips United Methodist Church, which merged with Monterey Center United Methodist Church on September 23, 2025. We grieve the sudden passing of Pastor Scott Smith from Portage Prairie United Methodist Church and hold fast to the comfort of God's Holy Spirit in times of change and loss.

The Greater Southwest District is made up of twelve branches, reflecting the life that comes from the words of Jesus in John 15, "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit." Churches in each branch were invited to come together to do something to offer the love of Jesus Christ. Projects included: gathering supplies and filling flood buckets, purchasing blankets and filling backpacks for migrant families, gathering supplies and creating emergency packets for women, rice packing, fund raising with cookie sales and a Talent Show, and so much more. The branches are beginning to come together and form meaningful bonds so that we are connected in ministry. The focus for 2026 is on the good soil that grows the vine. The challenge for each church in each branch is to focus on growing disciples.

We continue to celebrate our connection with Western Michigan University and Wesley of Kalamazoo where the district office is located. And, we are thankful for Semilla, which intentionally reaches out to people in the community with love and grace.

While we do not yet know what the future holds, we are confident that if we stay connected to the vine, all good things are possible.

Heritage District

It has been my pleasure to serve another year as Superintendent for the Heritage District of the Michigan Conference. The leaders in the Heritage District have worked diligently and faithfully to support local churches through grants and loans as well as by partnering with local church leaders for Local Church Assessments and best practices for lay leadership.

We partner with local churches through Connectional Grants. In 2025 we awarded \$19,320 in Connectional Grants to 17 congregations for technology upgrades, mission / outreach projects, coaching support, and some minor capital improvement projects. We awarded \$30,000 in seed money to 7 churches for larger capital projects. These funds help support financial sustainability across our district.

It is a blessing to be able to provide financial support as congregations rediscover who we are as United Methodists. We have worked together to develop leaders through building teams. Our Local Church

Assessment team comes alongside churches who are seeking a strategic way forward through the Local Church Assessment process so they may be more effective in sharing God's love with others.

Lay Servant Ministry classes are fully funded, due to faithful participation in district ministry shares, so anyone can learn and grow through Lay Servant Ministry courses without a financial burden. We have also equipped local churches through zone conferences and training days.

Zone groups have formed contextually, working together to carryout mission and worship events, as well as provide support for area clergy colleagues. This year we added a mentoring group for licensed local pastors who are finding support and gaining confidence as they navigate the challenges of ministry.

As we move forward into the new yet – to – be – determined structure of the Michigan Conference, I am confident in the laity and clergy of the current Heritage District, knowing they will carry all that they have gained and experienced into leadership wherever they may go. Glory to God! Amen.

Joyfully submitted

Rev. LuAnn Rourke

Northern Skies District

The year of 2025 was a time of transition for the Northern Skies District. We bid farewell to DS Rev. Scott Harmon, and welcomed Rev. Kristi Hintz as our new DS with an installation service in St. Ignace. Our district continues to be a geographic challenge, with our district spanning 37 churches in the Upper Peninsula and 33 churches in the northern part of the Mitten. A total of \$4,842 was approved for local churches in emerging and creative grants this past year.

In September, Camp Michigamme, the only district-owned camp in Michigan, exhausted the last of its financial resources, and the District Leadership Team voted to suspend all operations at the camp. The Camp Michigamme Board of Trustees voted to dissolve, and the District Leadership team took care of securing the property, while forming a temporary Task Force, which held three listening sessions in early 2026 to gather ideas for what might be done next. While we are sad to see another UMC camp in Michigan end, we are hopeful that the legacy of outdoor ministry and discipleship will live on in a new form.

Northern Skies DS Kristi Hintz has created six new zones within our district, each with a pastor who will work to build relationships with up to seven local congregations. The large distance between most congregations in our district requires us to think creatively to maintain our connections. We continue to foster a strong United Women in Faith ministry and are working to offer more Lay Servant training to our local churches.

Rev. Eric Falker

Western Waters District

We continued the visioning work from 2024 as we moved into a Simplified Accountability Structure for the District (with separate DCOM and DBBCL teams). Our 2025 District Conference was based on our Vision to Inspire, Train, and Connect. We offered training on Radical Hospitality. Churches were given “homework” and the work of bettering up our hospitality was the key component of our HUB (regional) fall church conferences. The focus of HUB Conferences was centered around time for discussion and sharing of ideas around tables and in the larger group. Spring of 2026 HUB gatherings are planned as follow up for implementation.

We offered Mission and Ministry Grants for community outreach (like providing firewood, block parties, youth events); leadership development; and community ministries. We continued to support the Native American Elders Program, Immigration Law and Justice, and Campus Ministries.

Finally, we had opportunities at District Conference and through a love offering to thank Executive Assistant Liz Bode for 16 years of faithful service as she retired at the end of the year.

Michigan Annual Conference-Related and Other Agencies

After the Storm

Disaster Case Management, the activity that After the Storm provides, is a client-centered approach to assisting survivors of natural disasters achieve their long-term recovery goals. Disaster Case Managers meet with clients for assessment and goal setting, help clients access federal, state, and local assistance, coordinate home repair and rebuild projects, and refer survivors to additional social services as needed.

Grounded in its faith-based mission, After the Storm remains committed to **sharing God’s love through compassionate service**, walking alongside survivors with dignity, hope, and practical support during some of life’s most difficult moments. Through acts of care, partnership, and restoration, the organization seeks not only to rebuild homes and communities, but also to reflect Christ’s love in action.

2025 was a year of meaningful progress, program completion, and sustained long-term recovery efforts for After the Storm.

Following the devastating tornadoes in Kalamazoo County, After the Storm successfully closed out the Kalamazoo recovery project after serving more than 100 families. Through strong collaboration with community partners—including United Way, the Kalamazoo Community Foundation, and the City of Portage—**over \$1.3 million** was invested in the recovery of affected households, helping families stabilize and rebuild following the disaster. This work reflects the power of coordinated local partnerships in addressing unmet needs and supporting full community recovery.

After the Storm also continued its extensive work under the **DR-4757 Disaster Case Management Program**, providing sustained support to survivors navigating complex and long-term recovery challenges. To date, the program has served **over 1,200 cases**, connecting households with critical resources valued at **more than \$3 million**. In recognition of the ongoing needs of survivors, the program

was granted a one-year extension in December, allowing services to continue through 2026 and ensuring continued access to recovery support for those still working toward stability.

Throughout 2025, After the Storm maintained and strengthened key operational partnerships with FEMA Region 5 **and the** Michigan State Police Emergency Management and Homeland Security Division (EMHSD). The organization also continued its longstanding relationships with UMCOR, the Michigan Conference of The United Methodist Church, **and local United Methodist churches**, whose support remains vital in mobilizing volunteers, providing financial assistance, and sustaining long-term recovery services for disaster-impacted communities. These collaborative partnerships ensure coordinated recovery efforts and strengthen the overall network of support available to survivors.

Michigan Area Loan Fund

The Michigan Area Loan Fund serves as a trusted ministry partner to local United Methodist churches and faith-based organizations by providing mortgage loans, promissory notes, and a mission-driven investment opportunity for individuals, congregations, and ministries across the state. The Loan Fund continues its statewide mission of resourcing faithful vision and expanding ministry in every corner of Michigan. Our work aligns closely with the Annual Conference's core foci and advances the shared calling to be a church that is spiritually vibrant, just, equipped for leadership, and financially resilient.

By providing accessible and responsible financing, the Loan Fund enables congregations to create and sustain spaces where faith is nurtured and God's love is shared. Loans support sanctuaries, fellowship halls, classrooms, and community outreach facilities – places where worship is deepened, disciples are formed, and neighbors encounter the grace of Jesus Christ.

Our investment program also invites Michigan United Methodists to participate directly in this mission. Individuals, churches, and ministry organizations who invest in the Loan Fund become partners in ministry, knowing their resources are being stewarded to strengthen local congregations and extend their witness. This shared financial discipleship fosters a tangible connection between personal faith and the flourishing of ministry across the Conference.

The Loan Fund is committed to serving all parts of Michigan. By offering fair, transparent, and mission-focused lending, we work to ensure that congregations in urban, rural, and economically challenged contexts have equitable access to capital needed for facility improvements, expansion, and redevelopment. These investments help churches remain rooted in their neighborhoods, provide vital community services, and serve as anchors of hope and stability. Our loans help congregations thrive and be significant places of welcome, dignity, and justice.

Strong facilities and stable financial structures empower leaders to focus on their primary calling: spiritual leadership, community engagement, and mission innovation. By partnering with clergy and lay leaders through thoughtful consultation and financing, the Loan Fund supports congregations as they discern new ministry models, launch outreach initiatives, and adapt their spaces for changing mission needs. In addition, the Loan Fund's history of collaboration with conference leadership and local church boards fosters a culture of strategic planning and faithful stewardship. This commitment equips leaders to guide their congregations with confidence as they respond to emerging priorities and opportunities for ministry.

The Loan Fund plays a vital role in strengthening the long-term financial health of United Methodist churches. Our lending and investment programs cycle resources within the United Methodist connection: funds entrusted by investors are deployed to support church ministries, and loan repayments replenish the pool for future projects. This model promotes sustainability by aligning financial returns with missional impact. Churches gain access to competitive, values-based financing, while investors know their resources are advancing God's work across Michigan. Through prudent management and commitment to faithful stewardship, the Loan Fund helps redirect financial resources toward ministry that is life-giving, future-focused, and resilient.

From its historic roots to its present-day statewide reach, the Michigan Area Loan Fund continues to embody a legacy of partnership, trust, and mission. By supporting congregations with capital, counsel, and community investment, we remain dedicated to strengthening the church's witness, building the Beloved Community, equipping leaders, and ensuring the financial sustainability of ministry across the Michigan Conference. Ultimately, we are blessed to partner with local churches so that God's love may be shared more fully and faithfully now and for generations to come.

Brio Living Services and UMRC-Porter Hills Foundation

United Methodist Retirement Communities, Inc., d/b/a Brio Living Services, has been a leader in caring for older adults since its faithful founding in 1906. We are delighted to share our accomplishments over the past year. Thank you for the prayers and support of the Michigan United Methodist Church Conference as we serve older adults across lower Michigan.

Brio Living Services and the UMRC-Porter Hills Foundation are committed to serving older adults—more than 8,000 annually—of all socioeconomic levels across our state, in keeping with our faith-based heritage and mission. Today, more than half of Michigan's households headed by individuals aged 65 and over fall into the ALICE category (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) with earnings above the official Federal Poverty Level, but who cannot afford the basic costs of living. Older women experience higher poverty rates than older men, and black older adults have one of the highest rates.

At Brio, we believe it is only right that ALL older adults, regardless of their ability to pay, receive the highest quality care and services they need to thrive. Our faith-based, nonprofit organization encompasses not only traditional, market-rate residential communities for older adults, but affordable living and home- and community-based services as well. Brio Living Services serves the most economically diverse population of older adults in the state. In fact, the majority of our 23 locations and service lines provide care for older adults with low incomes. These include:

PACE or Programs of All-inclusive Care for the Elderly:

Our home- and community-based services account for 70% of the older adults we serve, helping them live as independently and safely as possible in their own homes and communities. This includes over 1,300 older adults across 14 counties each year through our five PACE, or Program of All-inclusive Care for the Elderly, sites across the state. PACE serves the psycho-social, medical, and supportive needs of

low-income, nursing home-eligible adults, ages 55 and up. Most participants are dually eligible for Medicare and Medicaid and pay no additional fees for PACE services, which include: comprehensive medical, occupational and physical therapy, pharmacy needs, nutrition and meals, health education, social and recreational activities, and door-to-door transportation.

In 2025, PACE of Southwest Michigan in St. Joseph joined the Brio family as a partnership with Region IV Area Agency on Aging. In addition, a second Huron Valley PACE Day Center is scheduled to open in Monroe in Spring 2026. In this way, Brio is broadening its reach to serve older adults and help them live safely and independently in their own homes, with the help of PACE services.

Affordable Living Communities: Brio offers seven affordable living communities; six in Kent County and The Thome Rivertown Neighborhood in Detroit, offering truly affordable assisted living. Nearly 370 older adults call these communities home.

Long-term skilled nursing: While some senior living providers across Michigan have stopped investing in long-term care or are getting out of it altogether, Brio recognizes that there is still a need for high quality skilled care, offered in beautiful settings and focusing on person-directed care. Approximately 70% of those we serve in our healthcare centers have low incomes and receive Medicaid. Brio Living Services bridges the gap between what Medicaid covers and the actual costs of quality skilled nursing care. These include Kresge Rehabilitation and Healthcare Center (Chelsea Retirement Community) and the Health Center at Porter Hills Village and Green House® Homes in Grand Rapids. We are proud of the **five-star ratings** by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), earned at each of these three locations.

Benevolent Care: The cornerstone of the UMRC-Porter Hills Foundation is the Benevolent Care Fund, available to qualified residents of Brio's flagship campuses in Chelsea and Grand Rapids, who exhaust their savings through no fault of their own. These older adults live primarily in our assisted living and memory support neighborhoods. Approximately \$1 million is provided each year, thanks to generous gifts to the Foundation's Benevolent Care Fund.

At Brio Living Services we see both the opportunity and the responsibility that lies before us to serve and care for the older adults who once cared for us. Brio announced exciting plans to expand and transform **Porter Hills Village**, which has served the Grand Rapids area since 1970. The scope of this transformational project is a 250,000 sq.-ft. building to replace the existing assisted living, memory support, and skilled nursing buildings, and the construction of an additional 55-60 independent living apartments to meet the continued growing demand in this area. Our care areas will adopt the **Household Model** of person-directed care, providing greater autonomy for residents to make their own choices in a small home setting.

In 2025, Brio Living Services held a grand opening for **The Ravines**, a new independent living addition on the Porter Hills Village campus in Grand Rapids.

At our Chelsea Retirement Community campus, we are renovating and expanding our 70-year-old Chapel, which will allow us to better serve our residents by providing greater accessibility and a welcoming space for the community. Plans for its re-opening and dedication are planned for Summer 2026.

In September, the UMRC-Porter Hills Foundation, the charitable arm for Brio Living Services, announced its \$28 million *Live Life with Brio* comprehensive campaign and its four Fundraising Pillars of: Capital Improvements; Program Investment, including life enrichment and programming for older adults; Team Member Investment, providing Scholarships and Emergency Aid for our dedicated team members; and **Benevolent Care**, our cornerstone, ensuring that eligible Brio residents always have a home where they are loved and treasured.

Other accolades Brio received in 2025 include: Senior Care's Best Places to Work 2025, West Michigan's Best and Brightest® designation for the 23rd straight year, and **Best and Brightest Companies to Work For® in the Nation** for the 3rd year in a row.

We are grateful for our faith-based history which continues to guide the future of Brio Living Services. Thank you for your prayers and support in helping us provide loving communities, care, and services for older adults. We look forward to meeting with churches and affiliate groups over the coming year to share the good work you are helping us accomplish on behalf of older adults and their families, as well as our team members. Thank you for your commitment to our mission of service to older adults.

Steve Fetyko
President & CEO
Brio Living Services

Kelli Smith, CFRE
President & CEO
UMRC-Porter Hills Foundation

United Methodist Foundation of Michigan

Celebrating 100 years of ministry in 2025, the United Methodist Foundation of Michigan continues its commitment to multiplying generosity across United Methodist congregations and related ministries by strengthening pastoral leadership, empowering congregations, and advancing faithful stewardship.

We remain one of the leading scholarship providers to United Methodists in the state with a strong focus on supporting current and future pastors in graduate and professional studies as well as United Methodist undergraduate students pursuing their academic callings. Through these investments, we are equipping the next generation of leaders for effective and faithful ministry.

Our commitment to innovation in ministry is reflected in our annual grantmaking with ministry grants totaling approximately five percent of our endowed funds. These grants are intentionally focused on building exceptional pastoral leadership and strengthening vibrant, mission-focused congregations. We continued to honor exemplary generosity through the Wayne C. Barrett Steward Leader Award and leveraged matching funds in partnership with the United Methodist Higher Education Foundation and Wespath Benefits and Investments.

Leadership development remains central to our mission. Strategic partnerships, including our alliance with Dakota Wesleyan University and Wesleyan Impact Partners, provide high-quality training opportunities that enhance pastoral effectiveness and leadership capacity across the Conference. We also advance the theology and practice of generosity through financial discipleship. Our team leads seminars, preaches in local churches, and promotes trusted resources to help individuals and congregations grow in their discipleship.

Through charitable gift planning, we are honored to assist individuals and families in shaping legacies that support the ministries and missions that they care about most. Their legacy will continue to bless the Church for generations to come.

Pastors are further supported through retreats, cohorts, coaching, mentoring, and ongoing formation opportunities designed to nurture spiritual health and leadership resilience. Our proactive service model is focused on cultivating cultures of generosity within congregations, expanding stewardship tools and resources, and deepening partnerships that strengthen the whole Church.

Our investment ministry reflects both Wesleyan theology and financial excellence. We manage assets according to socially and fiscally responsible guidelines aligned with United Methodist Social Principles and actively engage companies through shareholder advocacy to encourage strong governance and ethical practices.

During the year, we completed a competitive review of investment advisers and fund managers to ensure the strength, integrity, and performance of our faith-driven strategies. We also concluded a comprehensive rebranding initiative, including a new logo, a redesigned website, and an expanded social media presence to better communicate our mission and impact. In addition, we transitioned to a new banking partner to enhance electronic transaction capabilities and improve service for our investors and ministry partners.

Through comprehensive services, strategic partnerships, and faithful stewardship, the Foundation continues to serve the Conference with a singular purpose: to multiply generosity, develop leaders, and strengthen the Church for God's mission in the world.

United Methodist Theological Schools

Boston University School of Theology

Your partnership, prayers, and support are a cherished gift as BUSTH seeks to serve the church and the world! In a year like 2025, BUSTH's commitments to equip transformational leaders for peace and justice are more necessary and significant. We are hopeful and vigilant in our continued partnership with you.

News:

- **Students:** The academic year 2025-26 entering class was among our most diverse, with 106 new students, 40% of whom are international students from 17 different countries.
- **Faculty:** In July, Rebecca Copeland and Luis Menéndez-Antuña were promoted to Associate Professor. In September, Nicolette Manglos-Weber became Associate Dean of Students & Community Life, and Rady Roldán-Figueroa ('05) started as Associate Dean for Academic Affairs. Timothy Adkins-Jones ('09,'21) joined as Assistant Professor of Homiletics.
- **Expanding Online/Hybrid Programming:** BUSTH launched a fully Online Master of Divinity (OMDiv) program in November and the first cohort is planned for Fall 2026. Learn more at

bu.edu/sth/omdiv. In May, the Doctor of Ministry (DMin) program graduated its largest class ever, 18.

- **Faculty Research:** Professor Steven Sandage is a co-principal investigator for “Training and Treatment Integration Research for Virtue and Flourishing in Mental Healthcare: A Team Science Project,” which received a \$5.2 million grant from the John Templeton Foundation to address a growing need among therapists for training on how to integrate relational virtues and human flourishing in clinical practice. Faculty published more than 130 books, scholarly articles, op-eds, presentations, and book reviews during 2025. Many were interviewed by media publications or featured on podcasts for their scholarship in topics such as trauma-informed care, humility among religious leaders, and biblical agriculture. Selected stories: bu.edu/sth/research/faculty-research/.
- **Scholarships:** BUSTH continues to benefit from nearly 125 scholarships overall, donated to by school alumni, other BU alumni, and friends of BU including more than 20 named scholarships from living alumni and/or their family members.
- **Contextual Education:** Funded by the Lilly Endowment, Director of Contextual Education Anastasia Kidd and Director of Enrollment Chad Moore will lead “The New Wineskins Network” \$1 million initiative to build sustainable, collaborative infrastructure for student and clergy formation across the Boston region.
- **Online Lifelong Learning:** BUSTH offers online courses for professional and spiritual enrichment of religious leaders. Recent offerings include “Digital Ministry as Contemplative Practice.” Learn more at bu.edu/sth/oll.
- **Development:** Recent accomplishments include a generous pledge to endow a Praise & Worship Fund as well as some new operating funds including the Manoog C. Peters Chaplaincy Fund to further support the school’s chaplaincy curriculum, and the Center for Global Christianity and Mission Film Project Fund to promote the Center’s ministry.

Commitment to Justice and Compassion

- BUSTH’s inaugural Fr. Vincent Machozi (’15) Colloquium will be held in February to honor the life’s work of our alumnus, martyred in the DRC for his work advocating for civilian victims of political violence. “Ecologies of Peacemaking” will bring together scholars in the areas of social conflict, economic inequalities, and environmental degradation. Register at bu.edu/sth/machozi-colloquium.
- Our Fall 2025 [Lowell Lecture](#) presented the work of Rev. Dr. Micah L. McCreary, whose topic “Leading Through and Beyond our Wounds” focused on becoming trauma-responsive leaders.
- Work continues to improve accessibility, sustainability, and responsible investing as written in our [2030 Strategic Plan](#). BUSTH is the first certified Green School at BU.

With faith and gratitude, G. Sujin Pak, dean

Candler School of Theology

As Candler School of Theology at Emory University continues in its second century of educating faithful and creative leaders for the church's ministries throughout the world, we are heartened by the work and witness of The United Methodist Church and look forward to our enduring partnership as the denomination moves into its next chapter with a vision to love boldly, serve joyfully, and lead courageously.

An official seminary of The United Methodist Church, Candler has a strong Methodist presence among our students, faculty and staff, while holding true to the Wesleyan value of ecumenical openness. Our student body reflects the diversity and breadth of the Christian faithful, with an enrollment of 507 from 11 countries, 42 states, 45 denominations, 34 UM annual conferences, and 50% persons of color. We see this diversity as a blessing, enriching our life together and providing the perfect context for training for relevant ministry in the 21st century—ministry that cultivates community across difference, welcomes all to contribute and belong, and embodies Christ's love in and among us.

Last fall Candler welcomed its largest incoming class in over a decade. This strong enrollment reflects years of intentional work to reimagine programs, continue to invest in faculty excellence, and offer robust scholarship support through the generosity of alumni and friends. And even more importantly, it reflects that God is still calling people to join the holy work of transforming the world in Jesus' name.

Candler offers six degrees, most of which are available in hybrid or online formats. Nearly a quarter of MDiv students participate in Candler's Teaching Parish program, earning course credit by serving as student pastors in local churches. And our proven DMin program—with a remarkably high 94% completion rate—is 90% online. These flexible options along with Candler's recognized academic excellence and hands-on learning opportunities are opening possibilities for more people to follow God's call to ministry.

Reducing financial barriers to high-quality theological education remains a top priority at Candler. This year, we are on track to award nearly \$8.5 million in scholarship support across degree programs. All MDiv students receive scholarships, with those who are certified candidates for ordained ministry in the UMC receiving full tuition.

Several programs beyond our formal degrees make Candler a true hub of Christian learning. The Candler Foundry, our public theological education initiative, offers in-person and online courses, events, and certificate programs. The United Methodist Course of Study School at Candler worked with 19 annual conferences to educate licensed local pastors in 2025. The Candler Center for Christian Leadership, which trains United Methodist leaders in best business practices, now has certified facilitators in 33 annual conferences. And a recent \$10 million grant from Lilly Endowment will further develop Candler's La Mesa Academy, a multicultural, multilingual program dedicated to the theological education of lay ministers.

We are preparing for a leadership transition in summer of 2026, as Jonathan Strom completes his tenure as dean of Candler in July. We invite your prayers as we search for the school's next dean.

When we talk to Candler alumni and students about their call, one thing becomes clear: The specifics may be different, shaped by their unique gifts, contexts, and life experiences, but their drive to join God's work of transforming lives and the world is a constant. We recently launched a series called "Candler Changemakers" highlighting the range of fascinating ways our alumni are leading change as they fulfill their call. Follow along on our website (candler.emory.edu) and social media to see how God is working through them. You'll be inspired!

—Office of Communications, Candler School of Theology, Emory University

Drew University Theological School

Drew University Theological School is a global seminary with a global student population serving the worldwide church. Drew Theological School educates and mentors pastors, preachers, deacons, activists, teachers, thought leaders, and change agents for ministry and service in the church, society, and the wider world. Building upon its Wesleyan and Methodist foundations, Drew Theological School is diverse in theology, vocations, age, as well as racial, ethnic, national, and international identities of its faculty, students, and staff.

Many Drew students are just beginning their ministry, while others come to graduate theological education with prior ministry experience, reflecting an ongoing trend among theological schools in the United States and Canada. In providing theological education to the world, Drew holds in-person classes in Madison, New Jersey, classes that meet exclusively online, while others meet in hybrid fashion, i.e., partially online, partially in-person, as well as in-person Doctor of Ministry program in South Korea. Regular chapel services are offered in a hybrid way on Tuesdays and Thursdays with people participating from Seminary Hall as well as online. Chapel worship is live-streamed so that students, alumni, and friends around the world can participate.

In Fall 2025 Drew Theological School welcomed 88 new students in all degree programs, with total student enrollment (by headcount) in Fall 2025 semester being 365. Enrollment of international students at Drew is very strong at 140 students in Fall 2025. This number includes students who are studying full-time in the U.S.A. on a student Visa, students who are studying online from their home country, and students in the South Korean Cohort of the Doctor of Ministry program.

Drew's interdisciplinary degree programs provide real-world apprenticeships, promote adaptive leadership skills, and encourage innovation through team-taught core courses as well as a variety of electives that integrate theological disciplines and faith practices. The Drew faculty's shared values are infused across in the teaching, learning, and the formation of students. These values are: 1) a commitment to anti-racism; 2) gender and sexual-identity equality; 3) eco-sustainability and environmental justice; and 4) interfaith understanding and cooperation.

Drew Theological School continues to experience an increase in United Methodist students, including United Methodist Global Fellows pursuing further education for ministry. UMC graduates are serving in conferences of The United Methodist Church across the United States, and especially within nearby

regional episcopal areas of Greater New Jersey, Eastern Pennsylvania, Susquehanna, Upper New York, New York, and New England.

Rev. Edwin David Aponte, PhD, ThD (honorary) Dean and Professor of Religion & Culture

Duke Divinity School

Duke Divinity School celebrated its 99th Opening Convocation in August 2025 with a sermon from Dean Edgardo Colón-Emeric to begin the Nicene Creed Preaching Series at Duke Divinity School. He emphasized that the Nicene Creed is both a Pentecost profession and a peace proclamation:

“Perhaps this is the season for untangling the Nicene Creed from state theology and church theology. Perhaps this is a task for a divinity school whose mission claims to 'engage in spiritually disciplined and academically rigorous education, in service and witness to the Triune God in the midst of the church, the academy, and the world.' ... Christ did not preach peace looking for recognition or awards. His life is a single extended sermon on peace. Peace is believing that our lowest point does not limit our highest hope, because we acknowledge the power of baptism, the possibility of repentance, and the forgiveness of sin. *We believe. We believe.* This is a Pentecost profession, a peace proclamation, and also a praise pronouncement.”

This year we have joined with Christians around the world to commemorate the 17th centennial of the Council of Nicaea and the Nicene Creed. Duke Divinity scholars and ministry leaders published the book *Trinitarian Matters: 1700 Years of Shaping Christian Identity and Practice*. The school hosted two conference events to explore and learn from Nicaea: Convocation & Pastors’ School, focused for those in church and vocational ministry; and “Visible and Invisible: Surprising Encounters in Theology and the Arts,” with musical performances, poetry, and artistic expressions informed by the richness of the Nicene Creed.

Through God’s sustaining grace, we continue to welcome students from across the nation and around the world to be trained for faithful ministries serving God in churches, chaplaincy, and community service. In 2025, we were joined by 219 students. The Master of Divinity program gained 120 new students in both residential and hybrid programs, a 10 percent growth over last year. The Master of Arts in Christian Practice enrolled six new students; the Doctor of Ministry, 34; Master of Theology, seven; Master of Theological Studies, 32; and the Doctor of Theology welcomed five new students to campus. The Certificate in Theology and Health Care welcomed 14 students.

Duke Divinity is committed to facilitating clear and supportive pathways into theological education to encourage and equip those who are discerning a call to ministry. We confirmed an MOU with Huntingdon College, reaffirming our mutual dedication to nurturing vocations, strengthening the United Methodist tradition, and investing in the next generation of Christian leaders.

We welcomed four new faculty this year: Jonathan Tran, professor of theological ethics; Natalie Carnes, professor of theology; Matthew Whelan, associate research professor of theology; and Nina Balmaceda, Irene and William McCutchen Associate Professor of the Practice of Reconciliation and director of the Center for Reconciliation.

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

Edgardo Colón-Emeric, Dean of Duke Divinity School

Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary

Garrett Seminary continues to embody a trajectory of growth, innovation, and deepening partnership across the connection. Rooted in its Wesleyan heritage and animated by its mission to form courageous leaders in the way of Jesus, the seminary looks toward the future with confidence and hope.

For the fifth consecutive year, Garrett welcomed an entering class that reflects sustained enrollment growth. This steady expansion signals renewed confidence in our approach to theological education and in Garrett's distinctive role within The United Methodist Church and the global Christian community. The newest students represent geographic and cultural breadth, coming from across the United States and more than twenty countries throughout the worldwide connection. They prepare for ministry in congregations, chaplaincy settings, nonprofit leadership, academia, and mission contexts, reflecting the increasingly diverse and global nature of the Church's leadership needs.

In response to the evolving realities of ministry and lifelong learning, Garrett launched The Garrett Collective, a comprehensive digital platform offering theological resources, courses, learning experiences, and stackable microcredentials. Designed to serve laity and clergy alike, The Garrett Collective expands access to high-quality theological education in multiple languages and modalities. Content is curated and developed in partnership with annual conferences, congregations, and mission-driven organizations to address expressed needs across the connection. This initiative strengthens ongoing professional development for clergy, equips lay leaders for faithful witness, and extends Garrett's reach to communities that may not otherwise have access to formal theological study. The Garrett Collective represents a significant step toward greater accessibility, affordability, and contextual responsiveness in theological education.

The seminary also announced a historic agreement with its long-standing campus partner, Northwestern University. Through this agreement, Garrett will relocate to newly designed, state-of-the-art facilities on the southern end of campus. These buildings will support the seminary's increasingly multi-modal student body—those studying on campus, in hybrid formats, and in fully immersive online programs from across the nation and around the world. The new facilities will allow Garrett to invest more fully in vibrant residential theological formation while simultaneously expanding global access through digital and hybrid degree offerings. This agreement reflects a deep and mutual commitment between the seminary and the university, positioning both institutions for a strong and collaborative future. Most importantly, it enables Garrett to remain focused on mission-driven initiatives for generations to come.

Garrett has also experienced significant success in foundation and grant support for innovative learning and leadership initiatives. Strategic investments have strengthened The Garrett Collective, the Center for Ecological Regeneration, the Job Institute for Spiritual Formation, the National Initiative to Strengthen Hispanic Pastoral Leaders and Congregations, the Mageto Fellows Program in partnership with Africa University, and the Faith and Leadership Collaborative. Each of these initiatives extends the seminary's relationship with congregations and their leaders, resourcing the Church in areas of ecological justice, spiritual formation, intercultural ministry, global partnership, social impact, and leadership development. Together, they represent a widening circle of accessibility and impact, ensuring that theological education is responsive to the needs of diverse communities throughout the connection and beyond.

Garrett Seminary remains deeply committed to the vitality of The United Methodist Church. Through enrollment growth, digital innovation, historic institutional partnerships, and expanding grant-supported initiatives, the seminary is strengthening its capacity to serve the Church in a season of significant transition and opportunity. Guided by the conviction that God continues to call and equip leaders for this moment, Garrett looks forward to continued partnership with annual conferences, congregations, and ministries across the connection.

Javier A. Viera, President

Methodist Theological School in Ohio

MTSO is selected to offer Clinical Pastoral Education through CIPP

The General Board of Higher Education and Ministry of the United Methodist Church has chosen MTSO as the new academic home of the Center for Integrative Pastoral Practice, its Clinical Pastoral Education program. The CIPP program, which GBHEM had operated since 2018, is a vital component in the preparation of future chaplains, spiritual care providers and pastoral counselors, integrating theological knowledge with practical clinical training.

CIPP@MTSO (mtso.edu/cipp) uses students' existing ministry settings for the clinical assignments required for CPE certification. It serves students who are forging ministry pathways in both traditional and non-traditional contexts.

With a Lilly Endowment grant, MTSO will help strengthen children's worship

Lilly Endowment Inc. has awarded MTSO a \$1.25 million grant to establish "Kids Incorporated: Incorporating the Next Generation into the Full Life of Congregational Worship." The program is funded through Lilly Endowment's Nurturing Children Through Worship and Prayer Initiative.

The program will empower partner congregations to better serve children and their families by enhancing children's spiritual development and increasing understanding, accessibility and engagement opportunities for children within worship settings. With a focus on children ages 4-12, MTSO is addressing developmental differences across various age groups and promoting intergenerational worship experiences.

New technology enhances the blending of in-person and online learning

Five MTSO classrooms have received significant technology upgrades, making the school's blended learning experience even better. The new tech in these "Zoom Rooms" includes 360-degree cameras and microphones for more seamless classroom discussions, along with an updated platform that records and transcribes lectures.

With MTSO's HyFlex (short for "hybrid-flexible") education, students can attend classes in person, remotely or some of both. No matter how they participate, they're engaged in an immersive real-time experience.

Respectfully submitted,
Danny Russell, director of communications

Saint Paul School of Theology

What does God require of us? To act justly, love mercifully, and walk humbly with God. At Saint Paul School of Theology, this call from Micah 6:8 shapes everything we do—from preparing pastors to serve rural communities to fostering a beloved community where all belong. Centered in Christ and rooted in the Wesleyan tradition, we are committed to forming innovative leaders who make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

A Year of Growth and Vitality

2025 has been marked by remarkable momentum. Our Course of Study School educated 248 students—a 6% increase—with 628 course registrations, representing a 14% growth. These servant leaders are making a tangible difference: 42% serve rural communities with populations under 2,500, and 22 students serve as pastors of three or more churches. We celebrated 21 students completing the 20-course program, equipping them for licensed ministry.

Seminary enrollment grew by 9%, with a 33% increase in new students for Fall 2025. Our commitment to diversity is bearing fruit, with 29% racial diversity among students and almost even gender distribution. Students from 31 states and 220 cities connect with us through flexible online and hybrid learning options, while 16 graduates of the Course of Study School have transitioned into our degree programs.

Living Our Strategic Vision

Our Board of Trustees has recently endorsed a strategic plan that reflects our values and responds to the changing contexts of the church and the world. We are striving to become a beloved community that embodies belonging, justice, equity, and inclusion. Our new Doctor of Ministry track in Spirituality, Innovation, and Adaptive Leadership exemplifies this vision, developing change agents grounded in contemplative spirituality and equipped with emotional intelligence and intercultural competence. These same principles permeate our Master of Divinity and Master of Arts in Christian Ministry programs.

Saint Paul remains financially healthy, operating with a balanced budget, no debt, and an endowment ten times our annual expenses. This sustainability, rooted in community donations, enables us to invest in scholarships, technology, and evolving academic programs that serve our students and the church.

Looking Ahead

In 2026, we are strengthening our foundation and expanding our horizons by cultivating a vibrant alum network—a lifelong professional and spiritual home. Through mentorship, resource sharing, and collaborative ministry, we are building a dynamic ecosystem that empowers graduates from their first day of classes through retirement and beyond.

Saint Paul School of Theology invites you to join us in this journey of formation, innovation, and transformation. Together, we are preparing leaders who embody justice, mercy, and humility as they serve Christ and His church.

United Theological Seminary

Since 1871, United Theological Seminary has prepared faithful and fruitful Christian leaders who make disciples of Jesus Christ. In the 2024-25 fiscal year, the seminary served 642 graduate students, 275 doctoral and 375 masters,* reflecting approximately 30 percent enrollment growth since 2021 and placing United among the largest United Methodist seminaries in the United States.

A diverse community of many denominations, races and nationalities, United welcomed students from 38 states, 24 nations, and 54 denominations, with United Methodists representing the largest denominational group within the student body.

Academics

United's academic programs remain grounded in the historic Christian faith, scriptural holiness, and a commitment to the renewal of the church, preparing graduates to serve with wisdom, integrity, and hope.

United introduced a Doctor of Theology in 2024 to support pastor-scholars called to ministry at the intersection of the church and academy. The new degree program welcomed 13 students in its first year.

The seminary's Doctor of Ministry program continues to attract experienced ministry leaders seeking advanced professional education focused on faithful leadership. In the 2024-25 school year, 262 students participated in the mentor-led program.

Master's programs include eight houses of study, serving nearly 200 students in the United States and around the world, with programs offered in English, Spanish and Korean. In July 2025, 11 students attended the first Contextual Ministry Retreat for the African House of Study, held at the Kenya Methodist Conference Center in Nairobi. The Hispanic House of Study will celebrate its first class of graduates in May 2026, with candidates from across the United States, Mexico, Colombia, and Peru.

Through rigorous scholarship, intentional mentoring, worship, and community life, as well as practical engagement with the church's needs, academic life at United advances the seminary's vision of *Spirit-led leaders, a Christ-like Church, and a transformed world*.

Finances

United continues to focus on reducing the educational debt of its students. The Fresh Wind Campaign to raise \$10 million for the endowment is expanding scholarship opportunities for current and future students. The campaign has raised more than \$9 million toward this goal, by the grace of God and through the generosity of alumni/ae, churches, and friends of the seminary.

Looking Ahead

United enters the coming years with gratitude for God's faithfulness and confidence in God's future. Several senior leaders have answered new calls, and President Dr. Kent Millard has announced his retirement effective June 30, 2026, concluding ten years of service marked by encouragement, vision, and stability. A Presidential Search Committee is at work to identify United's next president, who will begin service on July 1, 2026.

Trusting God's promise spoken through the prophet Isaiah, "I am about to do a new thing" (Isaiah 43:19), United remains committed to preparing Christian leaders who boldly proclaim the gospel and make disciples of Jesus Christ. Thanks be to God!

**12-month unduplicated headcount enrollment for the 2024-25 fiscal year from July 1, 2024, to June 30, 2025.*

Dr. Kent Millard, President

WESLEY THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

As I complete my tenure as president of Wesley Theological Seminary, I am confident in handing the leadership to Dr. Carla Works, the 11th President of our school. Dr. Works, Dean and Woodrow and Mildred Miller Professor of Biblical Theology at Wesley DC, is a distinguished New Testament scholar, educator, and church-centered theologian.

Wesley Theological Seminary (Wesley DC) remains steadfast in its mission to equip persons for Christian ministry and leadership in the church and the world, to advance theological scholarship, and to model a prophetic voice in the public square. In a season marked by institutional change, civic uncertainty, and renewed hope for the United Methodist Church, Wesley DC actively forms leaders who are spiritually grounded, intellectually rigorous, and engaged with the world God loves through the following programs.

Master of Divinity, Master of Arts, Master of Theological Studies Degrees: Wesley DC offers Master of Divinity, Master of Arts, and Master of Theological Studies degrees through residential, hybrid, and fully online formats. Our programs serve a diverse student body representing a wide range of denominations,

cultural contexts, and vocational callings. Across all modalities, Wesley DC emphasizes ministerial formation that integrates theological depth, spiritual practice, and contextual engagement.

Doctor of Ministry Degree: Wesley DC remains one of the largest Doctor of Ministry programs in the United States and serves experienced ministerial leaders from across the world. In May 2025, ten chaplains from southern Africa graduated through a landmark partnership with Africa University, reflecting Wesley DC's growing global reach. Our DMin tracks for military chaplains continue to grow, including through a renewed partnership with the U.S. Army Institute for Religious Leadership. New tracks in Church Leadership Excellence, Soul Care, Global Church Leadership, and others begin in 2027.

Course of Study: As the regional Course of Study school for the Northeast Jurisdiction, Wesley DC delivers the full Course of Study curriculum online. Scholar-practitioners teach these courses, equipping Local Pastors across the denomination with flexible, high-quality preparation for ministry.

Ministry Certificates and Lifelong Learning: Wesley Pathways for Ministry offers online courses and certificates to help you discover your passion for ministry and strengthen your leadership skills, whether you are a layperson or a pastor. Courses and certificates help people gain ministry and leadership skills for church, community, and specialized ministry settings. Many courses/certificates are stackable for master's or doctoral credit and/or can be taken for CEUs.

Office of Admissions: Are you ready to explore your next faithful step? The Admissions Office regularly holds in-person and online open houses for potential master's and DMin students, and admissions officers are available to answer your questions and help you discern.

The Hub for (Re)imagining Ministry: Is your church ready to engage new generations or journey toward thriving in new ways? The Hub is currently accepting applications for its [Engaging Young Adults](#) nationwide, virtual cohort for congregations beginning August 2026, and will be recruiting new cohorts of congregations for [Bringing Church Home](#) (helping churches better accompany and support parents/caregivers in sharing their faith) and [Children of Faith](#) (helping churches center children in worship and formation) in fall 2026. The Hub is also entering into partnerships with UMC districts and annual conferences, equipping leaders to experiment, learn, and adapt faithfully in their local contexts.

The Lewis Center for Church Leadership: The Lewis Center welcomed Rev. Dr. Jonathan Page as its new Director in 2025. Dr. Page brings deep experience in leadership development across ecclesial and secular contexts and is guiding the Center into its next chapter of service to the Church. Through its widely read *Leading Ideas* newsletter and the *Leading Ideas Talks* podcast, the Lewis Center reaches thousands of leaders across the denomination.

The Henry Luce III Center for the Arts and Religion: The Luce Center welcomed Rev. Timothy Chon, MDiv, MFA as its new Director in 2025. Since Spring 2025, the Luce Center, which serves as a vital intersection of theology, creativity, and public imagination, has presented four exhibitions in the Dadian Gallery. In 2025, the Luce Center completed a major studio renovation that expanded capacity to support multiple artists-in-residence simultaneously. The Center welcomed professional Artist-in-

Residence Khaleelah Harris alongside new Student Artists-in-Residence, strengthening its commitment to nurturing artists at every stage of practice.

Center for Public Theology (CPT): CPT builds on its nearly fifty-year legacy by equipping faith leaders for thoughtful, courageous public witness. In collaboration with the Florida Annual Conference and with support from Trinity Wall Street, CPT leads a Public Theology Fellowship addressing immigration and public witness in politically diverse congregations. CPT continues to offer its flagship course, *Faith and Politics in the Public Square*, which remains open to seminarians nationwide. The course brings participants to Washington, DC for sustained engagement with policymakers, journalists, scholars, and activists. This year’s cohort engaged leaders including Senator Chris Coons, NPR’s Michel Martin, Judge Thomas Griffith, and Tope Folarin of the Institute for Policy Studies—preparing leaders to serve faithfully amid rapidly shifting public realities.

Community Engagement Institute): CEI forms leaders for justice-centered, community-rooted ministry. In March 2025, CEI hosted *Fostering Urban Vitality and a Heart for the City*, a two-day urban ministry conference in Baltimore, with support from City Seminary of New York and the Lilly Endowment. CEI offers traditional courses and immersive travel seminars open to all Master’s-level students. With grants from the General Board of Global Ministries, CEI continues to offer the *Heal the Sick* Health Minister’s Certificate. Since its inception, the program has trained more than 500 health ministers across 38 states and seven countries. In Spring 2026, CEI will offer *Trauma-Informed Congregations*, equipping leaders to address trauma with theological, cultural, and communal wisdom.

Wesley Theological Seminary remains deeply committed to the United Methodist Church and to the formation of leaders who serve with humility, imagination, and courage. As the Church continues to discern its future, Wesley stands ready—faithful to its mission, responsive to the moment, and hopeful in God’s ongoing work. For the Church. For the world. For such a time as this.

Rev. Dr. David McAllister-Wilson, President

Lyvonne Briggs, Director of Strategic Communications and Marketing

United Methodist General Board of Higher Education and Ministry

Africa University

Thank you to the congregations of the Michigan Conference of The United Methodist Church for your steady support of Africa University. In 2025, Michigan Conference congregations generously invested in the Africa University Fund at 93.5 percent. That commitment makes a real difference in forming disciples who love boldly, serve joyfully, and lead courageously—across Africa and around the world.

2025 was a year of strong growth and momentum for Africa University (AU). In June, AU graduated its largest class ever—622 students from 20 African countries. In August, the university welcomed its most

diverse incoming class, with students from 30 nations. They study in four colleges, a law school, and two institutes on a modern, fully debt-free campus built for learning and community.

A few highlights from 2025:

- A self-funded solar power plant now supplies 100 percent of AU campus electricity, easing pressure on Zimbabwe’s national grid and benefiting nearby communities.
- A new collaboration with the United Nations University Institute for Water, Environment and Health advances research in food security, sustainable agriculture, and environmental resilience. Faculty and graduate researchers are developing evidence-based responses to climate stress, water insecurity, and agricultural vulnerability—equipping communities to adapt and thrive.
- An expanded partnership supporting applied research with The United Methodist Church’s Global Ministries agency focuses on at-risk agriculture and malaria prevention, strengthening rural communities.
- In partnership with United Methodist Communications, AU is training African church communicators in digital engagement and media strategy—strengthening the Church’s witness across diverse contexts.
- AU’s School of Law moot court team earned the honor of representing Africa at the World Round of the Price Media Law Moot Court Competition in the United Kingdom in 2026.

These milestones are directly connected to your generosity. As this quadrennium continues, Africa University urges every congregation in the Michigan Conference to maintain AUF support at the 2016 budget level and work toward 100 percent funding each year. AU also encourages churches to consider becoming a “Keystone Congregation” by committing \$7,000 annually in scholarship support for one undergraduate student—and walking alongside that student with prayer and encouragement throughout their degree journey.

Africa University remains a living expression of our worldwide connection. Because you give, research advances. Because you pray, leaders are called and formed. Because you believe in Africa University, hope expands across nations.

Thank you for standing with AU in 2025. Together, we are shaping a generation equipped to lead Africa—and the Church—into a resilient and faithful future.

James H. Salley

President and Chief Executive Officer – Africa University (Tennessee) Inc., and Associate Vice Chancellor for Institutional Advancement – Africa University (Zimbabwe).