

## Reports

**REPORTS****COMMISSION ON ARCHIVES AND HISTORY**

by Lona Dearmont, Chair

It was a pivotal year. The Kansas Area and Nebraska Commissions on Archives and History (CAH) met together twice, in March and May, to get acquainted and tour each other's archival facilities at Baker University and Nebraska Wesleyan University.

Out of these meetings grew a joint advisory statement made to the Transition Team as it was planning for the merger as Great Plains Conference. We celebrated our conferences' role as "custodians of an irreplaceable and unique resource for institutional memory."

We celebrated that our conferences benefited from the expertise of two professional archivists, Jen McCollough (Kansas Area) and Karrie Dvorak (Nebraska), whose efforts are key to maintaining the quality and usefulness of the archives.

We advocated following standardized records retention procedures across the conference to ensure that historically significant records will continue to be preserved and accessible.

Recognizing that archives and history is integral to the work of the conference, we recommended that the chair of the Commission be part of the Connecting Council. The Transition Team adopted our recommendation in the Plan of Organization.

In October, the newly appointed Great Plains Commission met for the first time. Our team agreed that "our mission is to keep the history of the church so that we can use it to remember, to learn, to tell our story, and to inspire great churches and great leaders."

Our priorities are to develop contacts with church historians, to reaffirm relations with the institutions acting as repositories, to ensure that collection and retention policies are being followed, and to plan for the future storage and preservation of historically significant records of the Great Plains Conference.

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**NEBRASKA UNITED METHODIST HISTORICAL  
CENTER/ARCHIVES REPORT**

by Karrie Dvorak, Director/Curator

In 2013, Nebraska United Methodist Historical Center/Archives ("NUMHC") staff and volunteers worked diligently to: respond to research requests; update church and clergy files, and pastoral appointment notebooks; process conference and closed-church records; finalize the removal of all collection items from an off-site storage facility at NWU; process newspaper clippings regarding churches and ministries in the Nebraska Annual Conference and provide summaries for use by the Director of Communications; and, catalog an additional 300 volumes of books and upload that information to the on-line card catalog located on the web at: <http://www.librarything.com/catalog/neumc/>. Collectively, NUMHC volunteers worked approximately 307 hours at the Archives this past year. Staff also made significant progress in de-accessioning items from the off-site storage facility that were deemed unsuitable for NEUMHC's collections and integrating other items into the existing collection space in the basement of Cochrane-Woods Library.

Throughout 2013, part-time archivist, Karrie Dvorak: (1) responded to approximately 103 telephone/e-mail and forty-two walk-in requests for information from researchers both inside and outside the denomination and Nebraska Annual Conference (genealogical, local church history, former clergy, *Nebraska Messenger* history, and UMW history, etc.); (2) supervised three regular volunteers on their processing, cataloging, clippings, and file management projects; (3) continued acquiring and accessioning new collection items, including closed-church records from Mascot-Bethel, Pilger, Saronville, and Sterling UMCs, as well as Nebraska Annual Conference Peace with Justice Ministry records and Board of Trustees records on various closed churches, and some additional items from Camp Norwesca; (4) prepared reports and presentations for the joint Nebraska/Kansas Area Commissions on Archives & History meetings and the last meeting of the Nebraska Annual Conference; (5) prepared a historical display of NUMHC collection items for the Nebraska Annual Conference and assisted the Director of Communications in preparing poster and table-top displays of historic photos and information from NUMHC's collections for that last annual conference; (6) assisted the Nebraska Annual Conference

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UMW historian in preparing a display and final history for their last meeting held in Kearney in October; (7) provided records management advice to several local church historians, pastors, and district superintendants in the Nebraska Conference; and, (8) assisted four congregations throughout the Conference with relevant historical information regarding their church anniversary celebrations and planned histories.

The Historical Center/Archives continues its mission to offer research support for all persons interested in the rich heritage of the Nebraska area of the Great Plains Annual Conference. Truly that work could not be completed without the significant effort and dedicated commitment of NUMHC volunteers: Bob Craig, Gail Devore, and Barbara Schmidt, as well as the members of the Great Plains Commission on Archives & History and its predecessors.

**BOARD OF PENSION AND HEALTH BENEFITS**

Kelly Williams, Chairperson

Kelly Williams was appointed chair and Tammy Shepherd, secretary.

The Board consists of eight laity, one retired clergy member and three active clergy members. Ex-officio members include the Conference Treasurer, Gary Beach, the Conference Benefits Officer, Carol Fusaro, and Cabinet Rep. Rev. Dan Flanagan.

The Board along with CFA has an Investment Committee for the purpose of advising the Board regarding the investment of discretionary funds.

It remains the desire of the Board to continue using the resources of the General Board's Investment Committee for the investment of our discretionary funds until such time the Investment Committee deems it necessary to move the funds.

**Health Insurance**

The current provider for health coverage is through Cigna. The Conference offers two plans to meet the needs of the members. The first plan features a pre-tax Health Savings Account with a high deductible to encourage consumers to shop around and use their benefit dollars more carefully. Using reserve funds, the Board funded \$1,000 into each employee-only coverage and \$2,000 for all other categories of coverage. All medical claims and prescriptions

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apply towards the deductible amount. Once deductible is met the plans pay 100% for in-network providers of service.

Please note: Funding for the Health Savings Accounts are reviewed annually. The funding for 2015 will be determined in August 2014. The second plan is Cigna Open Access Plan which is similar to a traditional PPO with co-pays. The prescription coverage has a separate co-pay and out-of-pocket maximum. This plan offers a Flexible Spending Account.

A Dependent Care Account is also available to be used with either plan.

Health insurance will only be acted on at Annual Conference when bids have been obtained which might require a change in carriers, so no action is required this year at Annual Conference.

**Church Responsibility:** The health insurance premium is mandatory for all churches with either full-time or three-quarter time appointments, regardless of the participation of the clergyperson in the insurance plan. Churches with three-quarter time appointments will pay the full blended premium.

Please Note: The blended rate for 2015 is still to be finalized. It will be determined in August 2014 with recommendations given to the Connecting Council for approval.

**Clergy Share:** The clergy portion of the health insurance premium will be no more than 3.5% of their gross salary and will be determined in August 2014 with recommendations given to the Connecting Council for approval.

The clergy portion of the health insurance premium must be included in gross salary on the compensation form and is to be paid by the pastor as a pre-tax deduction. This is not to be paid by the local church, but is a deduction from the clergy salary.

**Clergy couple special consideration:** The clergy couple shares will be determined in August 2014 with recommendations given to the Connecting Council for approval.

**Wellness Program:** To encourage clergy participation in a “wellness program,” each clergy member upon showing evidence of an annual physical examination by a doctor, will receive one month’s waiver of his/her clergy contribution. If the spouse is covered on Conference insurance it will require proof from both the clergy member and spouse before receipt of the waiver.

**Virgin Health Miles:** Virgin Health Miles is a walking program through the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits. This program is for active clergy, retired clergy, and lay employees of the Conference, along with their spouses.

**Health Insurance for Lay Employees of Local Churches:** The Conference health insurance plan may be offered to lay employees of a local church and employees of United Methodist institutions and entities. A signed contract or written confirmation from the local church or UM institution should be on file requesting coverage for their laity staff members. However, any individuals covered do not qualify for any of the GPUMC incentives and they will be billed the actual cost of the insurance premium.

**Medicare Secondary Payer/Small Employer Exception:** If a local church or a conference-responsible extension ministry qualifies for the Small Employer Exemption (less than 20 employees), and the clergy person (and/or spouse), lay employee (and/or spouse) is eligible for Medicare and still under active appointment, the individual will be required to move to Medicare, including Medicare part B with Medicare becoming primary. The church would still be billed the full blended rate, but the clergy person would not be required to pay the clergy share.

**Retired Clergy under Full-time Appointment:** A Medicare-eligible retired clergy person serving in a three-quarter or full-time capacity would stay on the medical plan they selected as a retiree. The local church will be billed the full blended rate. The clergy person would not pay the clergy share. However, if a retired clergy person is on the active plan, they will pay the clergy share.

**Retiree Health Insurance:** The Conference partners with Extend Health, through the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits, for Retiree Health Insurance. Extend Health is an exchange that will help each retiree select the private Medicare plan that best meets their medical needs and budget.

**Nebraska Retiree Health Insurance Subsidy:** During the GPUMC Annual Conference regular sessions in 2014, 2015 and 2016, there will be time set aside for clergy serving churches in Nebraska and lay members from Nebraska churches to vote on the policies governing the retiree health care benefit.

**Retiree Health Insurance Subsidy:** It is the recommendation of the Nebraska Retiree Health Care Team that for 2015 we continue with the current plan of asking the Nebraska churches be assessed a Fair Sharing Giving amount of 1.25% of Table 3 Line 62 (total income for annual budget/spending plan) of the local church report to the Annual Conference.

An annual Retiree Health Valuation is required by the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits. The valuation completed by Towers Watson indicates that there will be adequate funding to meet the needs of this subsidy.

### **Life Insurance**

We continue to offer affordable life insurance. This benefit is available to clergy members and conference lay staff members who works at least 30 hours per week. The costs to this benefit are to be paid by the participant. The benefit can be portable when employees terminate.

### **Vision and Dental Insurance**

We continue to offer affordable vision and dental insurance. This benefit is available to clergy members and lay staff members who works at least 30 hours per week. These benefits are optional coverages and the costs are to be paid by the participant on a pre-tax basis.

### **Retirement Benefits**

The Conference has an over-funded position in the Pre-82 Pension Plan and substantial pension reserves. The Board recommends we continue to use the over-funding and reserves to reduce the overall cost of the pension benefits to local churches. The retirement contributions in excess of those paid by local churches will be funded first from the Pre-82 fund, and then out of the pension reserves, if needed. The excess funds will be used as long as the Pre-82 funding balance is not reduced below 120%.

The local church funding is as follows:

	2014	2015
CPP death & disability	3%	3%
CRSP defined contributions	3%	3%
CRSP defined benefit	4%	4%
Total	10%	10%

The CRSP benefits apply for those clergy members serving 50% and above. Those members serving 25% the local churches will fund 10% into the members UMPIP account. The 2% balance required will be funded from the Pre-82 over-funding, and then out of the pension reserves, if needed.

**Past Service Rate (PSR):** Increase the PSR from the 2014 rate of \$715.00 for each past service year to \$729.00 for each past service year, beginning January 1, 2015. (The past service rate is a defined benefit based upon years of service through December 31, 1981.)

**Contingent Annuitant Percentage (CAP):** Increase the CAP from the 2014 rate of 75% for the surviving spouses of the former Nebraska and Kansas East Conferences to the rate of 85%, and the rate for the former Kansas West Conference will remain at 100%.

**Clergy Retirement Security Program (CRSP) Funding:**

- Use the Pre-82 excess funds first to fund the 2014 and 2015 retirement contributions in excess of those paid by the local churches.
- Use the Pre-82 excess funds first to fund the 2014 and 2015 retirement contributions in excess of those paid by the local churches for those serving 25%. These funds will be deposited into the individual's UMPIP.
- The use of Pre-82 excess funds should not reduce the fund balance below 120%.
- Retain the percentage of compensation billed to local churches at 4% of compensation for the CRSP defined benefit funding.
- Maintain the CRSP defined contribution funding and CPP funding at 3% of compensation each, for a maximum total contribution of 10% of compensation.
- Spousal benefit at 85% for (former) Nebraska and Kansas East and 100% for (former) Kansas West.
- Continue PSR increases at level of average (annual basis) clergy COL.

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**Special Pension Grant:** It is recommended to continue the special pension grant for the following:

- Esther R. Miller, surviving spouse of Alfred Miller. The grant is for 12.5 years of service credit at the surviving spouse contingent annuitant for the former Kansas West Conference (100%).
- Lance Lingard, dependent son of Richard H. Lingard, clergyperson of the former Nebraska Conference, (25% of pension rate times years of service of the father) payable to the co-guardians, Mrs. Carissa Shirley and Mrs. Holly Brandt.
- Kathy Kirkus, dependent daughter of Eldo Kirkus, clergyperson of the former Nebraska Conference, (25% of pension rate times years of service of father).

**Other Board Activities**

The Board received and approved two requests for emergency grants through March for a total of \$5,500. These grants are funded out of reserves in the Oil & Gas Lease funds.

The Board maintains written guidelines for emergency grants.

- The Board will receive requests from active and retired clergy, surviving spouses, and local clergy.
- An individual may receive one grant in any given year.
- A grant will not be approved if a previous grant has been given for the same emergency.
- Grants are limited to a maximum of \$3,000 per year.
- Each grant will be reviewed on an individual basis and will be based on merit and need.

**CLERGY HOUSING RESOLUTION:**

Resolution on Rental/Housing/Household Expense Allowance, in accordance with Federal Guidelines for clergy housing, the following resolution is recommended:

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WHEREAS, the religious denomination known as The United Methodist Church (the Church), of which this Conference is a part, has in the past functioned and continues to function through ministers of the gospel (within the meaning of Internal Revenue Code section 107) who were or are duly ordained, commissioned, or licensed ministers of the Church (Clergypersons);

WHEREAS, the practice of the Church and of this Conference was and is to provide active Clergypersons with a parsonage or a rental/housing allowance as part of their gross compensation;

WHEREAS, pensions or other amounts paid to active, retired, terminated, and disabled Clergypersons are considered to be deferred compensation and are paid to active, retired, terminated, and disabled Clergypersons in consideration of previous active service; and

WHEREAS, the Internal Revenue Service has recognized the Conference (or its predecessors) as an appropriate organization to designate a rental/housing allowance for Clergypersons who are or were members of this Conference and are eligible to receive such deferred compensation;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED:

THAT an amount equal to 100% of the pension, severance, or disability payments received from plans authorized under The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church (the Discipline), which includes all such payments from the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits (GBOPHB), during the period January 1, 2015 through December 31, 2015, by each active, retired, terminated, or disabled Clergyperson who is or was a member of the Conference, or its predecessors, be and hereby is designated as a rental/housing allowance for each such Clergyperson; and

THAT the pension, severance, or disability payments to which this rental/housing allowance designation applies will be any pension, severance, or disability payments from plans, annuities, or funds authorized under the Discipline, including such payments from the GBOPHB and from a commercial annuity company that provides an annuity arising from benefits accrued under a GBOPHB plan, annuity, or fund authorized under the Discipline, that result from any service a Clergyperson rendered to this Conference or that an active, a retired, a terminated or a disabled Clergyperson of this Conference rendered to any local church, annual conference of the Church, general agency of the Church, other institution of the

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Church, former denomination that is now a part of the Church, or any other employer that employed the Clergy person to perform services related to the ministry of the Church, or its predecessors, and that elected to make contributions to or accrue a benefit under, such a plan, annuity, or fund for such an active, a retired, a terminated, or a disabled Clergy person's pension, severance, or disability plan benefit as part of his or her gross compensation.

Note: The rental/housing allowance that may be excluded from a Clergy person's gross income in any year for federal (and, in most cases, state) income tax purposes is limited under Internal Revenue Code section 107(2), and regulation thereunder, to the least of: (a) the amount of the rental/housing allowance designated by the Clergy person's employer or other appropriate body of the Church (such as this Conference in the foregoing resolutions) for such year; (b) the amount actually expended by the Clergy person to rent or provide a home in such year; or (c) the fair rental value of the home, including furnishings and appurtenances (such as a garage), plus the cost of utilities in such year. Each clergy person or former clergy person is urged to consult with his or her own tax advisor to determine what deferred compensation is eligible to be claimed as a housing allowance exclusion.

**2015 COMPREHENSIVE BENEFIT FUNDING PLAN SUMMARY**

The 2012 *Book of Discipline* ¶ 1506.6 requires that each annual conference develop, adopt and implement a formal comprehensive funding plan for funding all of its benefit obligations. The funding plan shall be submitted annually to the General Board of Pension and Health benefits for review and be approved annually by the annual conference, following the receipt and inclusion of a favorable written opinion from the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits (GBOPHB). This summary document is only a portion of the information contained in the actual signed funding plan. As such, it might not contain all the information required for a comprehensive view of the benefit obligations of the conference. You may request the full contents of the 2015 comprehensive benefit funding plan from your conference benefit office.

Following is the summary of the Comprehensive Benefit Funding Plan (CBFP) that received a favorable written opinion from GBOPHB for the 2015 conference benefit obligations:

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**Clergy Retirement Security Program (CRSP) Defined Benefit (DB) and Defined Benefit Contribution (DC)**

**Plan Overview:** The Clergy Retirement Security Program (CRSP) is an Internal Revenue Code section 403(b) retirement program providing lifetime income and account flexibility designed for those who serve as clergy of The United Methodist Church. The plan is designed to provide participants with one portion of their overall retirement portfolio. CRSP replaced the Ministerial Pension Plan (MPP) effective January 1, 2007, which replaced the Pre-82 for service rendered prior to January 1, 1982.

CRSP consists of both a defined benefit (DB) plan, which provides a monthly benefit at retirement based upon years of credited service to the Church, and a defined contribution (DC) plan, which provides a retirement account balance established and funded by annual conferences. The Clergy Retirement Security Program (CRSP-DB) annuities total liability as of January 1, 2013 is \$923.7 million, while total plan assets are \$978.5 million resulting in a current plan funded ratio of 106%. The Great Plains Conference portion of the liability is 3.18% and the 2015 contribution is \$3,415,424. The conference anticipates that the amount will be funded by: Direct Billing and subsidy out of Pre-82. Additionally, General Conference 2012 approved a change to CRSP that provides each annual conference the discretion to determine whether to cover three-quarter and/or half-time clergy. The Great Plains Annual Conference has elected to cover clergy serving 50%+ under CRSP effective January 1, 2015.

Effective January 1, 2014 CRSP-DC plan was reduced from a 3% to a 2% of plan compensation non-matching contribution. Clergy will have the opportunity to earn up to an additional 1% CRSP DC contribution by contributing at least 1% of their plan compensation to UMPIP, therefore if a participant contributes at least 1% of plan compensation to UMPIP, the individual will receive a contribution of 3%, which is unchanged from 2013 and prior. The 2013 CRSP-DC contribution was \$1,073,270 and was funded by: Direct Bill. It is anticipated that increases for future years will average 2.00%, due to: The rate of increase is based on the average raise rate of 2.0%.

**Ministerial Pension Plan (MPP)**

**Plan Overview:** The Ministerial Pension Plan (MPP) provides clergy with a pension for their years of ministry with The United Methodist Church from 1982 through 2006. MPP is an Internal Revenue Code section 403(b) retirement plan. Effective January 1, 2014, exactly 65% of the account balance must be annuitized when it is to be

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distributed. The remainder may be rolled over to UMPIP, another qualified plan or IRA, or paid in a lump sum.

The Ministerial Pension Plan (MPP) annuities total liability as of January 1, 2013 is \$2.7 billion, while total plan assets are \$3.0 billion resulting in a current plan funded ratio of 109% and no required contribution for 2015. The Great Plains Conference's portion of the total liability is 2.96%. Future MPP annuitants have a total account balance of \$4.4 billion and the Great Plains Conference's portion of that balance is \$118.10 million or 2.70% of the total.

**Pre-1982 Plan**

**Plan Overview:** Supplement One to the Clergy Retirement Security Program (CRSP), also known as the Pre-82 Plan, provides clergy with a pension for their years of ministry with The United Methodist Church prior to 1982. The Pre-82 Plan was replaced by MPP effective January 1, 1982. When participants enter a Retired relationship with your Conference, and does not terminate, the minimum benefit payable to them is based on two factors: 1) years of Service with pension credit and 2) Conference pension rate. Years of Service with pension credit are approved by each Conference on the recommendation of the Conference Board of Pensions in accordance with plan provisions and *The Book of Discipline*. The pension rate, also called the past service rate (PSR), is the dollar amount chosen by the Conference as the amount payable for each approved year of Service with pension credit. Typically, the pension rate changes from year to year. The number of years of Service with pension credit is multiplied by the PSR, and the product is the minimum annual benefit payable to those eligible for Pre-82 Plan benefits. In certain situations the benefit received from the Pre-82 plan, may vary based on the applicability of what is referred to as Defined Benefit Service Money (DBSM), which is the defined contribution feature of the Pre-1982 Plan. At the time that a participant retires, the DBSM account is converted to a life based benefit. At that point the participants benefit is the greater of the PSR benefit or DBSM benefit. As the conference increases the PSR, the participants benefit is recalculated; however the DBSM based benefit does not change.

The 2015 Past Service Rate (PSR) recommended to the Great Plains Annual Conference will be \$729.00 representing a 1.96% increase from the 2014 rate. The conference expects future increases to be approximately 2.00%, which is based on: Cost of living for Great Plains Conference is approx. 2.0%.

The contingent annuitant percentage is recommended to increase for the former Kansas East and Nebraska from 75% to 85%. The former Kansas West will remain at 100%.

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Based on the final actuarial valuations from the General Board of Pensions and Health Benefits as of January 1, 2013 for 2015, the portion of the Pre-82 liability attributable to the Great Plains Conference and funded status is, as of 1/1/2013, as follows:

Funding Plan Liability	\$95,239,807
Assets in the Plan	<u>\$118,261,107</u>
Funded status	\$23,021,300

represented by a 124% funded ratio

Funded Status as of 12/31/2013 \$26,357,086

The funded ratio is recalculated each year based on economic and demographic changes. These changes create the possibility that Pre-82 contributions may be required at a future date (even after 2021).

As outlined above, given the funded status of the Pre-82 Plan for the Great Plains Conference, the Conference Board of Pensions (CBOP) intends to redirect Pre-82 assets in the amount of \$3,327,963 on 12/31/14. The conference intends to use Pre-82 surplus while retaining 120% reserves. The conference recognizes that the use of surplus redirection increases the probability of future Pre-82 contributions; therefore, our goal is to maintain at least 120% reserves.

Defined benefit plan liabilities (Pre-82, MPP and CRSP-DB) continue until the last benefit is paid to participants and their surviving spouses irrespective of the funding level of the plan. That is, even if the assets in the plan are larger than the liabilities in the plan, the conference still has a liability (obligation) with the plan.

### Active Health Benefit Program

**Plan Overview:** The Great Plains Conference offers an Insurance program to the active participants.

During the 2013 year, the total cost of the program was \$10,883,656 and was funded by Direct Bill. The projected average increase for future years is expected to be 6%, due to: Trend is 6 - 12 % increases. The amount owed does not reflect that due to bidding the cost of health insurance..

### Post-Retirement Medical Benefit Program (PRM)

**Plan Overview:** The Great Plains Conference post-retiree medical plan currently offered is a Stipend plan made available to Extend Health.

The current annual cost is anticipated to be \$673,089 with the funding sources to be: Secure Promise Funds: Nebraska has special funding account that will be used + extra mission shares will be paid by NE churches. On a longer term basis the Great Plains Conference intends to Secure Promise Funds: Nebraska has special funding account that will be used + extra mission shares will be paid by NE churches.

A new PRM valuation date 1/1/2014 will be completed soon. Assets designated for PRM is \$5,695,435

### **Comprehensive Protection Plan (CPP)**

**Plan Overview:** The Comprehensive Protection Plan (CPP) provides death, long-term disability and other welfare benefits for eligible clergy of The United Methodist Church and their families and is an Internal Revenue Code 414(e) "church plan" funded by plan sponsor insurance premiums. Generally, you are eligible to participate in CPP if your conference or salary-paying unit sponsors the plan and you satisfy the eligibility requirements which include full-time episcopal appointment and plan compensation equal to or greater than 60% of the Denominational Average Compensation or the Conference Average Compensation whichever is less. The Great Plains Annual Conference has elected to make CPP-eligible clergy, who are appointed at least 50%, have mandatory participation.

Currently (for 2013) the Great Plains Conference has a required contribution to the Comprehensive Protection Plan of \$1,073,270, which is anticipated to be funded by Direct Bill. The anticipated average increase in future years is expected to be 2.00% per year due to: Rate of increase is based on the increase of average raises of 2%.

### **United Methodist Personal Investment Plan (UMPIP) for Lay and Clergy**

**Plan Overview:** The United Methodist Personal Investment Plan (UMPIP) is an Internal Revenue Code section 403(b) defined contribution retirement savings plan for clergy and lay employees of The United Methodist Church and affiliated organizations. Participants may make before-tax and/or after-tax contributions through payroll deductions. Participant contributions, contributions your plan sponsor may make on the participants behalf and investment earnings comprise the individual's retirement account balance.

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Conference office lay employees working an average of 20 hours per week or more are eligible for a pension contribution of 6% of salary with a 3% employee match. The estimated contribution for the Great Plains Conference is anticipated to be \$130,715 and funded through the Mission Shares

As of January 1, 2014, the Great Plains Conference is sponsoring UMPIP for clergy serving one-quarter time and are eligible for a pension contribution of 12% of salary. The estimated contribution for the Great Plains Conference is anticipated to be \$22,024 and funded through the Direct Bill.

**Other Conference Defined Contribution Type Obligations**

**Plan Overview:** The Great Plains Conference currently offers a Virgin Health Miles plan made available to clergy members + spouses that are covered on the Conference insurance, retirees + spouses and Conference lay staff members + spouses that are covered on the Conference insurance. The contribution for 2013 was \$77,553 with the funding sources to be: Direct bill for the actives and reserves for the retirees. The anticipated average increase in future years is expected to be 2.00% per year due to: Funding is approved on a year to year basis with not much expected growth in participation.

**Plan Overview:** The Great Plains Conference currently offers a Moving Expenses plan. The contribution for 2013 was \$385,000 with the funding sources to be: Mission Shares. The anticipated average increase in future years is expected to be .00% per year due to: The amount budgeted for this was not increased or lowered.

**Plan Overview:** The Great Plains Conference currently has Lockton Consultants to assist with securing insurance coverage and optional wellness plans. The cost for 2013 was \$80,000 with the funding sources to be: Direct Bill. The anticipated average increase in future years is expected to be .00% per year due to: Services from Lockton will be evaluated on a yr to yr basis.

**Plan Overview:** The Great Plains Conference currently offers a Death & Disability for Lay Staff plan. The contribution for 2013 was \$18,711 with the funding sources to be: Budgeted – Mission Shares. The anticipated average increase in future years is expected to be 2.00% per year due to: Based on salary and rates of coverages. New coverage costs are less than past years.

**Conclusion:**

The 2015 Comprehensive Benefit Funding Plan and the above outlined Summary document incorporates to the best of our understanding, the Great Plains Conference's obligations and funding requirements of the benefits provided to the Clergy and Laity of the Great Plains Conference.

**NEBRASKA RETIREE HEALTH CARE TEAM**

by Rev. Ron Harris, chairperson

The Nebraska Retiree Health Care Team serves the Great Plains Annual Conference in overseeing the health insurance subsidy of Nebraska clergy retirees. The current subsidy was established for clergy who served in the Nebraska Annual Conference on or before December 31, 2013 and who have or will retire by December 31, 2019. The subsidy is part of the tradition of Nebraska churches to honor and support those that have served in the past as members of the Nebraska Annual Conference. The Nebraska Retiree Health Care Team met in January to evaluate and make adjustments to the recommended support amount that will be asked from the Nebraska churches of the GPUMC at our next Annual Conference session. The team recommends that the funding request for 2015 be 1.25% of church income as approved in the Plan of Organization.

**PERSONNEL**

Minimum Compensation for 2015.

The Personnel Committee recommends a cost of living adjustment to the Minimum Compensation amounts for 2015. This adjustment is derived from implementing the formula to determine the salary of District Superintendents for 2015.

For 2015, the recommendations are:

Full-Time Local Pastors - \$34,750

Associate Members - \$37,000

Provisional Members - \$39,250

Full Members - \$41,500

The above minimums are inclusive of utilities. Churches which currently pay parsonage utilities either directly or as a separate allowance are encouraged to include this amount in base salary.

All Conference employees, other than District Superintendents and Directors whose salaries are set by the Plan of Organization, will receive a 2.16% salary or wage increase for 2015.

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**BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

by Rev. Steven L. Flader

The Great Plains Conference Board of Trustees is off to a great start. We assist local churches in protecting their property in furtherance of their mission of making disciples. We assist the Conference in maintaining, organizing, and evaluating Conference property over a two state area. This includes 17 District parsonages, six camps, six campus ministries, three Conference buildings and an episcopal residence in Wichita and an apartment for the Bishop's use in Lincoln. In addition we maintain a fleet of conference vehicles and insure and dispose of discontinued churches.

Much of our early work this year has been devoted to establishing policies and best practices for the new Annual Conference. This historic work has included but is not limited to new policies on conference vehicle use, parsonage review reports, district parsonage use and responsibilities, and a parsonage moving report for use in any pastoral move. In December we accepted insurance bids for Workers Compensation and general liability for all conference property.

Maintaining district parsonages is one task given to the board by the Book of Discipline. Major updates to district parsonages include: new kitchen flooring for the Gateway District; fencing for the back yard for the Prairie Rivers District; garage door replacement for the Blue River District; a new heater for the Great West District; a new water heater for the Missouri River District; window replacement was completed in the Hutchinson District; a new parsonage was built and put into service and the existing parsonage sold in the Dodge City District; kitchen remodel in the Topeka District; new fencing, gate controllers and concrete repair for the Conference office in Wichita; and new window treatments and exterior signage for the Lincoln office.

As we have changes in District Superintendents we will be doing cleaning and remodeling in those parsonages as needed. This will necessitate changes in the Salina District parsonage including an exterior wheelchair ramp and other interior handicapped accessible features.

The Conference Trustees has major responsibility for the property of our six camps. These are conference camps and we should support all six of our camps. We need to spread the word that we have six very unique camps serving our Conference. We work with the camping board to create experiences for all the people of Kansas and Nebraska.

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One of the unfortunate realities is that the number of discontinued local churches continues to grow. In the past year one church has closed Living Hope, formerly Pearl Memorial UMC in Omaha, Nebraska. The following church property has been sold within the last year: St Paul UMC in Liberal, Kansas. For all these properties the Board is responsible for insurance and legal fees following their closing. In some cases, the expenses exceed the proceeds from the sales of the property.

In the last year 10.85 Acres of land purchased in the mid-1980's for a possible new church start in Kearney, Nebraska for \$41,000 was sold in September 2013 for \$153,888. The proceeds from this sale in Nebraska were transferred to the Great Plains Annual Conference for new church starts anywhere in our Conference.

Because Bishop Jones continues to reside in Wichita, the Board of Trustees is renting an apartment here in Lincoln for his use when he is in Nebraska. This will be reevaluated on an annual basis by the Episcopal Committee and the Board of Trustees.

The Conference Board of Trustees has been blessed by the support and hard work of Bishop Jones, the Cabinet, our Conference Treasurer and Director of Administrative Services, Gary Beach, and our Property Manager Patrick McKaig. Gary and Patrick handle a ton of detail work connected to financial and property issues for the Conference. I would also like to thank those who have served this past year on your Conference Board of Trustees. They have been a great team to work with.

**COUNCIL ON FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION**

By Carl Nord, Chairperson

**I. Our Purpose**

Should the Conference Council on Finance and Administration (or CF&A as we are commonly referred to) have a mission statement apart from the Great Plains mission statement it might be as follows: To oversee the funds entrusted to the conference. We have an expectation that all financial matters are handled with integrity, accountability and transparency.

As a new conference and a new conference committee we are in the process of developing procedures that accomplish our mission. We have members on our committee that are well versed in financial matters and others that are well versed in church matters. This creates a blend of secular accountability and missional accountability that is necessary in dealing with our conference budget and the management of funds. Currently, most of the members of the committee bring a level of experience gained from

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being part of the equivalent committee of our former conferences. This experience brings with it a history but at the same time we view all matters and all funds as those of Great Plains Conference and an elimination of preexisting conference lines.

The committee has established an audit Committee and an investment committee. Both committees include persons with financial expertise and are not part of CF&A. The investment committee was established in cooperation with the Conference Board of Pensions.

The committee has the responsibility of recommending to the conference the person who is the treasurer of the conference. The treasurer is accountable to CF&A. Gary Beach has been previously elected by the conference to serve for the balance of this quadrennium. We affirm his appointment and affirm the work that is being accomplished in his department.

The budget we are presenting for 2015 is an income based budget. We have measured, to the best of our ability, the expected available funds for the conference in 2015. This provides the limit for expenditures for all areas combined. Since this is the measured limitation of available funds, changes to the budget would need to be revenue neutral. To state it simply, we cannot spend what we do not expect to receive.

We have an expectation that the budget is missional. The various areas of budget are headed up by persons who present their missional purpose both to the Annual Conference and to the Connecting Council. CF&A does not and will not weigh out missional value in order to maintain a sense of neutrality with all budget areas.

Finally, during this period of transition we are experiencing growing pains due to the lack of historical information and the understanding of who we are as an Annual Conference. We view this as a means of making us stronger and becoming the church God has called us to be. We welcome suggestions from all of our constituents.

### **II. The Budget Process**

The following is an explanation of our current budgeting process. We have an income determination and an expense determination. Although the processes are inter-related they remain independent of each other.

As previously stated, determining income is the overall controlling process. We are continuing to use our mission share formula that is based on a 10% tithe from each local church. 2015 will be step two in having all churches subject to the 10% formula. We should reach our goal with the 2016 budget year. The income is then adjusted for an allowance for unpaid mission shares. Our

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hope and desire is that all churches would remit the full 10% tithing eliminating the need for this allowance. In addition to the funding from the local churches we have available income from the Great Plains Conference Reserve Fund. The document creating this fund is included in your pre-conference material and replaces Section 4, Council on Finance and Administration, Budget Administration, paragraph E (page 67) of our Conference Plan of Organization. The 5% income from the Reserve has been included as a source of income. It is our belief that the 5% draw from the Reserve is sustainable over a long range forecast. A special distribution was also included for the 2015 budget which enabled funding the expense request without further reduction. Special distributions may or may not be sustainable for future budget periods and will be reviewed annually. The source of the special distribution is from significant investment returns to the Reserve. Approval of special distributions is the responsibility of CF&A in consultation with the investment committee.

The expense side of the budgeting process begins with each budget area submitting their request based on anticipated needs for the budget year. Those requests are compiled by the conference treasurer and submitted to the Mission Alignment Team. The team evaluates requests in view of our missional priorities which are in Section 1 of our Plan of Organization. The team also reviews the request in light of the expected available income as provided by CF&A. After the expense requests are aligned with the income availability, the budget is submitted to CF&A for approval. CF&A then brings the approved budget to the Connecting Council for preliminary approval pending the action of the Annual Conference.

Currently the system provides the necessary checks and balances to provide a well intended and thought out budget for us to operate within. It is also intended to build a budget that is both connectional and missional. We would like to say that this is a well-oiled process but it is not. The newness of the process also involves a learning curve that will grow as we move forward to future budget years.

# GREAT PLAINS CONFERENCE Reports

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## Great Plains Composite Budget Summary

	2014	2015		
	Approved Budget	Budget Request	\$\$\$ Change from 2014 to 2015	% Change from 2014 to 2015
<b>INCOME:</b>				
Mission Shares				
Less: Allowance for Unpaid Mission Shares	\$15,725,272	\$15,181,611	(\$543,661)	-3.46%
<b>Net Mission Share Income</b>	<b>(\$1,358,810)</b>	<b>(\$1,358,907)</b>	<b>(\$2,097)</b>	
<b>% of Mission Share Asking</b>	<b>91.37%</b>	<b>91.05%</b>		
<b>Other Income:</b>				
Restricted Reserve-Budget Support (5%)	\$1,254,559	\$1,463,669	\$209,110	16.67%
Restr Reserve-Budget Support Special Distribution	\$0	\$600,000	\$600,000	
Missional Opportunity Reserve Draw	\$0	\$150,000	\$150,000	
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$15,623,021</b>	<b>\$16,036,373</b>	<b>\$413,352</b>	2.65%
<b>EXPENSES:</b>				
<b>I: Episcopal Office</b>				
General Church Ministries for Episcopacy	\$670,135	\$698,897		
Episcopal Administrative Personnel	\$49,730	\$38,689		
Episcopal Office Expenses	\$23,659	\$24,468		
Episcopal Residence Maintenance	\$13,000	\$13,260		
District Personnel	\$2,579,074	\$2,601,302		
District Office Expenses	\$338,190	\$384,080		
Cabinet Operations	\$552,500	\$552,500		
<b>Total Episcopal Office Budget</b>	<b>\$4,226,288</b>	<b>\$4,313,194</b>	<b>\$86,906</b>	2.06%
<b>II: Clergy Excellence</b>				
General Church Ministries for Clergy Excellence	\$787,908	\$800,005		
Board of Ordained Ministry	\$141,300	\$174,800		
Trans into Ministry	\$0	\$90,957		
Clergy Excellence Office Expense	\$11,200	\$36,200		
Clergy Excellence Personnel	\$413,203	\$435,412		
<b>Total Clergy Excellence Budget</b>	<b>\$1,353,611</b>	<b>\$1,537,374</b>	<b>\$183,763</b>	13.58%
<b>III: Congregational Excellence</b>				
<b>III. A. Leadership Development:</b>				
General Church Ministries for Leadership Development	\$384,603	\$390,539		
SCJ Ministries for Leadership Development	\$123,399	\$120,477		
Leadership Development Ministries	\$109,500	\$105,500		
Small Membership Church Ministries	\$0	\$70,500		
Campus Ministries	\$551,000	\$551,000		
Camping & Retreat Ministries	\$626,997	\$627,000		
Safe Gatherings	\$60,000	\$65,500		
<b>Total Leadership Development</b>	<b>\$1,855,499</b>	<b>\$1,930,516</b>		
<b>III. B. Vital Congregations:</b>				
Resource Center GPUMC Support	\$19,500	\$27,920		
Youth Ministry	\$60,200	\$101,750		
Ethnic Ministry Mission Share need	\$559,408	\$559,333		
New Church Start Mission Share Need	\$595,846	\$586,175		
<b>Total Vital Congregations Budget</b>	<b>\$1,283,954</b>	<b>\$1,375,178</b>		
Congregational Excellence Office Expense	\$79,575	\$79,575		
Congregational Excellence Personnel	\$876,335	\$946,161		
<b>Total Congregational Excellence Budget</b>	<b>\$4,075,363</b>	<b>\$4,331,430</b>	<b>\$256,067</b>	6.28%
<b>IV. Mercy and Justice</b>				
General Church Ministries for Mercy and Justice	\$2,294,996	\$2,330,263		
Disaster Response	\$8,760	\$15,900		
Mercy and Justice Ministries	\$170,050	\$160,050		
Mercy & Justice Office expense	\$18,900	\$18,900		
Mercy and Justice Personnel	\$169,333	\$151,710		
<b>Total Mercy and Justice Budget</b>	<b>\$2,662,039</b>	<b>\$2,676,823</b>	<b>\$14,784</b>	0.56%
<b>V: Administrative Services</b>				
General and SCJ Ministries for Admin Services	\$382,983	\$388,302		
Administrative Committee Expenses	\$79,762	\$80,510		
Administrative Services Office Expense	\$159,250	\$166,600		
Information Technology	\$220,000	\$175,000		
Annual Conference Expense	\$127,200	\$77,600		
Conf Office Building Maintenance	\$166,150	\$169,473		
Trustees: Insurance, Auto, Dist Office & Parsonage	\$544,108	\$540,759		
Communications Program Expense	\$155,200	\$154,750		
Communications Personnel	\$341,408	\$332,108		
Administrative Services Personnel	\$1,004,203	\$942,452		
<b>Total Administrative Services budget</b>	<b>\$3,180,264</b>	<b>\$3,027,552</b>	<b>(\$152,712)</b>	-4.80%
Missional Opportunities	\$125,456	\$150,000	\$24,544	19.56%
<b>Total Great Plains Conference Budget</b>	<b>\$15,623,021</b>	<b>\$16,036,373</b>	<b>\$413,352</b>	2.65%
<b>Net Income (Loss)</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>(\$0)</b>	

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### Great Plains Composite Budget Summary

	2014	2015		
	Approved Budget	Budget Request	\$\$\$ Change from 2014 to 2015	% Change from 2014 to 2015
<b>Other Billings:</b>				
<b>NE billing</b>				
Retiree Health Insurance Supplement	\$566,337	\$544,324	(\$22,013)	-3.89%
<b>Mission Agency Support:</b>				
1% of line 67 for Agencies	<u>\$1,478,397</u>	<u>\$1,469,802</u>	<u>(\$8,595)</u>	<u>-0.58%</u>
<b>Colleges/Universities</b>				
Nebraska Wesleyan Univ (scholarships)** - Lincoln, NE	\$92,000	\$92,000		
Baker University - Baldwin City, KS	\$130,000	\$129,250		
Saint Paul School of Theology - Leawood Kan., Oklahoma City, Okla	\$125,000	\$125,000		
Kansas Wesleyan University - Salina, KS	\$130,000	\$129,250		
Southwestern College - Winfield, KS	\$130,000	\$129,250		
<b>Health &amp; Welfare Institutions</b>				
U M Homes/Aldersgate Village (Good Samaritan Fund) - Topeka, Kan	\$75,000	\$75,000		
Asbury Park, (Good Samaritan Fund) - Newton, Kan	\$25,000	\$25,000		
GraceMed Health Clinic - Wichita, Kan	\$55,000	\$55,000		
Released & Restored - York, Lincoln, Geneva, Neb	\$14,000	\$14,000		
EmberHope (Youthville) - Newton, Dodge City, and Wichita, Kan	\$30,000	\$30,000		
Epworth Village - York, Neb	\$30,000	\$30,000		
<b>Ministries with the Poor</b>				
		\$0		
United Methodist Ministries - Omaha, Neb	\$185,000	\$185,000		
Justice for Our Neighbors - Nebraska	\$150,000	\$150,000		
Friendship House of Hope - Ogden, Kan	\$37,000	\$37,000		
Wesley House - Pittsburg, Kan	\$50,000	\$50,000		
Fellowship and Faith - Topeka, Kan	\$14,000	\$14,000		
UM Open Door - Wichita, Kan	\$55,000	\$55,000		
UM Western Kansas Mexican-American Ministries	\$55,000	\$55,000		
<b>Ecumenical/Interchurch organizations</b>				
Interchurch Ministries of Nebraska	\$35,000	\$35,000		
Rural Response Hotline (Interchurch Ministries of NE)	\$25,000	\$25,000		
Kansas Christians United (KS Ecumenical Ministries)	\$6,000	\$0		
<b>Retreat Centers</b>				
Forest Park Conference & Retreat Center - Topeka, Kan	\$30,000	\$30,000		
<b>Total Mission Agency Support Budget</b>	<u>\$1,478,000</u>	<u>\$1,469,750</u>	<u>(\$8,250)</u>	<u>-0.56%</u>
<b>Net Mission Agency Support Income</b>	<u>\$397</u>	<u>\$52</u>	<u>(\$345)</u>	

\*\*additional pastor support is included in the campus ministry budget above

#### For Information Only - included in the above budget

<b>General Church Apportionments</b>				
Episcopal Office	\$670,135	\$698,897		
Africa University	\$70,329	\$71,409		
Black College	\$314,274	\$319,130		
Ministerial Education	\$787,908	\$800,005		
World Service	\$2,294,996	\$2,330,263		
General Administration	\$276,962	\$281,275		
Interdenominational Cooperation	\$61,590	\$62,596		
<b>Total General Apportionments</b>	<u>\$4,476,194</u>	<u>\$4,563,575</u>	<u>\$87,381</u>	1.95%
<b>South Central Jurisdiction Apportionments</b>				
Mt Sequoyah	\$22,687	\$22,687		
Lydia Patterson Institute	\$94,868	\$94,868		
SMU Wesley Foundation	\$5,844	\$2,922		
SCJ Mission And Administration Fund	\$44,431	\$44,431		
<b>Total SCJ Apportionments</b>	<u>\$167,830</u>	<u>\$164,908</u>	<u>(\$2,922)</u>	-1.74%

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**Mission Agency Support**

Activity

*Gifts can be designated for the following Mission Agencies. However, such gifts will not count toward the payment of a church's Mission Agency Support share.*

**Colleges/Univ/Seminary:**

NE Wesleyan Univ-Scholarships - Lincoln, NE	700
Baker University - Baldwin City, KS	701
St Paul School of Theology	702
KS Wesleyan University - Salina, KS	703
Southwestern College - Winfield, KS	704

**Health & Welfare Institutions:**

UM Homes - Aldersgate Village - Topeka, KS	710
Asbury Park (Good Samaritan Fund)- Newton, KS	711
GraceMed Health Clinic - Wichita, KS	712
Released & Restored - NE	713
EmberHope (Youthville) - KS	714
Epworth Village - York, NE	715
Crowell Health Services - Blair, NE	990
Wesley Towers - Hutchinson, KS	993
E. C. Tyree Health & Dental Clinic - Wichita, KS	994

**Ministries with the Poor:**

United Methodist Ministries - Omaha, NE	720
Justice for Our Neighbors - NE	721
Friendship House of Hope - Ogden, KS	722
Wesley House - Pittsburg, KS	723
Fellowship & Faith - Topeka, KS	724
UM Open Door - Wichita, KS	725
UM Western Kansas Mex-Amer Ministries	726

**Ecumenical/Interchurch Organizations:**

Interchurch Ministries of Nebraska	730
Rural Response Hotline, NE	731

**Retreat Centers:**

Forest Park Conf & Retreat Center, Topeka, KS	736
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**Conference Advance List**

Activity Project

**Great Plains Mission Partnerships:**

Nigeria Hope for Children in Africa	300
Nigeria Scholarship for Students	301
Haiti Covenant	302
Zimbabwe East Chabadza Covenant	303
Fairfield Outreach Sponsors Organization (FOSA)	992

**Great Plains Campus Ministries:**

Emporia State - Emporia, KS	320	001
Fort Hays State - Hays, KS	320	002
Kansas State - Manhattan, KS	320	003
Nebraska Wesleyan - Lincoln, NE	320	004
University of Kansas - Lawrence, KS	320	005
Pittsburg State - Pittsburg, KS	320	006
Washburn University - Topeka, KS	320	007
Wichita State - Wichita, KS	320	008
University of Nebraska, Kearney, NE	320	009
University of Nebraska, Lincoln, NE	320	010

**Great Plains Camping Inc:**

Camp Chippewa - Ottawa, KS	321	010
Camp Comeca - Cozad, NE	321	011
Camp Fontanelle - Nickerson, NE	321	012
Camp Horizon - Arkansas City, KS	321	013
Camp Norwesca - Chadron, NE	321	014
Camp Lakeside - Scott City, KS	321	015

**Great Plains Ethnic Ministries:**

Hispanic/Latino Ministries	345
Blue River Hispanic/Latino Ministries	348
Prairie River Hispanic/Latino Ministries	349
Great West Hispanic/Latino Ministries	
<i>Centro de Alabama y Adoracion</i>	350
<i>Imperial Ebenezer Hispanic</i>	351
<i>El Mesias UMC - Wichita KS</i>	352
<i>Evangelica UMC - Garden City, KS</i>	353
<i>Center of Grace - Olathe, KS</i>	354
<i>Native American Ministries</i>	360
<i>Sacred Winds Native Mission Cong - Lincoln, NE</i>	361
<i>Korean UMC - Wichita, KS</i>	370
<i>Danner Mem. Schlrsip African-Amer Students</i>	375
<i>Living Hope UMC - Omaha, NE</i>	376
<i>New Visions Community UMC - Lincoln, NE</i>	996

**Other Great Plains Missions:**

Seminary Scholarship Endowment	900	
New Church Development	934	
Peace With Justice	960	
Hunger	967	
Round up for Hunger	968	
Great Plains Disaster Response Fund	975	
Rebuilding GP Churches Fund	976	
Habitat for Humanity		
<i>Beatrice</i>	978	020
<i>Hastings</i>	978	021
<i>Kearney</i>	978	022
<i>Lincoln</i>	978	023
<i>Omaha</i>	978	024
<i>Grand Island</i>	978	025
<i>Sarpy County</i>	978	026
Great Plains Volunteers in Mission	981	
Common Ground	982	
Elkhorn Valley Church & Comm. Ministry	983	
David Upp Missionary Support, KS	984	
Crossroads Center - Hastings, NE	991	
First UMC Television Ministry - Wichita, KS	995	
Sunrise Community Services - Chadron, NE	997	

**GREAT PLAINS CONFERENCE RESTRICTED RESERVE FUND  
(RESERVE FUND)****Background information**

The Great Plains Conference is blessed with money that has been accumulated from several sources over the last forty years. As of January 31, 2014 we have approximately \$32,000,000 available to us which is not designated for any particular purpose. The largest portion of these funds (\$29,273,377) is in what The Great Plains Plan of Organization referred to as “the deposit account” because the bulk of the money is invested with the General Board of Pensions. Again, while most of it accumulated as earnings from money set aside for pensions in the deposit account, some of it is from excess reserves in our three predecessor conferences. It is our intent to combine these resources into one account referred to herein as the “Reserve Fund”. None of this is needed to fund our current pension obligations. Each of our three pension programs are fully funded at levels which should be sufficient during stock market downturns and there are other reserve funds available to help if needed. Therefore, we hereby establish a Restricted Reserve Fund to support conference ministries. It is restricted by the annual conference and administered by the Conference Council on Finance and Administration.

**Conference Restricted Pension Reserve**

We hereby designate \$20,000,000 of the Reserve Fund as the Conference Restricted Pension Reserve. This provides an additional protection against stock market downturns for the purpose of meeting our pension obligations. The Annual Conference shall retain the power to adjust the balance of this reserve based upon the joint recommendation of the Conference Board of Pensions and the Conference Council on Finance and Administration.

**Missional Opportunities Reserve Fund (MOR)**

We hereby designate \$3,000,000 of the Reserve Fund as the Missional Opportunities Reserve Fund (MOR) as of January 1, 2014. Each year CFA will designate an amount up to 5% of the MOR to be available to the conference for missional opportunities in accordance with policies set up by the Connecting Council. Any team of the Conference, including the Extended Cabinet or Appointive Cabinet, can request money from the MOR Fund for any conference-wide strategic purpose or one that implements or strengthens one of our missional priorities.

**Reports****Budget Reserve**

The balance of the Reserve Fund is restricted for support of the Great Plains Conference Budget.

**Annual Budget Funding**

Each year in February, the Great Plains Council on Finance and Administration will calculate the thirty-six monthly average of the Reserve Fund ending on January 31 of that year. They will apply a percentage not greater than 5% to that average. Because the Great Plains Conference is a new entity, we are not able to use a thirty-six month average. In 2015 we will use the ending balance on January 31, 2014, in 2016 a 13-month average, and in 2017 a 25-month average. The calculated amount shall be designated as an income source for the next budget year and shall be withdrawn from the Reserve Fund during the budget year in accordance to the directions from the Conference Treasurer. CFA may also designate a special distribution of the Fund if its earnings make that prudent and possible.

**2015 Budget Funding proposal**

Because the funds have not yet been combined, the budget support for 2015 will be 5% of the January 31, 2014 balance of the current deposit account of \$29,273,377 which is \$1,463,669. Additionally, due to significant investment earnings in 2013, a special distribution of \$600,000 will be transferred for budget support bringing the total budget support to \$2,063,669.

The Missional Opportunities Reserve Fund will make available to the Connecting Council 5% of \$3,000,000 for a total of \$150,000 for 2015.

**REPORT OF THE TREASURER**

**by Director of Administrative Services: Gary A Beach**

I appreciate the opportunity to share with you how our conferences ended the year 2013, a brief report on the progress in our transition to becoming one conference in the administrative offices, and some words about resources we are providing to pastors, local church leaders, and conference level leaders.

Regarding year-end 2013 – our three former conferences had very similar levels of payment on what we now, in the Great Plains Conference, call Mission Shares. Kansas East raised 85.04%, Nebraska raised 86.05%, and Kansas West led the way with 87.65% of its Mission Shares paid. That is an average of 86.25%. How does

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that compare to the national average? At the end of 2013, 44 of the 57 conferences reported and the national average of those 44 was 86.89%. So we are not far below average.

However, Bishop Jones has challenged us to, prior to the end of his time with us, reach Mission Share payout of 95%. Is that even possible? Apparently it is as 5 of our sister conferences actually surpassed that goal in 2013. North Texas paid 95.2%, West Michigan paid 96.4%, Central Texas paid 97.23%, Louisiana paid 97.99% (a level they have reached for years including the year of Katrina and the year after it as well), and topping the list was Kentucky which paid 98.8%.

But is it possible in the Great Plains? Yes, it's possible even in Kansas and Nebraska! I'd like to recognize the laity and clergy of two of our own districts that have already met and surpassed that goal in 2013. Would the laity and clergy of the Gateway District of Nebraska please stand and be recognized for paying 96.49% of their Mission Shares in 2013. Now would the laity and clergy of the Hays District of Kansas please stand and be recognized for paying 95.13% of their Mission Shares in 2013. And, finally, I'd like to recognize the laity and clergy of three more districts who, had we rounded to the nearest 1%, would have also made this goal in 2013 – the Flint Hills District of Kansas with 94.92%, the Hutchinson District of Kansas with 94.61%, and the Dodge City District of Kansas with 94.52% paid. If your church paid 100% last year your DS has a certificate issued by the national level of the church that they hope you will pick up from them before they leave today.

But now it's 2014 and in the Administrative Services department we are working hard to create, often from scratch, the infrastructure for our new Great Plains Conference. I am so appreciative of the staff I inherited from our three former conferences! They have worked exceptionally hard to bring us to this point. The last 9 months, since the Uniting Conference, have been extraordinarily busy and sometimes even difficult. While we've closed the "books" each year in all of our former conferences none of us have had the experience of literally shutting down various businesses (30 at my latest count) and the creation from scratch of four new ones. We know there were some rough spots, and some of you had some measure of frustration. Please know that your staff was just as frustrated at not being able to respond as quickly as we have all grown accustomed over the years. What we have discovered is that we are doing more work than the three former conferences combined but are doing it with four fewer staff in finance in an attempt to save money. We are

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determining now if reducing staff by that amount was the correct thing to do. But, slowly but surely, things are beginning to get into a “new normal” with many of the rough spots behind us. Thank you all for your patience and grace during this difficult time!

We are working closely with the Communications Department to provide resources that we hope will be helpful to laity and clergy alike. If you go to the Administrative homepage of our conference’s website you will find several links on the left that represent ways we have tried to sort such resources to make it easy for you to access.

Don’t find everything you need? Don’t hesitate to be in touch and let us know what else you’d hope to find and we’ll work with our Communications staff to see what’s possible.

Beyond the website our department has created a newsletter that came out in both January and April. We hope to continue this no less than quarterly. It is being emailed to church treasurers, financial secretaries, chairs of Finance Committees, pastors, and (if a church has one) an email address for a church secretary. But we still have a number of churches that have not yet turned in their local church officer list. If we don’t know who your officers are we simply are unable to provide them such resources.

As we move into the future we are exploring online bill payment for churches to the Annual Conference. We have taken the first step and purchased a system to make this possible. Our first rollout for this will be to allow churches to pay their benefit bills in this fashion if you so choose. A second phase we hope will be to allow churches to send money to us for Mission Shares, Mission Agency Support, and all other gifts that currently are channeled thru the Treasurer’s office. We will keep the conference updated as these developments occur.

Your gifts given thru the Great Plains Conference make mission and ministry happen. Our job as your staff is to facilitate this work. We are grateful for the opportunity to serve you, the conference, and God, whose work all of us are striving to do.

### **Connecting Council**

The Connecting Council of the Great Plains Conference participated in the Leadership Event in October of last year, and then held its first official meeting March 21-22, 2014. Its purpose is “to review and evaluate the conference’s missional progress, to align major initiatives of the GPUMC, to enhance communication with all parts of the annual conference, and to take such actions between sessions of the annual conference as are permitted.” The Council meets twice a year and has 72 members.

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The Council prepared for its work by reading Bishop Robert Schnase's book, *Seven Levers: Missional Strategies for Conferences*. The discussion about these seven approaches to a vital and fruitful conference was helpful in looking at all we have accomplished in the last several years and the ways we need to move forward in the future.

The Council considered a number of matters:

- It authorized a strategic planning process that asks many of our teams and boards to set goals in line with our Conference's missional priorities
- It approved an allocation of the Missional Opportunities Fund for Elisha Grants to help new clergy with their financial commitments.
- It approved a proposal from the Mercy and Justice team for a Great Plains Public Education Initiative.
- It approved, in conjunction with the Council on Finance and Administration, a proposal for a Restricted Reserve Fund to be considered by the Annual Conference.
- It approved a new relationship with the Kansas Health Foundation and changes to the Foundation's Articles of Incorporation and By-laws.
- It considered the proposed Safe Gatherings Policy and Personal Conduct Policy, sent them back for more work, and then approved the revised policies for Conference consideration.
- It approved, in conjunction with the Council on Finance and Administration, a proposed 2015 budget for Conference consideration.
- It approved a proposal from the Episcopacy Team for the Episcopal Residence Task Force to be considered by the Conference.
- It approved a request from Tri-Community UMC in Omaha for use of their capital funds.
- It approved a request from United Methodist Open Door in Wichita for a conference-wide capital campaign.
- It approved a proposal for electronic voting for General and Jurisdictional Conference delegates in 2015.
- It approved proposals from the Pensions and Health Benefits Team for consideration by the Conference.
- It approved the Disaster Response Plan.
- It considered the 2013 Great Plains Fast Facts about our vitality and plans to study them in greater detail at its next meeting.

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- It received a report from Bishop Jones about the principles governing multiple campuses in conferences other than the Great Plains Conference. The next meeting of the Connecting Council is October 3-4. Some time at this meeting will be devoted to discussion about the vitality of local churches and how the local churches can work together to more effectively engage in ministry in their local communities.

**Clergy Excellence****ELISHA GRANT PROGRAM TO SUPPORT NEW CLERGY**

We propose to create the Elisha Grant program to support new clergy serving under appointment in local churches within the Great Plains Conference. The Conference will use up to \$100,000 per year for the next three years from the missional opportunities budget to give support to people within the first five years of their service in the Conference.

Persons are eligible to apply if they

- Are 45 years old or younger
- Have graduated from a seminary approved by the University Senate
- Are appointed for full-time service at a local church in the Great Plains Conference and in their first five years of such service after graduating from seminary, and
- Are an approved candidate, provisional member or full member of the Great Plains Conference.

Potential recipients must apply and be approved by the Elisha Grants Committee. Grants will be treated as taxable income and documented by a 1099-Misc form submitted to the IRS. The application must document the amount spent on tuition, books and fees for M.Div. seminary classes. The maximum granted in any one year is \$4,000 and the maximum number of years is 5 years. Thus, the maximum grant over time would be \$20,000.

This program begins in 2014 and persons who began service in 2010 would be eligible to apply, knowing that only one year would be possible. Persons beginning service in 2014 could apply for all five years.

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We anticipate that up to 25 grants would be awarded each year.

**Elisha Grants Committee**

The Committee to oversee the approval of grants is composed of 2 members of the Board of Ordained Ministry appointed by the BOM chair, 2 District Superintendents appointed by the Bishop, and chaired by the Director of Clergy Excellence.

**Funding**

The Elisha Grants Program will receive up to \$100,000 of funding from the Missional Opportunity Fund in the 2014, 2015 and 2016 budget years. Initial grants would be awarded during May of 2014 and paid in August of 2014. We seek a minimum three-year commitment from the Connecting Council for the use of Missional Opportunity Fund money to support this program.

**GREAT PLAINS BOARD OF ORDAINED MINISTRY**

Bruce Emmert, Chairperson and  
Andrew Conard, Treasurer

The Great Plains Board of Ordained Ministry, in partnership with the Bishop and Cabinet, support the mission and vision of our annual Conference through recruiting, discerning, equipping, forming, credentialing and sending men and women into the mission field who are

- truly CALLED by Christ to serve as clergy,
- COMPETENT, equipped, and effective in their ministry and
- committed to be faithful to the COVENANT connection of the United Methodist Church.

These three points form the structure of the Great Plains Board of Ordained Ministry.

Our goals and priorities are to provide strong leadership in the areas of Call, Competency and Covenant. We seek to support congregations in identifying and nurturing leaders (a culture of Call), equip and credential excellent clergy leadership for GPUMC churches (Competency) and encourage continued development of deployed clergy while maintaining standards of excellence (Covenant).

Three of the most exciting aspects of our work are Residency, the Candidacy Summit and our work in the development of Clergy Competency model for the Great Plains. These three Board of Ordained Ministry priorities are mission critical to the work of the

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Great Plains Board of Ordained Ministry as we seek more effective practices to meet the demand for excellent clergy leadership in the Great Plains Annual Conference.

The Board of Ordained Ministry is directly involved in helping meet the demand for excellent clergy leadership today and as it grows over the next decade. The Board of Ordained Ministry will seek creative and resourceful ways to raise up men and women who are passionate followers of Christ, called to serve churches of all sizes. We will pay particular attention to recruiting young clergy, to the need for diversity, and to the need for alternate forms of pastoral leadership in smaller congregations and communities. The Board of Ordained Ministry will offer clergy leaders processes and opportunities to strengthen their partnerships with laity as spiritual leaders so that the gifts of each can be used to build up the whole body of Christ.

### TRANSITION INTO MINISTRY

by Nicole Conard

The Transition into Ministry Program (TiM) of the Great Plains Area of the United Methodist Church assists young pastors in making the transition from seminary to effective full-time pastoral leadership. TiM residents learn and serve for two years with a mentoring pastor in a teaching congregation and then for three years as a solo pastor. Throughout the five years, the young pastor receives learning, feedback and peer support through cohorts, mentoring relationships and lay mentoring committees.

The TiM program has been made possible by a grant from the Lilly Foundation, which is supplemented by funds from churches and donors within the Great Plains Conference.

Great Plains Conference is one of three United Methodist Conferences to employ this program. Like other TiM programs, the Great Plains TiM's project objectives are to develop an effective leadership development system for young clergy so that the conference will benefit from excellent pastoral leadership.

TiM is contributing to the progress of an effective leadership development system for young clergy in the Great Plains Conference. Eight new pastors and seven churches have participated in the program, including Lincoln: Trinity UMC (Lincoln, NE), Chapel Hill Fellowship (Wichita, KS), Emporia: First UMC (Emporia, KS), Lincoln: Saint Paul UMC (Lincoln, NE), Colby UMC (Colby, KS), West Heights UMC (Wichita, KS), Stillwell UMC (Stillwell, KS).

TiM residents find support and collegiality in one another. They find joy in ministry as a way of life that will serve them beyond their first five years of ministry. Throughout the program, TiM residents use a

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learning plan to contribute to their pastoral formation. Participating senior pastors and congregations enhance their mentoring gifts as they invest in young clergy and name best practices of what is needed to equip the next generation of pastoral leaders. TiM congregations renew their purpose of developing young leaders for the purpose of the greater church.

Other outcomes from the TiM program include several experiments and conversations in the areas of collegiality, group mentoring, seminary students, pastoral formation, mentoring by pastors and mentoring by lay committees.

The TiM program has begun the great work of assisting promising young seminary graduates in their transition from seminary into effective full-time pastoral leadership. The goal is the TiM Program, and its principles, continues to become integrated into our work as a conference in recruiting and raising the next generation of pastoral leaders.

**PERSONAL CONDUCT POLICY****For Clergy, Staff, Volunteers and Church Members****I. Introduction**

The Great Plains Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church is committed to fostering and building a culture of diversity and inclusion. "For just as the body is one and have many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ." (1 Corinthians, 12:12) "If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it." (1 Corinthians 12:26)

As a United Methodist Church, there will be times when employment preferences based on religion are appropriate and should be a factor with respect to one's employment. Subject to this consideration and the requirements of our denomination's *Book of Discipline*, we are mindful of our social obligations with respect to fair employment practices. We strive to create and maintain a work environment in which people are treated with dignity, decency and respect. We encourage differences among our leaders, employees and local congregations as embraced in the "Social Principles" contained in *The 2012 Book of Discipline* of the United Methodist Church.

This passion for reaffirming the relationship of God among all of God's people guides our desire that every congregation be

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welcoming to all persons. The environment of the Church, in its many settings, should be characterized by mutual trust and the absence of intimidation, oppression and exploitation. We believe that each employee and volunteer has the right to work and serve in an environment free of harassment; therefore, the Conference has adopted this Personal Conduct Policy. Anyone violating this policy will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment, discontinuation of volunteer service, or termination of membership under the provisions of Paragraph 2702 of *The 2012 Book of Discipline*. While the Conference expects church and conference staff volunteers, clergy and lay, as well as members of local churches, to abide by the terms of this Personal Conduct Policy as set forth below, the Conference recognizes *The 2012 Book of Discipline* of The United Methodist Church provides the exclusive methods for bringing complaints against appointed or ordained United Methodist clergy and the sanctions that may be applied.

## II. PROHIBITED CONDUCT UNDER THIS POLICY

It is the Conference's policy that no ordained or licensed pastor, district superintendent assignee (DSA), staff person, local church employee, church member/constituent, or volunteer may engage in any form of sexual abuse or sexual misconduct, racial or sexual harassment, or harassment based upon any other characteristic protected by law, including but not limited to, religion, disability, national origin, gender or age. Through enforcement of this policy and by education of church leaders, employees, and volunteers, the Conference will seek to prevent, correct and discipline behavior that violates this policy. All employees, church members/constituents, and volunteers, regardless of their positions, are covered by and are expected to comply with this policy and to take appropriate measures to ensure that prohibited conduct does not occur.

### A. Sexual Harassment

The definition of harassment is when an individual is subjected to unwelcome verbal or physical conduct or other offensive behavior, which is sexual in nature or based on gender, especially where:

- Submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of employment.
- Submission to or rejection of such conduct is used as the basis for decisions affecting an individual's employment; or

- Such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment.

The Great Plains Annual Conference prohibits all forms of sexual and other unlawful harassment. The Conference will not tolerate any offensive physical, written or spoken conduct, including the use of a computer, regarding any of the following subjects:

(1) Unsolicited and unwelcome or unwanted written, verbal, physical and/or visual contact with sexual overtones. (Written examples: suggestive or obscene letters, notes and unwelcome invitations. Verbal examples: derogatory comments, slurs, jokes and epithets. Physical examples: assault, touching, impeding or blocking movement. Visual examples: leering, gestures, display of sexually suggestive objects or pictures, cartoons, posters or magazines.);

(2) Unwelcome requests or demands for sexual favors. This includes either subtle or blatant solicitations, pressures or requests for any type of favor, including unwelcome requests for dates, when it is known they are unwelcome, and whether or not they are accompanied by an implied or stated promise of preferential treatment or negative consequence concerning employment;

(3) Verbal abuse or kidding that is sexually oriented and considered unwelcome such as telling "dirty jokes" or any tasteless, sexually oriented comments, innuendo or actions that offend;

(4) Creating a work environment that is intimidating, hostile, abusive or offensive because of unwelcome or unwanted conversations, suggestions, requests, demands, physical contacts or attentions related to a prohibited form of harassment;

(5) Continuing to express sexual or romantic interest after being informed that the interest is unwelcome. (Reciprocal or mutual attraction is not considered sexual harassment);

(6) Making reprisals, threats of reprisals, or implied threats of reprisals following a negative response to efforts to establish relationship, where the reprisal relates to compensation, promotion, discipline, tenure or job assignments;

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(7) Engaging in coercive sexual behavior which is used to control, influence or affect the career, salary, and/or work environment of another employee; or which may have that effect;

(8) Offering favors or employment benefits, such as promotions, favorable performance evaluations, favorable assigned duties or shifts, recommendations or reclassifications in return for sexual/romantic favors;

(9) Offering sexual favors in exchange for employment benefits, such as promotions, favorable performance evaluations, favorable assigned duties or shifts, recommendations or reclassifications; and

(10) Sending pornographic, sexually explicit, or sexually erotic material through the computer or other means.

Normal courteous, mutually respectful, pleasant, non-coercive interaction among employees, both men and women, that is acceptable to both parties, is not considered to be harassment, including sexual harassment.

**B. Sexual Abuse and Misconduct**

The Conference prohibits all forms of sexual abuse and sexual misconduct by local church employees, volunteers and members. It is the Conference's policy that no one affiliated with United Methodist Churches may engage in any form of sexual abuse or sexual misconduct. Anyone violating this policy will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination or removal from volunteer service.

**Sexual Abuse** – Sexual abuse means unwanted physical conduct of a sexual nature, sexual contact or sexualized behavior and may include, by example, touching, fondling, sexual intercourse and other exploitation or use of another person for purposes of sexual desires. Sexual abuse includes, but is not limited to rape, sexual battery, aggravated sexual battery, lewd and lascivious behavior, enticement of a child, indecent solicitation of a child, aggravated indecent solicitation of a child, or indecent liberties with a child.

**Sexual Misconduct** – Sexual misconduct means a chargeable offense within the meaning of Paragraph 2702 of *The 2012 Book of Discipline* of The United Methodist Church.

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All local churches are expected to create an atmosphere free of sexual abuse and sexual misconduct. Furthermore, all staff leaders and members are expected to immediately report any knowledge of sexual abuse or sexual misconduct.

**C. Training**

All pastors under appointment , District Superintendent Assignees (DSAs) and Certified Lay Ministers( CLMs) under assignment shall complete boundary training prior to their initial appointment or within the first six months of such appointment or assignment. Documentation of completed training shall be placed in the pastor or CLM's personnel file.

**III. PROCEDURES FOR REPORTING VIOLATIONS OF THIS PERSONAL CONDUCT POLICY****A. WHEN THE OFFENDER IS A CLERGY PERSON, CERTIFIED LAY MINISTER, OR EMPLOYEE OF THE CHURCH**

Any ministerial or managerial employee who receives a complaint of sexual abuse, sexual harassment, or sexual misconduct, or who otherwise becomes aware of or suspects a violation of this Personal Conduct Policy should immediately report the violation to the District Superintendent. Reporting of sexual abuse or physical abuse of children, youth, or adults from vulnerable populations shall also be made as required by the Safe Gatherings Policy.

If a complaint regarding sexual abuse, sexual harassment, or sexual misconduct is made, an investigation will be conducted as promptly as possible. The investigation of the complaint involving a non-ministerial employee of a local church will be conducted by Pastor or the Staff Parish Relations Committee and will be completed within thirty (30) days from the submission of the complaint, provided there are no extenuating circumstances. If the complaint involves a ministerial employee, the matter will be referred to the appropriate supervising clergy for investigation and appropriate action under *The 2012 Book of Discipline*. If the complaint involves a lay employee of the Annual Conference, the investigation will be conducted by the Personnel Team.

If the complaint involves a violation of the Computer Usage Policy, report the alleged violation to the Chairperson of the Pastor/Staff Parish Relations Committee of the local church (or the Personnel Team Chair, in the case of an annual conference employee) immediately.

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If an individual is found to have violated the Personal Conduct Policy, disciplinary action may be taken, up to and including termination of employment, removal from volunteer service, or termination of membership. All actions taken in connection with a violation of the Personal Conduct Policy will comply with any applicable law or procedure under *The 2012 Book of Discipline*.

The Conference will not retaliate against an employee who in good faith files a complaint alleging a violation of this Personal Conduct Policy, nor will the Conference retaliate against an individual for cooperating in good faith in an investigation of harassment.

Clergy misconduct is subject to the procedures contained in *The 2012 Book of Discipline*, and any complaint against clergy must follow the applicable provisions contained therein. Clergy, and those who have a grievance against clergy, whether or not the complainant or the violator is lay or clergy, are encouraged to address any concerns directly with the other person as a means of resolving the issues. If the issues are between two clergy, and the two cannot resolve the issues among themselves, the one claiming a violation is encouraged to seek the assistance of her/his Superintendent as a means of resolving the issues. If the clergy person's complaint involves her/his Superintendent, or if either is a Superintendent, the complainant is encouraged to invoke the guidance of a member of the Conference staff, another Superintendent, or the Bishop to assist in resolving the grievance prior to filing a formal complaint.

### **B. WHEN THE VICTIM IS A CLERGY PERSON**

If any clergy feels he/she has been subjected to racial, sexual, or other harassment or sexual misconduct, he or she should

(1) If the circumstances permit, state firmly and clearly to the alleged violator that this behavior is unwelcome and must stop. This action, in many cases, will resolve the issue.

(2) If the issue cannot be resolved through personal discussions with the alleged violator, the clergy must inform his/her immediate supervisor or, if the immediate supervisor is the alleged harasser, must contact the Chairperson of the Pastor/Staff Parish Relations Committee. In the case of sexual harassment, sexual abuse or sexual misconduct, if the clergy person feels uncomfortable reporting the issue using the above procedure, he or she may bring the complaint directly to the District Superintendent. Employees should report any incident of abuse or misconduct in writing, if possible.

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The clergy person who feels harassed by a lay person is encouraged to use the following procedures. If the offending behavior and complaint is sexual abuse or sexual misconduct then the immediate procedure is a formal complaint as outlined in *The 2012 Book of Discipline* paragraph 2703.4. Identifying sexual or gender harassment depends on a determination of what a reasonable person would perceive as unacceptable. It is important to resolve complaints confidentially and, if possible, informally.

**Initial Resolution Process**

1. Clergy are responsible for establishing and maintaining clear boundaries of professional conduct.
2. Therefore, a clergy person should respond immediately and clearly to the harasser that such behavior is unwelcome and uncomfortable.
3. If the behavior continues:
  - a. Avoid being alone with the harasser.
  - b. Keep accurate records of the harassing behavior.
  - c. Contact the chair of the Staff Parish Relations Committee (if the Chair of the SPRC is the harasser then contact the District Superintendent directly).
  - d. Notify the District Superintendent to begin the informal process for complaint resolution.
4. The District Superintendent will contact the Director of Clergy Excellence, who will meet with the chair of the SPRC (or person designated) to explain the informal and formal process and introduce two advocates.

**Informal Resolution Process**

1. After meeting with the Director of Clergy Excellence, the chair of SPRC (or a person designated) and the two advocates will form the intervention team and will meet separately with the clergy person and with the accused. The purpose of the meeting is to:

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- a. Determine if the complaint is valid or a miscommunication or misunderstanding.
  - b. Ask the accused to make an appropriate written statement to the clergy person. The written response may include explanation of the behavior resulting in a misperception of intent, an apology, and a promise not to repeat the behavior.
2. If the clergy person finds the response satisfactory then the complaint will be considered as resolved, and the District Superintendent will be notified of the result.
  3. If the response of the accused is not satisfactory or the accused refuses to respond, then the complaint will move to the formal process and the District Superintendent and the Staff Parish Relations Committee will be notified that a formal process of complaint has been initiated. At any point during the informal process the clergy person, the accused or the SPRC committee may request in writing to the District Superintendent a formal resolution process.

**Formal Resolution Process**

1. If the District Superintendent determines that the process outlined above has been followed and the complaint is not resolved, then the District Superintendent will appoint a committee on investigation according to paragraph 2703.4 in *The 2012 Book of Discipline*.
2. The final decision of the committee will be communicated in writing to the clergy person, the accused and the Staff Parish Committee.

**SAFE GATHERINGS POLICY  
FOR THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN, YOUTH AND ADULTS  
FROM VULNERABLE POPULATIONS**

The Great Plains Annual Conference is determined to minimize the risk of abuse to participants in activities of the Great Plains Conference, its districts, and programming agencies. Each local church is required to adopt a policy which is no less restrictive than Conference policy for local church personnel and events. Churches

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may develop best practices which are suited to their own context, as long as they are not in conflict with this policy.

**INTRODUCTION AND POLICY**

“Let the children come to me and do not stop them: for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs” (Matthew 19:14). Scripture and our United Methodist tradition inform us in our belief that God values all of human life - perhaps children most of all.

The Social Principles of the United Methodist Church states, “... children must be protected from economic, physical, emotional and sexual exploitation and abuse.” (§ 162.C, *The 2012 Book of Discipline*) *The Book of Resolutions* encourages all conferences to become involved in the prevention of the physical and sexual abuse of children (#3084.B. 2012 Book of Resolutions, p. 241) *The 2012 Book of Discipline* names child abuse, sexual abuse, sexual misconduct, and sexual harassment as chargeable offenses for clergy and lay members (§2702, 2012 Book of Discipline).

Therefore, it shall be the policy and covenant of the Great Plains Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church to prohibit and work to prevent physical or sexual abuse against children, youth, and adults from vulnerable populations involved in any ministry sponsored by the Conference, its districts, and programming agencies. Further, we are called to minister to those persons who are experiencing abuse and to those who have been victims of abuse in the past. To that end, we covenant to be aware of our responsibilities and to act justly in the best interest of those who have been abused or those who are most vulnerable to abuse.

**Scope**

This policy and its provisions shall apply to all staff persons, volunteer or paid, lay or clergy, who have any direct contact with children and/or youth and/or adults from vulnerable populations who participate in any activities or events sponsored by the Great Plains Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church including its districts and programming agencies.

**Definitions**

**Participants** - are children, youth or adults from vulnerable populations who are registered, enrolled, attending or otherwise participating in an event or activity sponsored by or under the auspices of the Great Plains Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church or programming agencies of the Great Plains Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church.

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Physical Abuse – Physical abuse is any act or omission of an act that endangers a person’s physical or mental health. Physical abuse may result from punishment that is overly punitive or inappropriate to the individual’s age or condition. In addition, physical abuse may result from purposeful acts or intentional failure to act that pose serious danger to the physical health of a child, youth or adult from vulnerable populations.

Sexual Abuse – Sexual abuse means unwanted physical conduct of a sexual nature, sexual contact or sexualized behavior and may include, by example, touching, fondling, sexual intercourse and other exploitation or use of another person for purposes of sexual desires. Sexual abuse includes, but is not limited to rape, sexual battery, aggravated sexual battery, lewd and lascivious behavior, enticement of a child, indecent solicitation of a child, aggravated indecent solicitation of a child, or indecent liberties with a child.

Staff Persons - All paid and unpaid staff, whether lay or clergy, who have direct contact with participants in any activities or events sponsored by the Great Plains Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church, its districts, or program agencies.

Adult from vulnerable populations Populations - Persons, 18 years of age or older, who are unable to protect their own interest due to a substantial mental or functional impairment or for whom a guardian has been appointed.

Certification Authority - The Certification Authority shall be the Safe Gatherings Coordinator, the Director of Congregational Excellence, a designated District Superintendent, and a Conference Chancellor.

Crisis Management Team - The Crisis Management Team is made up of the Bishop, the District Superintendent of the area involved, the Director of Communications, the Conference Chancellor, and the Director of Congregational Excellence.

### **Training**

The Great Plains Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church shall develop and implement training procedures for all individuals who work with children, youth and adult from vulnerable populations at conference and district activities and events. No individual shall have any direct contact with children, youth or members of adult from vulnerable populations until they have completed this training program with the exception that an uncertified worker or a youth under the age of 16 may assist as long as he or she is working with and under the direct supervision

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of a certified individual. In the case of a youth under the age of 16, the certified individual should be at least 21.

Safe Gatherings on-line training is the approved Great Plains Annual Conference method of training and certification, and it shall also be the training and certification process used by local churches.

**Screening**

Prior to certification, applicants will complete an on-line application/ consent form. By completing the form, the applicant will give the Safe Gatherings Coordinator permission to perform the necessary investigation to complete the review of the application.

The Safe Gatherings Coordinator shall facilitate a screening check with a national background service. A search of the National Sex Offender Public Website will be performed on each applicant. A screening check with the Kansas Bureau of Investigation or other appropriate agencies will be performed on Kansas residents. A screening check with the Kansas Department for Children and Families Child Abuse and Neglect Central Registry will be performed on Kansas residents. A screening check with the Nebraska Department of Health & Human Services, Division of Children and Family Services, Adult and Child Abuse and Neglect Register/Registry will be performed on Nebraska residents.

A lay reference and clergy reference will be provided by each applicant. Clergy will provide a reference from their District Superintendent. References must have known the applicant at least two years and not be related to the applicant.

The Safe Gatherings Coordinator shall review all application materials. If any of the completed forms or reports raises questions about the fitness of the applicant, the Safe Gatherings Coordinator shall notify the Certification Authority. The Great Plains Annual Conference reserves the right to turn away any individuals for volunteer or paid service.

If the applicant is found to have been involved in any activity in which the applicant abused or exploited children, youth or adults from vulnerable populations the applicant will not be approved. Any conviction of a crime against children, youth or adults from vulnerable populations shall disqualify any applicant. A person who has been convicted as a sex offender will not be certified. Affirmative responses to the following questions relating to crimes will prompt a personal review of an application:

- crimes against children,
- rape, sexual or physical assault
- possession or use of drugs, and
- suspension of a driver's license within the last five years

**Reports****Certification**

Certification is valid for four years. Applicants must be 16 or older in order to be certified to serve with the Great Plains Annual Conference. Those younger than 16 years can still serve in a ministry area but they must serve with a certified worker who should be at least 21 years old. Certified applicants will be notified of their approval by e-mail. The church through which the approved applicant is applying for certification will also be notified.

If not approved, the applicant will be notified in writing, and his or her pastor will also be notified.

**Reporting Incidents of Abuse**

**Kansas:** Kansas Statutes Annotated 38-2223 lists those who are mandated reporters in the State of Kansas. If you do not know whether you are in the mandated reporter category, go to the Kansas DCF (Department for Children and Families) website, [www.dcf.ks.gov](http://www.dcf.ks.gov) to find out. Certification does not automatically make you a mandatory reporter. All clergy serving United Methodist Churches in Kansas will be mandated to report incidences of child abuse.

Reporting Child Abuse - Anyone has the right to report suspected abuse directly to the State of Kansas at 800-722-5330. When the DCF is not open for business, suspected abuse may be reported to a law enforcement agency. Under Kansas law, anyone who, without malice, participates in the making of a report of abuse is immune from civil liability. The Guide to Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect in Kansas is an excellent resource and is found on the DCF website, [www.dcf.ks.gov](http://www.dcf.ks.gov). ChildLine and Abuse Registry Intake Unit, Call 800-932-0313 (TTD: 866-872-1677)

**Nebraska:** Nebraska Revised Statutes, section 28-711, requires any person who suspects that a child has been physically or sexually abused or neglected to report it promptly to the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services at the Abuse/Neglect Hotline, 1-800-652-1999.

Mandated reporters include specified professionals and child service organizations, but also include any person who in the course of engaging in activities under this policy has reasonable cause to believe that a minor has been subjected to child abuse or neglect or observes such child being subjected to conditions or circumstances which reasonably would result in child abuse or neglect.

Failure to report is a misdemeanor. Anyone making a report in good faith is immune from any civil or criminal liability.

#### Procedures for Reporting, Investigating, and Resolving Violations of this Policy

Pursuant to the provisions of ¶2702 and following of *The 2012 Book of Discipline*, in matters relating to the implementation and enforcement of the Great Plains Annual Conference Certification Policy, the following procedures shall apply (Note: These procedures will be followed except where state authority or law enforcement dictate otherwise):

1. Reporting
  - a. Immediately upon receipt of an allegation of violation of policy, the District Superintendent of the church or geographic region involved shall be notified.
  - b. The District Superintendent shall notify the Crisis Management Team.
  - c. The Director of Congregational Excellence shall notify the Certification Authority and the Conference's insurance carrier.
  - d. The Crisis Management Team will facilitate reporting to the State and/or law enforcement agencies, as appropriate.
  - e. The person against whom an allegation has been made ("Respondent") will immediately be suspended from working with children, youth or adults from vulnerable populations.
2. If a minor is involved, that individual's parent(s) / guardian(s) shall be notified of the alleged violation of policy by a person designated by the Crisis Management Team.
3. When the Respondent is not certified, the Crisis Management Team shall assist the local church with the investigation of the complaint and the process to use to work through the complaint. This may include assistance with legal and public relations issues as well as interviews necessary for

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the investigation of the complaint. Decisions of resolution shall ultimately rest with the local church.

4. When the Respondent is certified through the Annual Conference, then the procedures outlined in this document shall be followed.
5. The person or persons who first report the alleged violation of policy will be asked to document their knowledge of this incident(s) and provide that documentation to the Crisis Management Team.
6. The Crisis Management Team will determine who needs to be interviewed to determine the nature of the alleged violation and its impact. All conversations shall be documented including such things as (but not exclusive of) date, time, place, and names of people involved. In addition, the substance of the conversation shall be documented, with the person interviewed asked to review notes for accuracy and to sign such notes. In addition, all contacts made and actions taken by the Crisis Management Team or Certification Authority are to be documented.
7. If a formal complaint is made, the Crisis Management Team shall provide the respondent with a copy of the complaint.
8. If the Respondent voluntarily withdraws from certification, the file shall be so marked and all pertinent data regarding the allegation and steps taken in response to it shall be placed in the person's certification file and retained.
9. If the Respondent wishes to continue to function as a certified worker, then the Certification Authority, with counsel from the Crisis Management Team, may design a procedure for determining the fitness of the individual for this work. This may include such things as a psychological assessment, counseling, etc. as deemed appropriate to the circumstances. Payment of the cost of these is to be negotiated. Results will be made available to the Certification Authority and they, with the Crisis Management Team, shall make the final determination as to whether or not to reinstate a person's certification.
10. Those making the allegations ("Complainant"), the parent(s) /guardian(s) of any minor involved, the Respondent, and any persons who supervise such persons shall be notified

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of any result of the investigation and final decision of the Certification Authority. In all cases all documentation shall be retained in a confidential, personal file.

11. The Crisis Management Team will determine when and with whom information needs to be shared. If investigations or allegations of abuse should come to the attention of the media, a response shall come from a spokesperson designated by the Bishop.
12. It shall be the goal of the Great Plains Annual Conference to provide supportive care to both the Complainant and the Respondent, and to restore such individuals to wholeness. Supportive care can include the procedures of the criminal justice system, provisions of the current *Book of Discipline*, appropriate counseling referrals and continued pastoral visitation, and may include an Advocate provided by the Great Plains Annual Conference.
13. If the Complainant should desire to challenge the decision of the Certification Authority, he or she may utilize the complaint procedures of *The 2012 Book of Discipline* ¶12702 and following.

**Congregational Excellence****VITAL CONGREGATIONS TEAM**

by Eric Ford, Chair

The mission of the Vital Congregations Team is to help increase the number of vital congregations in the Great Plains Conference. As we are just beginning our work, we are intentionally asking the adaptive (versus technical) questions around congregational health and vitality. We have three major focal points in 2015:

**1. Assisting churches with visioning and strategic plans**

We are currently using four different models to assist congregations in their drive to increase vitality. ABIDE focuses on small membership churches. NEXT STEPS helps already healthy congregations move forward and focus on one specific area of ministry. GUEST QUEST assists congregations with an intentional plan of evangelism. RE-START will work with one congregation as a pilot project during 2014 /2015.

## **2. Hispanic Ministries**

There are currently 17 Hispanic worshipping congregations and 10+ partnering ministries doing intentional outreach with Hispanic/Latinos. Three coordination teams, made up of pastors/leaders from Hispanic local churches/ministries, have been formed for three key development areas: 1) Communications, 2) Training, 3) Retreats & Events.

The leadership academy --"Academia Dunamis"-- for Hispanic Ministry will focus training virtually, regionally and locally. For 2014-2015, the following topics will be offered: Leadership, Small Groups, Preaching, Music & Worship, Evangelism, Multi-media & Technology.

The Hispanic Youth Leadership Academy is in their sixth year and hoping for 60+ youth to gather at Nebraska Wesleyan University in May 2014.

## **3. Small Membership Church**

The first ever small church ministries conference in the Great Plains Conference -- "Small Wonders"-- will be held October 10-11, 2014 at Kansas Wesleyan University in Salina. Speakers will include Bishop Scott Jones and Rev. Stephanie Caro. Workshop topics will include: Starting and sustaining young adult ministries, Successful low-budget youth ministry, Mental health in rural areas, Intergenerational Ministries in the small congregation, and others.

A group of 5 college students will spend eight weeks during the summer traveling around the Great Plains Conference visiting 12 different communities. At each stop, they will lead Vacation Bible School and do service projects in the communities.

At the annual conference sessions, the theme video will feature examples of congregations who met or exceeded one of their vital sign goals. You may visit with representatives from these congregations at the Congregational Excellence booth during breaks. We will continue to develop strategies to equip congregations for meeting their goals.

## **GREAT PLAINS UNITED METHODIST CAMPS, INC.**

by Ben Wheeler, president

A strong camping ministry is an important component of the Great Plains Area's commitment to develop Christian spiritual leaders. This emphasis is one of seven foundations for camping and

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retreat ministries. The other six are to provide intentional places apart to encounter God, to extend genuine Christian hospitality and community, to nurture Christian faith and discipleship, to teach creation care and appreciation, to collaborate with United Methodist churches and agencies and to inspire and equip guests to do love and justice.

Camping ministries also help enhance local churches in providing Christ-centered excellence in Youth and Children's Ministries. Camping ministries are an incredible way for our youth and children to experience what it means to be a connectional church! Imagine youth groups coming together from all over the Great Plains Area to experience the best our conference has to offer in worship, speaking, games and more! How awesome is that!

We are gifted by having six camp sites spread across the Great Plains Area. Did you know that no matter what United Methodist Church you are in, you're no more than 3 ½ hours away from one of your camps? What a blessing! I believe that each of our six camp sites is uniquely positioned to reach their parts of our Great Plains Area.

With this being the first official year of GP Camps, Inc. being in existence, we're still learning how to function together. I'm extremely grateful to report that the spirit of collegiality across the GP Camps, Inc. Board has been fantastic! We've been able to avoid "how it's always been done" and focus on "the best things we can do" in order to accomplish our mission of equipping and connecting congregations to make disciples of Jesus Christ.

I'd also like to lift up the work our new Coordinator of Camping Ministries, Sara Shaw, has been doing. We are so blessed to have Sara as a part of the Congregational Excellence staff. I truly believe that Sara is going to be a difference maker in helping our camps to find new and innovative ways to work together as well as individually going to the next level.

Finally, would you join me in prayer over our camps? My prayer is that our future elders, deacons and laity leaders will hear God's call at camp, have that call nurtured and be empowered as leaders for the present and future church!

**UNITED METHODIST CAMPUS MINISTRY, INC.**

Rev. Caren S. Loper, Chair of GPUMCM

The Great Plains United Methodist Campus Ministry Board is in process of the adaptive work needed to define and clarify our role for effectiveness. The General Board of Higher Education along with the Book of Discipline and our Bylaws defines our role. (BOD Para. 634 3., 4.(d), 2.-9 pages 450-451 also Para 634 10. (b)1-5 page 452 and Para. 634 (13), (15), (16) page 456-457). The Great Plains Mission Statement, Vision, and Calling clarify our role. The Board is proactively adapting into our role for effectiveness under the organizational plan of the Great Plains United Methodist Conference.

Several Board Members have been assigned to be in relationship with each campus ministry site as advocates. We encourage campus ministers to connect with the local congregations around them. We have a total of ten State Campus Ministry Sites and four United Methodist Supported Campus Ministries in the Great Plains Conference. Each site is unique for their setting, mission, calling, and vision in how they reach out “to make Disciples of Christ for the transformation of the world.” Some have buildings, and some work out of local church buildings, while others are “go to” ministries. Campus Ministers who serve are Laity, Licensed Local Pastors, Ordained Deacons, and Ordained Elders. We are extremely blessed in the Great Plains with campus ministers that have a strong calling to this unique area of Discipleship.

As a Great Plains Campus Ministry Board we strive to support campus ministry in a variety of ways. One way is through face-to-face meetings twice a year. Our meetings are strategically scheduled to accommodate discernment around budgeting and grant allotments. Each meeting opens with a devotional time of spiritual formation. We experience fellowship as we commune together. Our campus ministers share creative and innovative ideas. Time is allowed to share thoughts and ideas that benefit all. Much of our work is, and will need to be, completed by email communications, smaller teams who will report back to the board, the advocated assigned to sites, and with a variety of technological support from the conference.

Please note the following changes: Conference Merit scholarships, which formerly came through the Campus Ministry Board, are now

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accessed through The General Board of Higher Education online at GBHEM.org. The applications are due by March 1 of each year. Evaluations of Campus Ministers and their sites also have forms available online at GBHEM.org. The forms are to be filled out by the Campus Ministers and submitted to the their supporting agencies. The GPUMCM is a supporting agency.

In the upcoming year, we hope to continue to build relationships with each other, with local congregations, the sites themselves, and pioneer new opportunities for campus ministry. We will work to increase visibility of the many exciting ministries of the campus sites we have. We encourage each congregation to remember campus ministry in their Special Asking for Mission Shares. The United Methodist Student Day Special Offering offers another great opportunity of support. KU-K-State and the Ichabod-Hornet Campus Ministry Challenges are fun fundraising events for four of our sites. Are you an alum of any of our campus sites in the Great Plains? If so, you are encouraged to support this important area of discipleship for the transformation of the world.

**MEXICAN AMERICAN MINISTRIES**

Care Centers: Garden City, Dodge City, Liberal, Ulysses, Johnson, Satanta

Medical Clinics: Garden City, Dodge City, Liberal, Ulysses

Dental Clinics: Garden City, Dodge City

Contact: Joan Robbins, CEO [director@ummam.org](mailto:director@ummam.org)

Website: [www.ummam.org](http://www.ummam.org)

Community Care Centers

UMMAM's Community Care Centers provide a variety of social services and other help for individuals in need. These counts are by service and do not represent unduplicated clients. The same individual may receive one or several services over the course of the year.

<b>Services</b>	<b>Families</b>	<b>Individuals</b>
Food	919	3,236
USDA Commodities	267	1,120
Emergency Assistance	476	1,535
Clothing/ Household Items		12,147
Immigration		872
School Supplies		165
Holiday Gifts/Food Boxes		668
Mittens/Gloves/Caps		219

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Layettes/Baby Items	299
Job Applications/Form Assistance	1,134
Volunteer Hours	1,772

**Community Health Centers**

Family practice services are available at all community health centers. Services include treatment of illnesses and injuries, wellness and preventative care, behavioral health services, prenatal care, health education and routine laboratory work. Our dental clinics offer complete dental care including preventative, restorative and emergency care. In order to utilize our behavioral health and other health services, patients must be established through our medical clinics.

Medical encounters 19,121 Unduplicated medical clients 5,841  
 Dental encounter 7,941 Unduplicated dental clients 1,973  
 Behavioral health encounters 158 Behavioral health clients 42  
 Other encounters (nutrition, optometry, etc.) 357

**Outreach/Special Programs****Early Detection Works (Breast/Cervical Cancer Program) (31)**

655 mammograms; 655 Clinical Breast Exams; 146 abnormal/indeterminate results; 7,450 individual and group contacts for education.

**Southwest Kansas Diabetes Prevention and Control (4)**

Provided diabetes counseling to 1,035 individuals; optometry appointments to 181 individuals; podiatry appointments to 79 individuals; and screened 619 individuals for blood sugar.

**Prenatal Case Management/Parents as Teachers (1)**

279 case management activities, including home/hospital visits and phone calls, plus prenatal classes.

**Lifetime Smiles Dental Outreach (19)**

Children are screened for visual oral decay, and referred to a dentist for follow-up. Lifetime Smiles held sealant clinics with children and fluoride clinics were held at schools, and health fairs

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**Migrant Farmworker Case Management (34)**

Assist migrant and seasonal farmworkers with medical/dental care and treatment plus case management. 1,532 enabling service encounters to 1,222 Low German families were provided.

**Healthy Living Kansas**

Community Health Educators in southwest Kansas are dedicated volunteers equipped with skills to engage community members in raising breast health self-awareness. Promotoras attended 28 events with 2,660 encounters.

**Health Center Outreach and Enrollment (4 )**

500 encounters; 350 applications submitted to the Marketplace; 250 estimated applications enrolled with the Marketplace.

**Child/Adult Care Food Program (4)**

Homes/centers enrolled	45
Meal/snack units reimbursed	192,755
Total amount of reimbursement pass through	\$283,502.60

**Mercy and Justice****MERCY AND JUSTICE TEAM****by Kent Little, Chair**

Our team has the primary purpose of helping local congregations transform the world through ministries of mercy and through ministries of justice that address systemic issues. We are called to fulfill the functions of the Conference Board of Global Ministries, the Conference Board of Church and Society, Christian Unity and interfaith organizations, relate to our global mission partnerships (Zimbabwe, Nigeria, and Haiti), Volunteers in Mission and criminal justice and mercy ministries.

Our work over the past many months has been defined by listening and staying focused on the above purpose. Bringing together three conferences each with vital and important mercy and justice ministries as well as our team's individual passions around particular ministries has been a huge task.

We have remained committed to our purpose of not only promoting mercy and justice stances, resolutions, and concerns as a conference but also remembering it is for the local congregation we exist. We have created sub-teams with various areas of interest and work each with a primary intent making sure we are grounded in the local church.

In the coming year we are going to be finding ways to do deep listening to the local congregations of our conference in order to bring resources to their particular concerns and ministries in their communities.

As a part that we will continue to lift areas of mercy and justice concerns in our states and across the Annual Conference. One such initiative is in the area of education. It is an exciting time to be a part of this Annual Conference and we see great things on the horizon as we work in the area of mercy ministries as well as work for justice in our midst as we grow in Discipleship making while transforming the world for Jesus Christ.

#### **DISASTER RESPONSE TEAM**

Steve Burnett, Chair

The Great Plains Disaster Response is a Ministry of Care that has theological, material, mental health, advocacy, and social service components designed to provide for the spiritual, emotional and physical recovery of disaster survivors and for the well-being of their caregivers. It is the goal of this ministry that in the midst of their situational turmoil all the affected people will experience God's grace and mercy through our presence and our response efforts.

The local church is the point of contact for all church assistance in a disaster. The Conference will support the local church by making its resources and those of the General church available, when invited and if needed, through the leadership of the Conference Disaster Response Team. The Conference Disaster Response Team links the local church to the resources of the District, Conference, and the General Church.

Operating consistently within the United Methodist Committee on Relief's (UMCOR's) philosophy, we stand ready to assist communities within the Great Plains Conference geographical area over the long

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haul of their recovery, until they are well on their way to establishing a “new normal” after a crisis. Like UMCOR, when possible, this ministry cooperates with other aid organizations to insure that all resources are used effectively and efficiently and to reduce the duplication of services to survivors. This cooperation provides the framework to reach the most survivors, especially those with the greatest need.

The Disaster Response Team is actively involved in meeting the mission priorities of the Great Plains Conference as adopted at the Uniting Conference. We can be particularly effective in equipping congregations to understand and to connect with not only their local communities, but also with others throughout the conference and beyond, by providing training and assistance for local churches in developing disaster plans, providing training in disaster response that can also be used in local missions.

Disaster Response offers congregations the opportunity to address the needs of disaster survivors through our service and our presence. Our ministry provides a visible presence of the church and offers spiritual and emotional healing as well as physical restoration of people’s lives. We are transforming the world through our service one person, one family, and one community at a time.

Training, such as spiritual and emotional care, and the opportunities for mission provided by Disaster Response are often a “stepping stone” to greater involvement in the United Methodist Church. Members often become involved in leadership roles on disaster response teams, on committees in their church, and in outreach programs.

We offer opportunities to build lay and clergy partnerships in all of our training and missions. Lay and clergy are encouraged to work together in developing disaster response plans for the local church, in training for and responding to disasters, and in planning local missions to name a few. We stress that everyone has spiritual gifts and that all are important and needed as we strive to be the hands and feet of Christ in service to God’s children who are in need.

“Share with God’s people who are in need.” Romans 12:13a

The Great Plains Disaster Response Team welcomes Rev. Linda Stewart as the Conference Disaster Response Coordinator. Linda assumed this position at the end of January, and has been “on the run” ever since.

The team has adopted a Disaster Response Plan for the Conference that was approved by the Connecting Council on March 22. The plan

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is available on the Great Plains web site. We encourage everyone to review the plan, especially Appendix B which contains handbooks that provide specific information for each position from Local Church Disaster Coordinator to the Bishop.

The Disaster Response Team is focusing on training to insure that we have an adequate number of volunteers trained at the Early Response Team level throughout the Conference. We are also focusing on training and providing assistance to local churches in developing a disaster response plan for their church and community. We invite anyone with an interest in serving Christ through disaster response and preparedness to join us. Contact Rev. Linda Stewart at the Wichita Conference Office to sign up for classes or for more information.

“This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of God’s people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God.”

2 Corinthians 9:12

**GLOBAL MINISTRIES - “FROM EVERYWHERE TO EVERYWHERE”**

by Alan Gager, Conference Secretary of Global Ministries

Rev. Nathan Stanton serves on The General Board of Global Ministries Board of Directors.

Rev. Alan Gager serves as our Conference Secretary of Global Ministries (CSGM) and also serves as the Jurisdictional CSGM representative on The Advance Committee.

The Advance is an official program of The United Methodist Church for voluntary second-mile giving. (Through The Advance, United Methodist annual conferences, districts, local churches, and organizations, as well as individuals and families, may choose to support mission programs or mission personnel with their financial gifts). Each Advance project has been vetted and approved by Global Ministries and Advance staff. One hundred percent of all Advance giving goes to the chosen mission project or ministry. Search for projects/missionaries, make donations, track your gifts and more online at: [www.umcmision.org/Give-to-Mission/The-Advance](http://www.umcmision.org/Give-to-Mission/The-Advance)

**Thanks for your support!**

In 2013 the former three conferences, districts, local churches, and organizations, as well as individuals and families enabled Kansas East to remit \$513,445.86; Kansas West to remit \$504,501.73; and Nebraska to remit \$483,141.74 for all Global Ministries projects.

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2013 missionary support included in the above figures: Nebraska \$15,680.48; KS East \$14,605.00; KS West \$4,893.92.

**PEACE WITH JUSTICE MINISTRIES**

by Andrea Paret, Peace with Justice Coordinator

*"As Jesus came near and saw the city, he wept over it, saying, 'If you, even you, had only recognized on this day the things that make for peace!'"*

*Luke 19:41-42*

This scripture verse was our focus at the Peace with Justice Coordinator Gathering at the General Board of Church and Society (GBCS) March 19<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup> and the immediately following Ecumenical Advocacy Days from March 21<sup>st</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup> in Washington D.C.

Peace with Justice Ministries has been a part of our United Methodist church for a long time. "Peace with Justice is the heart of the ministry of Jesus Christ," said Rev. Dr. Susan Henry-Crowe, General Secretary of GBCS. She reminded us of the work of justice and healing from the earliest days of Methodism which included advocating against child labor and slavery. God's intention is to have justice for all. There are many issues today that are just as difficult and controversial as they were at the time of John Wesley.

The Peace with Justice Coordinators meet once a year for spiritual renewal, mutual sharing about peace and justice work happening in each conference, brainstorming and organizing to strengthen the peace with justice ministries and to learn more about some of the burning issues of our day. One of the topics we focused on was the situation in Israel/Palestine and the SodaStream boycott that GBCS is supporting after much prayer and discernment. We are not boycotting products made in Israel but oppose products made by Israeli companies operating in occupied Palestinian territories. This boycott is in compliance with United Methodist Church resolution #4011. We are working with many faith and other groups that include Israelis as well as Palestinians. New guidelines were shared about trips to the Holy Land under the theme "Experience the Holy Land the United Methodist Way."

As the Great Plains Conference continues to grow stronger, Peace with Justice Ministries supports and encourages local churches in

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their transforming service to the world, addressing both immediate and systemic needs. Resources for peace with justice work are made available and information from GBCS regarding issues that church members across the conference are passionate about is shared, usually through GPConnect. Currently there are also two online publications from the Peace with Justice Coordinator: (1) The Mustard Seed, a bimonthly newsletter giving concrete ideas for prayer, study and action, and (2) Voices to the Capitol, also published bi-monthly, including a meditation, current legislation about peace/non-violence and hunger and contact information for national decision makers. Christ calls us to help create God's beloved community, a community with abundant life for everybody. If you are interested in signing up for either one of these or both, please contact me at [amparet08@yahoo.com](mailto:amparet08@yahoo.com).

This year, the Peace with Justice Special Sunday falls on June 15<sup>th</sup> (it is always the first Sunday after Pentecost). Local churches can also choose another Sunday for this focus. In 2013, over 330 local churches and United Methodist institutions from across Kansas and Nebraska participated in this special offering. And I encourage more churches across the Great Plains Conference to participate this year. A portion of the funds goes to GBCS to offer grants. Another portion stays in the Conference. Last summer a seminar at GBCS attended by Micah Corps interns, other students and clergy from Nebraska was partially funded through this offering. And this spring the funds helped students from Emporia State University and Washburn University in Kansas with their spring trip focusing on "What do you call home?" The trip included visits to and work at an Interfaith Shelter in Santa Fe/New Mexico, the Sand Creek Massacre National Park in Colorado and the United Methodist Mexican American Ministries in western Kansas. In March, Rev. Sarah Marsh from Tecumseh UMC was able to attend the Ecumenical Advocacy Days and will be working with those Micah Corps interns this summer whose focus is peace and non-violence.

"Justice is giving to another that which belongs to her or him as a human being. ... Biblical justice calls for the liberation of the poor and oppressed," explains Joseph J. Fahey in his book 'War and the Christian Conscience' (p.17). And Martin Luther King Jr. reminds us that true peace is only found where there is justice.

*"Let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action." 1 John 3:18*

**Other****EPISCOPACY COMMITTEE**

by Rev. Maria Campbell

The functions of the Episcopacy are described in paragraph 637.3 in *Book Of Discipline*. Some of which are: to support the bishop in the oversight of the spiritual and temporal affairs of the Church, with special reference to presidential responsibilities; to be available to the bishop for counsel; to keep the bishop advised concerning conditions within the area as they affect relationships between the bishop and the people of the conference agencies; to engage in annual consultation and appraisal of the balance of the bishop's relationship and responsibilities to the conference, the jurisdiction, general Church boards and agencies, and other areas of specialized ministry and to report needs for episcopal leadership to the jurisdictional committee on episcopacy through elected conference members.

The Episcopal Residence Sub-committee has completed numerous projects on the episcopal residence in Wichita. There are additional projects still to be completed. There is also an episcopal residence in Lincoln. A recommendation for members to serve on an Episcopal Residence Task Force will be presented to the conference in the June 2014 session. Its purpose will be to make a recommendation on location of the episcopal residence to the 2015 session of GPAC. If there is a change, it will take place in September, 2016. There will be no changes of location for the three conference offices until at least 2016.

A quadrennial appraisal (evaluation) of Bishop Jones was conducted during January and February of 2014. Those on the appraisal sub-committee were Marilyn Moore, Mark Conard, Maria Campbell, and Cindy Tannehill. Lavonne Mullet, Organizational Development & Management Consultant, led the process. Two hundred ninety two (292) people were invited to respond to an online quantitative survey. There were 174 responses, including 147 comments on strengths and 133 comments on edges. Ms. Mullet conducted 31 personal interviews. The findings of the appraisal were discussed with Bishop Jones. It should be noted that the GPC is a leader across the denomination in using a 360 degree process designed to provide feedback to the bishop and encourage his growth as an Episcopal leader.

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The Episcopacy Committee is grateful to Bishop Jones for his leadership as we become the GPC. He is a decisive leader who is gifted to preach and teach with excellence and passion. His desire to be faithful to his calling and the gospel bless us all.

**EPISCOPAL RESIDENCE TASK FORCE PROPOSAL**

It is the recommendation of the Episcopacy Committee with the approval of the Connecting Council that the following people serve as members of the Episcopal Residence Task Force. (This Task Force will bring a recommendation for the Episcopal Residence to the 2015 Annual Conference.)

Maria Campbell, chair

Mike Dillmon, GPC Board of Trustees representative

Brad Kirk

Jose Miranda

Marilyn Moore

Jose Olivas

Kent Rogers

Tom Watson

Marilyn Zehring

**LAY LEADER REPORT, GREAT PLAINS CONFERENCE**

by Courtney Fowler, Conference Lay Leader

The Great Plains Conference Lay Leadership team is made up of five lay members from Kansas and Nebraska. Courtney Fowler serves as the Conference Lay Leader. There are four Associate Conference Lay Leaders: Tom Watson, Micole Harms-Brazell, Carolyn May and Oliver Green.

In addition to the five-person leadership team, there are 17 District Lay Leaders, one from each district in the conference that represent their district, assisting their district superintendent when called upon.

As we make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world, we ourselves are transformed in the work of Christ. Our primary task is developing strong lay leadership in the local church. We believe our churches are filled with talented laity committed to serving their local churches and we encourage each person to discern their gifts for ministry.

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Our previous three conferences have now united into one and we are blessed with diverse leadership across our districts, many of which have ongoing teams in place to assist in training and programming in their district. We endeavor to find the strengths and best practices to apply toward developing comprehensive lay leadership development using available resources, information and technology where available and becoming an “idea-generator” for those areas that have unmet needs and concerns.

We are fortunate to have many opportunities for our laity to serve in mission and in leadership throughout the conference. Opportunities such as Lay Servant Ministries, Volunteers in Mission (VIM) trips, United Methodist Women, United Methodist Men and Hands on the Great Plains provide outlets for our laity to engage with the local church and the conference.

Our second task is to be a supportive link to laity and the liaison between clergy and laity as we help fulfill the mission of our conference. Our leadership team has met with the District Lay Leaders twice and will continue to engage in dialogue regarding training and support. We are developing our connections through social media to communicate and provide feedback and support.

In addition, the Lay Leadership team is connected with the Association of Annual Conference Lay Leaders, a national network of conference lay leaders. We served as co-hosts for this organization’s annual meeting which was held in March in Kansas City. Courtney Fowler was elected to serve on the executive council of the organization. Our participation through this organization connects us with resources offered through the UMC Board of Discipleship.

Developing lay leadership and providing a supportive link to laity and clergy are the current priorities of our team. As we begin our work in the Great Plains Conference, we seek to help other laity find their voice and calling and an outlet to serve through their local church.

**UNITED METHODIST WOMEN GREAT PLAINS CONFERENCE**

Esther Hay, Conference President

“Putting the Pieces Together”

On January 1, 2014, after months of preparation, planning and

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meetings, the women of the former Kansas East, Kansas West and Nebraska Conferences officially became the Great Plains United Methodist Women, a sisterhood of grace with approximately 27,000 members. With the National United Methodist Women change in structure and the formation of a new conference, we were given the unique opportunity to “step outside the box” and create something totally new and different. As we continue to form our shared journey we are “putting together the pieces” – pieces from our past, our present and our future. As we are living into our future the pieces of our new structure allow us to be creative, flexible, nimble and responsive to the changing needs of our membership while at the same time creating even more opportunities for women to be involved throughout our conference. We are viewed as national leaders because our conference is the first to develop a “one of a kind, cutting edge” structure. We serve as a resource for other conferences throughout the country who are seeking advice on how to develop and implement new conference structures.

Our new Great Plains Conference United Methodist Women’s logo is bold and dynamic. It visually reflects our past, present and future in the sharing of the common gifts of land, water and sunshine. As the sun is rising on our Great Plains Conference we anticipate innovative and fresh ways of doing mission. The crisp, clear lines reveal brightness, creativity and commitment in our midst. The shape suggests moving forward with the confidence that our God is faithfully continuing to journey with us, guiding and directing, nudging us and calling us by name. Our response to that call to be authentically in mission is shaping our conference. Together we are putting our faith, hope and love in action on these Great Plains and beyond our horizon. A new infinity scarf has been designed and debuted for the Assembly as another visual symbol of our new conference.

We do our work in the context of two organizations – United Methodist Women (local, district, conference and national levels) and the Great Plains Conference of The United Methodist Church. Here is a sampling of things we have completed or that are planned actions in 2014:

- Transformed World:

1. We are committed to supporting mission endeavors beyond our conference boundary and around the world through our annual Pledge to Mission. As of April 7th we have already remitted over \$171,000 or 28.5% of our \$600,000 Pledge to Mission for 2014.

2. Hosted a Legislative Event with a focus on Immigration.

3. Relate to three National Mission Institutions by providing volunteer and financial support to Della C. Lamb Community Center in Kansas City, MO, Epworth Village in York, NE and United Methodist Ministries in Omaha, NE.

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4. Provide educational experiences that lead to personal change in order to transform the world.

5. Awarded eleven \$500 scholarships for women to attend the United Methodist Women's National Assembly in Louisville, KY.

6. 182 registered for the United Methodist Women's National Assembly in Louisville, KY, April 25-27, 2014. Every four years thousands of women from all over the country and the world gather for worship, challenge and transformation. One of this year's Assembly keynoters, Hillary Rodham Clinton, will be speaking on global women's leadership and the role and power of women with influence to make a space for grassroots leaders.

7. Eunice Harrington Award – Annually recognizes a district officer who is continuing Eunice's legacy of leadership, service and advocacy to make the world a better place for everyone, especially those who are most vulnerable - women, children and youth.

- Enhancing the Ministry of Local Churches:

1. METour for young women ages 15-22 – a 10-day mission education experience. Participants engage in mission, learn about United Methodist Women and experience the United Methodist connection by visiting and working at National Mission Institutions, Volunteer in Mission sites and United Methodist related agencies. It gives girls an opportunity to learn about church related career fields.

2. The Great Plains Conference has a teen woman, college/university women and several young women in their 30s attending the 2014 National Assembly.

3. Prison Ministry – we currently have two United Methodist Women's units that meet within the Topeka Correctional Facility and are exploring the possibility of forming a unit at the Women's Prison in York, Nebraska.

4. Human Trafficking Awareness Event.

5. Maternal Health "Women and Girls of Sacred Worth" Awareness Event.

6. 4 MISSION DO Projects will be organized throughout the conference and each local unit is encouraged to participate in their own way – the topics are (1) UMCOR Kits, (2) Focus on Wellness – speaker or organize a 5K walk/run, (3) Disabilities Awareness and (4) Intergenerational Activity – such as adopt a grandmother or a daycare.

- Leadership Development:

1. We are a leadership training ground for women's leadership – we equip women and girls around the world to be leaders in communities, agencies, workplaces, governments and churches.

2. We offer opportunities for young women to serve in leadership positions and receive training in leadership development.

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3. Strong women leaders are an asset to local churches and communities.

4. Our 1st Annual Meeting of the Great Plains Conference United Methodist Women, October 17 and 18 will feature Jorge Lockward as our keynoter. Jorge is on the staff of the General Board of Global Ministries and serves as the Director of Global Praise. This is an excellent worship leadership development opportunity for clergy as well as United Methodist Women.

5. Each of our 17 districts have meetings that focus on a variety of topics such as the Roma of Europe, spiritual growth, prison ministry, Bible study and parenting.

6. The Great Plains Conference Cooperative Mission u is a collaborative event between United Methodist Women and the Great Plains Annual Conference which provides education on spiritual growth, social issues and geographic areas. Mission u is for everyone – children, youth, men, women, clergy and laity in the church; non-members and friends are also welcome to attend. The weekday Mission u, in particular, provides an in depth continuing education opportunity for clergy.

7. This year's spiritual growth study for Mission u is "How Is It With Your Soul?" an excellent spiritual growth study opportunity for both laity and clergy to engage in together.

8. Our 2014 "The Church and People with Disabilities" study will not only provide increased awareness and knowledge but also options for taking action and being more inclusive in the local church and community.

9. Clergy have the opportunity to teach Mission u classes and receive training for the class they will be teaching.

10. Members and clergy both have access to a wide variety of United Methodist Women's resources that can increase their awareness and give them tools for taking action in the local church and community or beyond.

11. The Reading Program informs clergy and women on spiritual growth and leadership development as well as broadens their understanding of mission work in the areas of nurturing community, social action and education for mission.

12. As a member of United Methodist Women, clergy have access to the full range of resources available through United Methodist Women.

- New Church Starts

1. Charter for Racial Justice Policies – the Charter for Racial Justice has guided United Methodist Women for more than 60 years and as we begin our new conference, we also recommit ourselves to recruit women of all races into the membership of United Methodist

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Women and provide leadership development opportunities without discrimination.

2. We are exploring starting language groups for Hispanic women facilitated by trained language coordinators and using United Methodist Women Spanish language resources.

We are the United Methodist Women of the Great Plains! We show up, we stand up and we speak up on issues, especially those impacting the well-being of women, children and youth. We are proud of our heritage, we are passionate about mission and we are women of action! We put our Faith, Hope and Love in Action as we give our pledge to mission, collect box tops and labels, donate gardening tools, develop women's leadership skills, participate in hands on mission opportunities and advocate for justice. We are concerned about human trafficking, domestic violence, immigration, climate change and many other issues.

We pray, we study, we participate in rallies, we hold seminars and retreats. We knit prayer shawls, make baby quilts and put together UMCOR kits and so much more! The total program of United Methodist Women is MISSION...it's why we exist. We are "Called for this Time." We are called to live the heart of God...to be the hands and feet that make God's love real. We are called to "put the pieces together" to help transform the world. We do this individually and as a group every time we put our faith, hope and love in action to make the world a better place for everyone including the most vulnerable - women, children and youth.

#### **D. Mission Agencies Colleges/Universities**

#### **NEBRASKA WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY**

by Fred Ohles, president

Nebraska Wesleyan's connection with the churches of the Great Plains Annual Conference is vital in our life as a university. Because of this partnership we are able to train present and future United Methodist students for the transformation of the world. The generous heart of United Methodists from Nebraska and Kansas has helped us fund part of our scholarships for United Methodist students as well as University Ministries.

During the 2013-14 academic year, 234 United Methodist students received \$2,742,648 in scholarships, grants, and tuition waivers provided by Nebraska Wesleyan University. Included in this total

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are 101 students who received \$75,500 in need-based Nebraska United Methodist Scholarships and four ministerial dependents who received \$53,480 in ministerial discounts.

Just as we believe in our current students, Nebraska Wesleyan is also invested in the future. For three years we have hosted the Hispanic Youth Leadership Academy (HYLA). This program seeks to nurture United Methodist Hispanic youth, teaching them about the United Methodist Church and empowering them to continue their education through college. We also hosted the first Confirmation Rally with the Bishop of the Great Plains Annual Conference. In cooperation with the Conference Council on Youth Ministries, we welcomed over 150 students and mentors from Nebraska and Kansas. We look forward to partnering with the United Methodist Church and the Great Plains Annual Conference in these and similar events that will strengthen the future of United Methodism in the Great Plains.

University Ministries

This year we welcomed our new University Minister, Rev. H. Eduardo Boussón. He comes to us after serving 13 years as a pastor in Kansas.

University Ministries has as its purpose to look after the spiritual health of everyone on campus. The religious landscape at Nebraska Wesleyan is as diverse as society at large. For us to nurture spiritual health, we had to address religious plurality. With this in mind, we designed a program of "Interfaith Dialogues." Once a month we invited leaders from different faith traditions to speak to the community. This year's speakers included the United Methodist bishop of the Great Plains Annual Conference; a Catholic priest and laywoman; a Jewish Rabbi; a Zen Buddhist Master; and a Missouri Synod Lutheran pastor. We will continue these dialogues next year.

Spiritual life was nurtured with weekly worship service in our chapel. We worship as students, faculty, and staff, and invite guest preachers from the community to speak to expand our experience. We supported 15 Bible studies led by students and staff from differing faith traditions. We sent weekly messages to staff and faculty with a thought to encourage and challenge them to think of their spiritual selves. We offered pastoral care to members of the Nebraska Wesleyan community as there was need.

This spring we launched “Lent with a Purpose” to help the Nebraska Wesleyan community think of a greater purpose. We incorporated prayer boards throughout campus and employed other resources to help people along the journey. This effort was well received.

We strived to help students think about their vocation, both secular and religious. Regarding the latter, we organized the Nebraska section of the Great Plains Annual Conference delegation to Exploration 2013, sponsored by GBHEM. Five Nebraska Wesleyan students attended. We are guiding two students through the initial steps toward candidacy, talking about calling, church, and future vocation. We look forward to building a program where more students will engage in these conversations.

We are proud that some of our graduating seniors will go into full-time service within the church. Some are contemplating seminary and some the mission field. One is joining the Global Mission Fellows program of the General Board of Global Ministries of the UMC as a missionary.

#### Speakers and Events

Dick Phillips, author of *Harvey Potthoff: a Life in Process*, and NWU faculty contributors reflected on the life of Harvey Potthoff, long-time NWU Distinguished Visiting Professor of Religion, on October 30 in celebration of the release of a new book about his life and scholarship. Immaculée Ilibagiza, a Rwandan genocide survivor, shared her experience February 26 with NWU classes and a lecture hall filled to capacity, including school buses of students from Hastings.

In an April 9 event co-sponsored by the Sociology-Anthropology Club, Emmanuel Habimana, co-director of the film *Komora: To Heal*, showed his documentary on the orphans of the 1994 Tutsi genocide in Rwanda and answered questions with an audience of students and community members. Finally, Paul Rauschenbush, Senior Religion Editor for the Huffington Post lectured on “Religion on the Internet” on May 1.

#### Wesleyan Live!

During 2013, a six-week class was held each semester. Dr. Robert Jewett, a retired United Methodist minister/theologian, taught

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both classes. The spring 2013 class was titled, "Paul and the Super Apostles." The fall class studied "First Corinthians for Troubled Churches Then and Now."

Wesleyan Live is held in a classroom setting and is also streamed live online. With enhanced capabilities of the Great Plains Annual Conference media staff and facilities, Wesleyan Live moved to the Conference office in Lincoln in 2014.

Wesleyan Live! is organized by the Rev. Mel Luetchens in cooperation with the President's Office.

**BAKER UNIVERSITY**

by Dr. Patricia N. Long, President

Baker University celebrated its 156<sup>th</sup> anniversary in February. Since 1858, the University has been committed to providing quality education for the next generation in the United Methodist tradition. The Values Statement of the University includes these words:

- **Student learning and academic excellence.** We provide quality learning environments promoting intellectual, professional and personal development resulting in lifelong learning.
- **Critical thinking, inquiry and freedom of expression.** We challenge all participants to think critically using open inquiry and freedom of expression.
- **Integrating learning with faith and values.** We expect all participants to be open to questions of faith and values as part of intellectual inquiry in the United Methodist tradition. In particular, we expect personal and professional responsibility that is based on high standards of ethical conduct.
- **Connections.** We promote a community of belonging and Baker family connections, which result in lifelong associations.
- **Inclusiveness.** We embrace diversity of community, thought and expression.
- **Service to the community.** We address the civic, social, health and environmental needs of our global community.

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Baker University continues to be proud of her strong affiliation with the United Methodist Church for the past 156 years. The 2013-14 academic year has brought much change and achievement to Baker, with more to be anticipated for the year to come.

For the first time in school history, Baker boasts 3 individual national athletic champions. Jeremy Galbraith and Stephanie Nelson in track and field and Bryce Shoemaker in wrestling. Athletics are such an important part of the University's life. Sixty percent of Baker students are student athletes, with the emphasis on student. The Baker University men's and women's athletic programs both finished with the highest overall GPA's of all 10 institutions in the Heart of America Athletic Conference during the 2012-13 academic year.

Warren Swenson is a 2013 graduate, currently employed by the University. He came to us well embedded in United Methodism and the Wesleyan tradition. At Baker, Warren was transformed into a campus leader, being elected Student Senate President at the end of his first year. During his years at Baker, Warren grew spiritually in many ways. He served as a mentor to his fraternity brothers, excelled academically, and participated in community service and civic engagement. Warren honed his skills in dispute resolution and communication, and also deepened his faith. He remains a sought after pulpit supply preacher in area churches. Warren will continue his education shortly, perhaps in seminary. Whether or not Warren is ordained, he will be a vital part of United Methodism in the future.

These four students exemplify Baker at its best and a place where lives are changed and success realized. These are four examples of Baker affecting the lives of individuals.

The university has completed phase one and is currently in phase two of the renovation of our student union. Phase one was a remodel and modernization of our cafeteria, while phase two, scheduled for anticipated completion by May 2014, will update public areas in other parts of the first floor. These updates, plus others planned for the future, will bring the student union in line with student needs and expectations.

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During the past academic year, two new areas of study have commenced. We now have a major in Criminal Justice for adult students in our School of Professional and Graduate Studies, and we are in the process of requesting approval of the Doctorate in Higher Education Administration. We are also currently in the final stage of our search for a Religious Studies Professor. The position is vacant due to the retirement of Dr. George Wiley in 2013. The search produced a large pool of applicants which has allowed us to bring three very strong candidates to campus for interviews. The position will be filled by the end of this academic year with the new professor beginning their Baker career for the 2014-15 academic year.

After 22 ½ years, The Reverend Dr. Ira DeSpain is retiring and leaving the post of Minister to the University. We worked closely with Bishop Jones and Superintendent Dennis Ackerman in finding, hiring, and appointing the 3<sup>rd</sup> University Minister in Baker's long history. We are so pleased that Reverend Kevin Hopkins will begin his work at Baker on July 1, 2014.

I have been privileged to serve as Baker's 28<sup>th</sup> president for the past eight years. As I announced to you last year, I am completing my tenure as President of this outstanding institution of higher education effective July 1, 2014. I am extremely pleased the Baker Board of Trustees selected Dr. Lynne Murray to be the 29<sup>th</sup> president. Dr. Murray and I are working closely to assure a smooth and meaningful transition so that Baker's future will continue to be bright.

**KANSAS WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY**

by Matthew R. Thompson, Ph.D., President & CEO

The Spirit is alive at Kansas Wesleyan University! We are joyful to be an institution affiliated with the Great Plains Conference of the United Methodist Church. At Kansas Wesleyan, we have used this last year to develop new ways to support and foster this important relationship and to better understand how it can inform the future of the university.

Campus Ministries at the university are a vibrant part of the student experience. We are pleased that our weekly student worship

gathering, Tuesday Night Alive, consistently hosts the largest attendance of any gathering on campus. Under the direction of Chaplain Mike Rose and Director of Spiritual Development, Cameron Jackson, students at Kansas Wesleyan are finding dynamic ways to grow in their spiritual development. This year, students have engaged in small group studies, traveled on an Alternative Spring Break Trip to Costa Rica, and explored the Wesleyan Way through weekly discussions.

Enrollment at the university remains strong and growing. We experienced our best retention rate in 18 years. Students are finding Kansas Wesleyan to be the dynamic place where they grow and develop into the men and women they want to be. This is because we value students as individuals and place them at the center of their learning experience. We invite them to “Be at the Center of It All.” Kansas Wesleyan has launched new initiatives aimed at enhancing the student experience. We opened the K-Dub Hub as a one-stop shop for students and their parents to answer all of their questions. No longer do students get the run around. They are heard and valued. This spring we launched a new major to foster and encourage young adults to pursue their calling into the ministry. We believe that our new Christian Ministry degree will be one that attracts people to serve congregations through a vocation that is informed by classroom discussions and practical, real-world internships. If your church is interested in hosting an intern, please contact Dr. Phil Meckley at (785) 827-5541, ext. 1415.

Our campus is committed to serving the broader world through service-learning and volunteering activities. During the fall and the spring semesters, students, faculty, and staff volunteered more than 10,000 hours to important Salina-based organizations. Many students continue to volunteer over breaks and during the summer in their home communities and churches. Giving back is an important part of the Kansas Wesleyan experience.

This spring, the university hosted a prayer breakfast for the Salina community and the broader Great Plains Conference. We were so pleased that Pastor Junius Dotson agreed to be our featured speaker. The university actively wants to be a part of the conversation that integrates spiritual and intellectual development.

Starting in January, the university launched an important campus conversation known as Intersections. This new series aims to bring real world issues into the conversation with the academic disciplines.

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During this inaugural year, Kansas Wesleyan focused on the important topic of civil rights. Speakers included Jane Elliott, Cheryl Brown Henderson, and Rebecca Chopp. We invite you to attend future conversations and to engage in the heady topics of our times.

Kansas Wesleyan is blessed in many ways, including through the gift of geography. Our location at the crossroads of two major interstates and at the very center of our country is an ideal metaphor for what we are doing in the life of our students and this Conference. We place Christ in the center of our work to assure that we are honoring Him and challenging our students to hear their call to His service. Thank you for your continued partnership with us.

**SAINT PAUL SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY**

[www.spst.edu](http://www.spst.edu)

Saint Paul School of Theology is a seminary of The United Methodist Church that educates leaders to make disciples for Jesus Christ, renew the Church, and transform the world. We are one institution with two campuses, in Oklahoma City and the Greater Kansas City area.

During the 2013-2014 academic year, 201 students from 23 annual conferences and 4 countries were enrolled in degree programs at Saint Paul School of Theology on both campuses. The Course of Study School at Saint Paul served 216 students the Overland Park, Kansas, Springfield, Missouri, and Oklahoma City, Oklahoma locations.

Twenty master's degree students and twenty-three doctoral students graduated from the Kansas City campus in May 2013. Six master of divinity students graduated at the 3rd Commencement Convocation in Oklahoma in August 2013. Laity from the Seminary Lite program in Oklahoma also received certificates.

Saint Paul at Oklahoma City University (OCU) began its 6th year in September. Dr. Amy Oden came to the Oklahoma City campus as Professor of Early Church History and Spirituality. The Association of Theological Schools authorized the campus to offer all courses leading to the Master of Divinity, Master of Arts in Christian Ministry, Master of Arts (Theological Studies), and Doctor of Ministry Degrees. They also lifted the residency requirement to complete one-third of the courses on the Kansas City campus. This is a major step in the development of Saint Paul at OCU. The success of Saint Paul

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in Oklahoma City has been a collaborative effort, strengthened by the support of the Oklahoma Conference of The United Methodist Church and United Methodist-related Oklahoma City University.

The seminary sold its Truman Road campus in Kansas City, Missouri to Guadalupe Centers, Inc. Guadalupe Centers, Inc. is the longest continuously operating organization serving Latinos in the United States. They provide early childhood, secondary, preparatory and adult educational programs; facilitate access to health and social services for all ages; promote and provide Latino cultural enrichment events; and sponsor social activities for diverse communities.

Students and faculty began classes on the Greater Kansas City (GKC) campus located in the East Wing of the United Methodist Church of the Resurrection, Leawood, Kansas, in September. Classes continue to be video-linked with the Oklahoma City campus. The seminary's staff and faculty offices are located under a mile away from the classroom location.

Saint Paul will launch three new masters' curricula in the fall of 2014. For the MDiv students, the new curriculum marks a return to a more praxis-based, integrated curriculum. The curriculum is grounded in spiritual formation with numerous practicums and faculty-led small groups to integrate seminary studies with vocational formation. Students will reflect upon their work during two intentional assessments mid-way through the degree and near the end of their studies.

The degree programs will require fewer hours which will mean less debt for Saint Paul graduates. The MDiv will require 79 credit hours for the degree rather than the 90 credit hours now required. The Masters of Arts in Christian Ministry and Masters of Arts (Theological Studies) will also be completed in fewer hours--54 credit hours for the MACM vs. 60 now and 49 for the MA(TS) vs. 60 now.

The trustees, faculty, staff, and students of Saint Paul thank you for your interest, prayers and support.

**SOUTHWESTERN COLLEGE**

by Steve Wilke, Vice President for Planning and New Programs  
Executive Director of the Institute for Discipleship

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Southwestern College has a wide range of efforts which make it an active United Methodist institution. Most of these efforts focus on church leadership, both lay and clergy.

Commitments from the College's Vision and Mission statements include: a *dedication to Christian values and leadership through service* as well as providing *preparation for a wide range of church-related vocations and involvement*.

The college demonstrates its commitment to students growing in their faith and Christian service by providing program such as Discipleship Southwestern and Worship Outreach teams. Activity scholarship granted to students in these programs are equivalent to the amounts given to students receiving athletic, performing arts, and other activity awards.

At the core of the college is a weekly fellowship of students, faculty, staff, and community members who live as the Church with a commitment to worship, study the Scriptures, pray, and serve others. The theme this year on campus and in chapel is "hope." Chapel is planned and conducted by students and a guest is invited to bring a message. Averaging attendance of more than 100 each week, students have heard Bishop Jones, pastors from their home churches, alumni in ministry, and persons on campus. Because many of the students are studying worship, chapel is both a time to learn and a time to worship. The service is streamed over the internet so that alumni and friends can participate.

Each year 35-50 students participate in the Discipleship service learning program. Discipleship Southwestern exists to encourage college students as they begin, or continue, the journey of becoming mature disciples of Jesus Christ. Program components include Bible study, covenant groups, mentorships, church internships, mission work and spiritual discipline development. Mission work rotates between local, regional and international experiences. The mission of the program is to make informed, transformed, equipped, and healthy disciples of Jesus Christ at home, at work, at church, and in the world.

Worship Outreach provides a program for students to grow in musical skill and their knowledge of personal and corporate worship. Students form various teams that take the concepts of the weekly classroom and apply them in musical leadership and service roles both on campus as a part of the leadership of chapel services and off campus to local church and regional worship experiences. Some

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of those experiences this last year have included many in the Great Plains Conference; Methodist churches in Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia; and the Ponca Indian United Methodist Church.

In a recording studio on campus, Worship Outreach teams have recorded and produced music for various projects including original songs, music in support of "Reflections," a Lenten devotional; hymns of the Ponca Nation; and songs from the Brothers in Blue prison ministry. Their video projects are also available on YouTube and have been submitted for use by the upcoming Imagine What's NEXT conference, a gathering of collegiate students sponsored by GBHEM in Denver, Colo.

This year approximately 20 students are religion and philosophy majors or minors on the campus. Some are also minoring in youth ministry. Most of these students are planning on pursuing a ministry vocation.

Currently two undergraduate online degrees in pastoral studies and youth ministry are provided through the colleges Professional Studies degree completion programs. In addition, a master of arts in specialized ministry (MASM) and a master of arts in theology studies (MATS) are offered online. These degrees have been most helpful to active military learners.

The Institute for Discipleship at Southwestern had the following highlights:

- This was the 7<sup>th</sup> year of the IFD visiting scholar program, and our visiting scholar was Matt Sigler from Boston University. Matt's focus is on a Wesleyan understanding of worship.
- 2013 saw the college through the Institute's Online Christian Education program found at BeADisciple.com serve over 1,000 persons with more than 100 small group classes.
- A conference for clergy, church staff, and campus ministry personnel was held in February with the title *Building a "Culture of Call" in Your Church and College*.
- In the fall, we hosted the Wichita East District clergy for a morning of worship, district business, orientation to the ministry efforts of the college, and lunch.

The alumni of Southwestern College who serve in ministry serve as the college's greatest contribution to the church and the body of

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Christ. Lay and clergy, paid and volunteer, SC alumni in ministry are found in all types of ministries all over the world. Students who are currently in seminary are: John Badley at Duke, Issac Chua at Asbury, Molly (Komlofsky) Just at Asbury, and Lucas McConnell at Yale.

**ALDRSGATE VILLAGE, A RETIREMENT COMMUNITY OF UNITED METHODIST HOMES, INC.**

Jerry C. Ney, President & CEO

Aldersgate Village has 431 total living units, featuring 176 independent living maintenance-free cottages, garden homes and apartments; 59 assisted living apartments; and 196 skilled nursing care rooms. The community is set on a 175-acre campus at 7220 SW Asbury Drive in Topeka, Kansas.

Aldersgate Village continued its mission of providing a comprehensive continuum of quality care to elderly Kansans in a faith-based setting during 2013, despite continuing to face difficult economic times. Enduring reductions in government funding and Medicare reimbursement cuts over the past several years has made Aldersgate's continued progress even more impressive. Operations have been streamlined and continue to employ industry best practices throughout. While it has been a significant organizational challenge, Aldersgate has positioned itself as a clinical leader in the region with major hospitals and continues to build and develop its core strength - service.

**Major Accomplishments for 2013**

Despite the ongoing effects of the challenging economy, Aldersgate's occupancies in 2013 continued to outperform budget projections in every service line with a 92.37% overall census in the Health Center. The newest service line in the Recovery Center and Sub-Acute units, introduced in 2012 continue to 3390 maintain recognition as one of the top rehabilitation centers in the region with occupancy of nearly 90%.

In 2013, the organization completed another major capital improvement to the aging campus. A \$1Million renovation to the Independent Living kitchen and main dining room was completed in July. The renovation and updates were intended to modernize the 30-plus year old amenities for the current independent living residents to enjoy as well as make it more marketable to prospects.

This capital improvement was made possible by a capital funding strategy without additional debt.

Operations underwent a Medicaid Audit with remarkable results of only \$9,400 in required Medicaid Refund – after auditing \$27 Million in claims from the last three years. The results demonstrate dedication and a strong management team that oversee the financial and billing obligation of the organization. To further strengthen the organization's financial position 2013 began with one major initiative - to attain a refinancing of the organizations \$23M in bond refinancing. The organization was pleased to report that in November the refinancing was complete, with a considerable monthly financial savings and the ability to obtain additional capital improvement funds for future progress and campus improvement.

The organization's core strengths, as well as our extended programs, are provided with a foundation in Christian principles. Aldersgate provides a vital service to residents and staff through Pastoral Care, which is led by Rev. Dennis Matthews. Through his service, not only do residents enjoy worship services and Bible studies, they also have access to counseling and spiritual guidance on a number of life issues.

Aldersgate remains grateful for Bishop Scott Jones' continued support and involvement in fundraising efforts for the organization. Aldersgate also thanks Topeka district superintendent, Rev. Kay Scarbrough for her involvement with the Aldersgate Board of Trustees in 2013. Aldersgate remains very appreciative to the churches of the Great Plains Conference for their continued support of our charitable care program, the Good Samaritan Fund. In 2013, Aldersgate Village provided \$360,000 in direct charitable care. In addition to charitable care, Aldersgate Village provides services under Medicaid for which the reimbursement provides no margin. This amounted to more than \$3,763,000 in care for the most vulnerable population – the poor and elderly.

Aldersgate has been blessed with the collective talent, expertise and ambition needed to be one of the finest retirement communities in the region. We are confident that by harnessing our talented leaders and enhancing our core strengths, we will continue to flourish and realize an even more promising and exciting year in 2014

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## Health &amp; Welfare Institutions

**GRACEMED HEALTH CLINIC, INC.,  
a Health Care Ministry of the Great Plains UMC**  
by David Sanford, CEO

The health care ministry of GraceMed experienced another banner year in 2013. By the numbers, we provided quality health care services through 80,063 patient visits for 30,472 unduplicated patients, an increase of 9% over 2012. During the year we opened a new school-based clinic at Dodge Elementary School in west Wichita and relocated two of our existing school-based clinics (Healthy Family and Evergreen) to new, larger sites in order to serve more people in their respective areas of Wichita. We also expanded our mobile oral health care outreach program for low-income children and senior adults by visiting 105 host sites in 15 south central Kansas counties during 2013.

And God continues to bring more opportunities our way for He knows many people still do not have access to quality health care. We are building four more school-based clinics in 'health care deserts' located in south and west Wichita. In 2014 and 2015, clinics will be built at Oaklawn Elementary School, Jardine Middle School (Planeview), South High and West High. These clinics will be open to students as well as community residents living near each site. To support these new clinics, we will build a new 30,000 sq. ft. 'hub' clinic on land donated by the Greater Wichita YMCA at their south campus.

Also, GraceMed will begin providing behavioral health services in 2014. In order to provide holistic patient care (physical, mental and spiritual), we will 'embed' mental health counselors with our primary care providers. By providing such services in a primary care setting, obstacles as well as the stigma attached to seeking mental health counseling will be minimized.

GraceMed's vision and mission, the provision of quality health care, is our 'platform' to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ. With Spirit-filled providers, managers and staff, led by Chaplain Jon Jones, our ultimate objective is to lead people to a saving knowledge of Christ and become his devoted followers. It's impossible to keep records, but we know, anecdotally, many people have come to know and accept Christ through the GraceMed health care ministry. And, many

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more have heard the Gospel, allowing God to plant a 'seed of truth' in their soul, trusting the Holy Spirit to 'water and grow' that seed.

Our relationship with the Great Plains UMC is important in that we want to be connected to the church and be perceived as a strong outreach organization, not merely a successful health care clinic providing needed social services for the needy. Our strength and our sustenance is our commitment to share Christ with those who enter our doors. We aspire to the evangelical ideals and teachings of John and Charles Wesley, particularly the doctrine of personal salvation by faith. We also believe, as did John Wesley, the Christian faith is revealed in Scripture and the Bible is the sole foundational source of our theology. We sincerely appreciate the Great Plains UMC's prayers and support to touch lives for Christ.

**RELEASED AND RESTORED**

by Pastor Ruth Karlsson

Released and Restored is a prison/re-entry ministry in Nebraska, and it is an Advance Special of the Great Plains Annual Conference. For the past nine and a half years of its existence, Released and Restored has been the Conference presence within the Nebraska Department of Correctional Services and the Lancaster County prison and jail systems.

The overarching goal of this ministry is to share the grace, mercy and love of Christ Jesus with incarcerated women and men in the Nebraska Department of Correctional Services prison system, and the Lancaster County Corrections jail.

Following the Wesleyan tradition of meeting individuals at their point of need, Released and Restored provides practical programming inside prison and jail facilities, to prepare individuals to live productive, moral, ethical and legal lives within our communities after their release from prison. Key components of this programming are teaching women and men critical thinking skills, goal setting and problem solving skills, and exploring how one's faith enhances and empowers productive and healthy decision-making. In addition, these programs prepare individuals to obtain and maintain gainful, long-term employment, teaching money-management and budgeting skills as well as landlord/tenant rights and responsibilities. A significant factor for successful re-entry is connecting re-entering individuals with local communities of faith. To that end, I travel throughout the state to local churches of various denominations to

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share the mission and ministry of Released and Restored, discussing how congregations can become involved in the restoration of these sisters and brothers of ours. Released and Restored has training curricula and workshops to equip local churches to welcome these persons with wisdom, grace and hospitality.

#### Ministry Activities

- A key highlight of ministry activities this year has been the continued provision of our newest program, Safe Haven. This program was developed to meet the overwhelming need for released individuals to have a safe and sober environment in which to engage in pro-social activities thereby providing an alternative to going back to the anti-social and destructive patterns of behavior that resulted in incarceration in the first place.

The most exciting aspect of this program however, is the collaboration between Released and Restored and the New Visions Community UMC. This community of faith has embraced the Safe Haven program, and the population group served by it, by providing radical hospitality through the provision of the space to conduct this program at their St James campus. The majority of Safe Haven volunteers are members of this congregation.

This collaborative effort of this program provides an essential link between recently released individuals and the community at large, and specifically to a community of faith.

- Continued to provide the Planning With Purpose program on a semi-annual basis at the Omaha Correctional Center. We are entering the third year of providing this program at this facility. Our facilitators are volunteers from the St James UMC in Bellevue;
- Continued to provide our Jobs Readiness/Life Skills program at the Adult Detention Facility for Lancaster County Corrections, the Lincoln Correctional Center, the Nebraska State Penitentiary, Nebraska Correctional Center for Women and at the Community Corrections Center-Lincoln.
- I provide weekly pastoral care to individuals at the following facilities, including inmates in the Special Management Units, Lincoln Correctional Center, Nebraska Correctional

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Center for Women, Nebraska State Penitentiary, and the Tecumseh State Correctional Institution;

- I celebrate Holy Communion monthly at the Lincoln Regional Center;
- I lead worship, and celebrate Holy Communion, once a month at the Nebraska State Penitentiary;
- Preached and made presentations about the mission and ministry of Released and Restored to numerous churches and organizations throughout Nebraska.

Released and Restored provides a ready-made opportunity for individuals to plug-in and become involved in a local mission field wherever there are correctional facilities, and in whatever communities to which inmates are returning. By serving a generally despised, marginalized and castigated population group, a natural outcome for our volunteers is their own spiritual growth and discipleship. A common theme from them is, "my faith is deeper and much more real because of my involvement with Released and Restored."

**EMBERHOPE, INC.** (formerly United Methodist Youthville)  
by Matt Johnson, Dir. of Church Operations

EmberHope, Inc. works to improve the lives of at-risk youth and families by offering innovative programs rooted in faith to inspire hope. Through the generous support of the United Methodist churches, uniting at the Great Plains Annual Conference, EmberHope continues our long history of serving thousands of vulnerable children and families. With your continued support, we look forward to making a difference in the lives of families we serve every day.

Here are some examples of how your giving has allowed us to serve:

- Foster children who arrive at their foster home with nothing, receive help with school supplies, clothing, tutoring and summer camp.
- An autistic boy at our Dodge City campus finds understanding and comfort on the back of a horse, who instinctively seems to know what he needs.
- A family receives specialized training and safety modifications to their modest home so they can accept a

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sibling group of four foster children who have experienced severe abuse, neglect and abandonment.

- A 9-year-old girl who has been sexually abused visits with her trusted counselor weekly, supplementing the monthly visits allowed by Medicaid.
- Girls at our Newton Secure Care cottage, some of whom come directly from sex traffickers, receive clothing, toiletries and educational activities.
- A promising youth struggling to establish herself after high school is assisted with finding an apartment, enrolling in vocational training and developing adult support.

There are four core programs that serve the needs of at-risk youth. These are funded by your gifts to the Healing Hearts Fund.

- Youthville Residential Care provides therapeutic programming for 116 severely disturbed children including horse- and dog-assisted therapies on our Dodge City, KS campus. Basic needs and services are provided to 43 teen girls served annually in our Newton, KS Secure Care cottage.
- Youthville Foster Care provides more than 350 stable foster homes statewide caring for 540 foster children. Please help us recruit, qualify, train and support foster families and provide hardship financial assistance for home safety requirements, repairs/cleaning, beds, and many other needs. Your donation also helps with clothing, school supplies, and activities such as summer camp, sports, music, graduation, and prom for foster children.
- FCS Counseling serves children and their families with behavioral and emotional problems from physical, sexual, and emotional abuse and neglect. This will supplement up to 13,800 sessions of therapy. More than 2,100 persons sought counseling from FCS Counseling last year.
- STRIVE is a new program helping at-risk youth ages 18-23 transition into responsible adults. STRIVE staff will work with the youth over two years to find a safe place to live, learn and work and to build positive permanent adult connections. Participants will receive stipends and can earn additional assistance with education, apartment and vocational startup expenses. This program is entirely donor supported.

**EPWORTH VILLAGE****by Patrick Garcia**

The year 2013 was a year of great transition and change for Epworth Village. Throughout this past year Epworth Village continued to fulfill our mission of hope and healing in the areas of our, Residential Group Homes, Foster Care services, In-Home Safety and Security services, the Epworth Village Learning Center, and our Out-Patient therapy services. In 2013 Epworth Village served 84 youth in our residential group homes, 86 students at our learning center, provided 1,373 Individual therapy sessions, 354 family therapy sessions, 442 group therapy sessions, served 79 families and 250 children with our in-home safety services, and provided services and support for 48 foster-children.

Epworth has two residential group homes located in York, Nebraska, and one group home in Grand Island, Nebraska. Our residential group homes have the capability of holding up to 30 male youth between the ages of 12-18. In 2013, many agencies strayed away from residential care, as it can often times put a financial burden on the agency and the community it is in. Epworth continued to offer residential services in addition to the other support services we provide with the hope of uniting families in an uplifting, healthy, and safe way.

Epworth also recognized that the state of Nebraska has a great need for foster care services for youth between the ages of 13-18. Epworth Village has been working very diligently to increase our foster care services in order to help and support these youth. As our foster care services expand, so does our reach and impact across the state of Nebraska.

The United Methodist Church continued to be a great supporter of Epworth Village in 2013. In addition to generous donations and assistance, Epworth was also blessed to have many different church groups offer their skills to assist in projects around Epworth's campus. Multiple work groups from various United Methodist Churches came and gave their time and talents to help renovate and repair our cottages and school. We are grateful for all the wonderful support and assistance they continually provide Epworth Village with.

The United Methodist Women also continued to be a supportive friend to Epworth Village this past year. The United Methodist Women have showered Epworth with not only donations, but also their prayers, generosity, and love; for that we are truly blessed. It would be difficult for Epworth Village to continue to fulfill our mission without such gracious support.

As Epworth Village continues to transition and face challenges, we look to the past to remember the strength of our roots and our rich history. We also look to the future and envision our mission being active and carried out through our work with children and families across the state of Nebraska. Our mission of providing health and healing was our focus in 2013, and will continue to be our focus in the years to come.

### **Ministries with the Poor**

#### **CHABADZA PARTNERSHIP REPORT**

by Mark Conard, Interim Coordinator

Welcome to Zimbabwe: Bishop Jones, members and friends of the Great Plains Annual Conference. Welcome to Zimbabwe? In one sense, it is thousands of miles away. In another sense, it is as close as the beating of our hearts.

Map of African Continent: Zimbabwe is a small, landlocked nation in south central Africa. Geographically, it is somewhat smaller than the territory now covered by the Great Plains Conference. Its population is about 13 million. It attained independence in 1980. Its name means "House of Stone."

Map of Zimbabwe: The capital of Zimbabwe is Harare. There are three official languages - Shona, Ndebele, and English. The literacy rate in Zimbabwe is 90%. 75% of the population is Christian. Unemployment is currently about 80% to 90%.

Mount Chiremba and wording: Altogether, Zimbabwe is a place of beauty and poverty, blessing and challenge, despair and vision, but - above all - a place of hope.

Origins in 1897: The origins of The United Methodist Church in Zimbabwe date back to 1897, when Bishop Joseph Crane Hartzell preached for the first time in what is now Mutare.

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Abiding Faith: The Methodist Episcopal, Methodist, and now The United Methodist Church have grown and increased through the years, convinced that "...all things work together for good..."

Two Conferences: The United Methodist Church in Zimbabwe is organized into two conferences, west and east.

One Bishop: They are guided by one Bishop, Eben K. Nhwatiwa, who was elected a bishop of The United Methodist Church in 2004.

Chabadza (hoe): Bishop Nhwatiwa is the one who has promoted and encouraged the use of a Shona concept, "Chabadza." In this video clip from 2010, Bishop Nhwatiwa and Bishop Jones discuss what Chabadza means...

Blank/Black slide: 2010 Video Clip

2010 KWC Journal: After extended conversation, a Chabadza Partnership Covenant was approved in 2010.

KWC Logo: At first it linked together the Kansas West Conference of The United Methodist Church.

Great Plains logo: Now, it is expanded and extended to include the pastors, congregations, ministries, and people of the Great Plains Conference. We are working on exactly how that will function in our new setting.

ZEAC Map: In any event, our partnership is with the Zimbabwe East Conference, covering only about 25% of the geography of Zimbabwe but encompassing an equal number of United Methodists. They organized into seven districts: Chimanimani-Chipingwe, Chitungwiza-Marondera, Harare East, Makoni-Buhera, Marange, Mutare, Mutasa-Nyanga.

Chabadza Covenant Commitments: The Chabadza Covenant commitments are several in number.

Work together: Work together in supportive and mutual relationships..

Prayer for one another: Uplift one another in prayer on a regular basis.

Learn from one another: Help people in our two conferences learn about - and from - one another.

Encourage relationships: Encourage district-to-district, church-to-church, and pastor-to-pastor relationships...we currently have more than 50 such church-to-church partnerships, with a need for 80 more. If your church is involved in a partnership relationship, please stand to be recognized...Thank you.

Support the Zimunya STC: Partner together in supporting projects of mutual interest, such as the Skills Training Centre at Zimunya in the Mutare District... If you have been on a Volunteers

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in Mission trip that helped build the Zimunya Skills Training Centre, please stand to be recognized... Thank you

Promote V.I.M. trips: Promote Volunteers in Mission activities that build and strengthen healthy relationships...

Provide financial support: For U.S. congregations to provide financial support for their partner church or circuit in the amount of \$600 a year, plus additional support as may be negotiated. For those that did so in 2013, certificates of appreciation are available at the Chabadza Partnership Connection display booth in the display area.

Communicate faithfully: Communicate faithfully to our respective constituencies and each year to our Annual Conference. In that regard, I invite you to read through the Chabadza Partnership Connection Annual Conference 2014 Edition and to pick up a Chabadza Covenant Partnership brochure at our booth in the display area.

Review, Evaluate, Adjust as needed: To review, evaluate, and adjust the covenant as needed. That is one of the tasks that will be undertaken by the delegation attending the Ebenezer Convention in Harare this August.

“Bear one another’s burdens...”: Altogether, our goal in this Chabadza Covenant partnership is “Bear one another’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ...”

“...work for the good of all...”: So then, whenever we have an opportunity, let us work for the good of all, and especially for those of the family of faith.”

Thank you. Come again. Have a Nice Day.: And as you visit Zimbabwe, in person or with the eyes of your heart, you will be blessed and perhaps hear or see the words, “Thank you. Come again. Have a nice day.”

## **UNITED METHODIST MINISTRIES, MISSOURI RIVER**

by Nathan Morgan

United Methodist Ministries cultivates food security by developing community gardens, creating opportunities to serve, and providing education on issues related to hunger. UMMinistries seeks to fulfill this mission through Volunteers in Mission, the Big Garden and the Blue Flamingo Fair Trade Boutique.

Through our VIM program over 400 youth and adults participated in mission experiences where they engaged in hands on service with

those in need and learned about systemic issues related to hunger and poverty. Volunteers in our mission experience program work in community gardens, fill food pantry baskets and spend time learning about issues such as food insecurity and homelessness. These experiences are eye-opening and often life changing for the young people who engage in them.

Our Big Garden network expanded to 80 garden sites across Nebraska and Kansas. Those gardens produced an average of 1700 pounds of vegetables each or nearly 68 tons of produce across the Big Garden network. Over 90% of our Big Garden sites donate some or all of their produce to local food pantries and homeless shelters. Produce from gardens in our network has provided thousands of meals to low income individuals who might not otherwise have access to fresh vegetables. But produce is only part of the story: Durgha grew up in Bhutan in central Asia. His family and friends were forced to leave and arrived in Omaha as refugees. Their new home was in an apartment complex where there was a murder in the parking lot soon after they arrived. Durgha and his friends were afraid to leave their homes. With the help of the Big Garden, Durgha developed a community garden at the apartment complex. Children and adults work together in the garden, and violence is a thing of the past. Community gardens make neighborhoods safer and reduce hunger.

The Blue Flamingo has transitioned from a thrift store to a Fair Trade Boutique housed in Hanscom Park United Methodist Church. The fair trade merchandise that the Blue Flamingo offers is a way that UMMinistries can be in ministry with farmers and artisans in developing countries around the world. Proceeds from the sale of fair trade merchandise goes to help support our mission experience program.

UMMinistries is proud to be a designated VIM site as well as a UMW National Mission Institution. These designations have deepened our relationships with United Methodist Churches in the new Great Plains Conference. Although our offices are located in Omaha, we are proud to have program sites throughout our new conference. We are grateful for the support of the Great Plains Annual Conference and are excited to be your partner in mission.

## JUSTICE FOR OUR NEIGHBORS OF NEBRASKA

Emiliano Lerda, Esq., Executive Director

Justice For Our Neighbors of Nebraska (JFON-NE) is a faith-driven ministry, welcoming immigrants into our churches and communities by providing free, high quality immigration legal services, education and advocacy. JFON-NE was started by and is affiliated with the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) of the General Board of Global Ministries (GBGM). In 2013, JFON-NE provided immigration legal services to more than 1,000 cases—a 20% increase from 2012. A large percentage of our clients are the most vulnerable in our community, most often women and children who are victims of domestic violence, sexual abuse or other crimes. We also have clients that are seeking help to reunite their families, or to prevent them from breaking apart due to deportation. Additionally, in 2013 we were able to reach out to thousands of people through various educational outreach projects and presentations throughout the State of Nebraska.

Until December 2013 JFON-NE was partially funded through mission shares from the Nebraska Conference. Now it is receiving funds through the 1% mission agency support from local churches across the Great Plains Conference. Without this support we would not be able to fulfill our biblical mission as directed by Matthew 25:35 in the following passage “For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in.”

With headquarters in Omaha, JFON-NE holds monthly immigration legal clinics at:

- Grace United Methodist Church in Omaha
- Latino Center of the Midlands in Omaha
- First United Methodist Church in Columbus
- First United Methodist Church in Lexington (opened in April 2013)
- Heartland Family Service in Council Bluffs, Iowa.
- In April 2014, we trained volunteers for a new clinic at Trinity United Methodist Church in Grand Island, with the first consultations in May.

In addition, in 2013 we partnered with Saint Paul United Methodist Church in Omaha to conduct numerous educational presentations. The monthly clinics are an opportunity for congregations and

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their members and other volunteers to extend hospitality to the immigrants in our communities. Through our ministry volunteers learn about the immigration legal system, understand how to advocate against unjust laws and structures and get to know and welcome the wonderful people who are our new neighbors. Developing and using their gifts in building relationships with the clients and their families our volunteers extend the impact of JFON-Nebraska's work by building a warm and friendly community for immigrants living among us.

We look forward to continuing to grow our program in 2014 to welcome more neighbors to our churches and communities.

**FRIENDSHIP HOUSE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH AND THE HOUSE OF HOPE-OGDEN**

Rev. Diana Chapel, Executive Director

**ABOUT OGDEN FRIENDSHIP HOUSE UMC AND THE HOUSE OF HOPE:**

Ogden Friendship House United Methodist Church and the House of Hope were established by the Kansas East Conference in 1984, to serve a community that lacks basic services and has a high rate of poverty. Over 85% of Ogden residents live in rental housing, many of which are mobile home rentals or substandard properties. There are few opportunities for employment and there is limited public transportation. The town lacks a grocery store, bank, medical care, and retail shopping. The House of Hope provides a food pantry, monthly mobile food pantry, thrift store and emergency financial aid to cover basic necessities. The House of Hope also hosts Alcoholics Anonymous and provides a licensed counselor who does pro bono work for those needing mental health care. The Ogden Friendship House United Methodist Church offers worship, Sunday school and Bible classes, and a twice weekly after school program for at risk children, which is staffed with students from our United Methodist Campus Ministry at Kansas State University.

**THE CHURCH:**

We are growing! We added ten persons to our congregation in 2013, all askings and apportionments have been paid in full (2014), and we have significantly improved our financial support of missions and ministries. We sent over 150 shoebox gifts to Operation Christmas Child and 260 Christmas stockings to deployed soldiers in Afghanistan in December. Our 2013-2014 after school program has nearly twice the number of children participating this year (24).

We are ecumenical! In 2013, we had our inaugural community VBS with the Ogden Bible Church, Ogden Baptist Church and OFHUMC all participating. Over 75 children attended and our 2014 VBS campaign is already in full swing. The success of this partnership encouraged the churches to make quarterly worship services and community dinners a reality. Our spring dinner on March 30 had over 150 in attendance. The meal was provided in conjunction with our church partners and the Kansas State Leadership Class, which Diana serves with as a community partner and mentor. Plans are being made by the churches to offer a monthly meal at the end of the month, as this is seen as a real need in our community.

We are looking good! The church is now 100% landscaped, and is an attractive addition to Ogden's main street. Working with KSU landscape architect department, Job Corps cement and masonry students and many volunteers made this an affordable, win-win project.

**THE HOUSE OF HOPE:**

Scott Archdekin, a student at Manhattan Christian College is our college intern. He is interested in ministry among the poor and is a valuable asset to our program.

We are paid in full! The House of Hope building was paid off in October 2013. We are debt free.

We have more partners! There are more agencies than ever that we share our extra resources- food, clothing, household items. At least eight new agencies were added to the list of our partners, and received some of our 'extras.' These include food pantries, missionaries, social service agencies, military organizations and other non-profits.

We assist! Oct 2012-Sept 2013:

Thrift store clients: 2,107

Food pantry clients: 582

Mobile pantry clients: 4,262

Benevolence fund clients: 20

Gas vouchers: 35

Thrift store financial donations received: \$9,045.31

Ebay financial donations received: \$3,321

**WESLEY HOUSE**

Ellie Foster, Pastor / Exec. Dir.

Wesley House is an outreach ministry of First United Methodist Church in Pittsburg, Kansas. Established in 1982, it has become one of the major agencies in Crawford County that provides services to low-income families in the area. The primary area of service is centered around the Food Pantry that is the primary one for the County – eligible families can receive a supply of food once every 30 days. Crawford County has one of the highest levels of persons living in poverty in the state of Kansas.

One of the major milestones reached at Wesley House in the past year is the addition of a large storage area, complete with walk-in refrigerator and freezer units, and a loading dock. This addition will enable the purchase of larger quantities of food at a greatly reduced rate, thus stretching the donations further than already is done.

Seasonal projects at Wesley House include the Children’s Summer Food Program, which provides extra food to families with children during the weeks when school meals are not readily accessible; the Back to School distribution, which provided around 650 students with the basic school supplies and vouchers for jeans and shoes; the Christmas distribution, which is a joint project with the Salvation Army – assisting approximately 900 families in 2013. Many individuals also participate in the weekly fellowship meals on Thursday evenings.

Wesley House has become one of the first places persons who need assistance go with their questions. Strong relationships have been established with other helping agencies in the area to which many persons are referred for assistance not provided by Wesley House. Many clients have shared that Wesley House is the first place they have felt a sense of hope in desperate situations.

Wesley House receives a tremendous amount of support from the United Methodist Church, from local churches to the Great Plains Conference. In addition, a great deal of support is generated from the community at large.

Wesley House is truly a place where God is present in the staff, as well as the many volunteers that give their time and energy. It is a

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place where people can see the love of God in action and experience God's love through the food that is given and the interaction with the volunteers. God continues to bless the ministry in unexpected ways every day.

**FELLOWSHIP & FAITH MINISTRY, INC.**

by Adrienne Martinez

**Our Vision:**

Provide ministries and services especially for those residing in our community as an expression of Jesus' love.

**Our Mission:**

To serve, help and enrich the lives of the people of our community through the social action and Christian testimony as a visible expression of our faith.

**Who we are:**

We are the United Methodist Church responding to God's call to take care of His people. The Bible teaches us to be Disciples of Christ offering love and good works to others and seeking reconciliation in all aspects of human life; social, physical, emotional, and spiritual. It is our prophetic duty to seek social righteousness, in order to establish a genuine spirituality and it is an expression of our relationship with the Lord, whom we serve.

**Our History:**

The ministry was born in 1959 as a vision of love and Christian testimony of the East Topeka United Methodist Church. In 1974 Fellowship, Inc. was formed and the pastor became a Pastor-Director serving both the Church and Ministry. In 1992, a Board of Directors was formed, and in 2003, the Cabinet separated Fellowship, Inc. from East Topeka UMC, becoming a non-profit organization with their own Executive Director and Staff, coordinating efforts with the other agencies in town.

In July 2006, both ministries Fellowship, Inc. and Puente de Fe were combined in order to form a stronger and more solid ministry, adding to the vision a spiritual ministry formed by a community of faith called: "Fellowship & Faith Ministry, Inc." The strength of this ministry comes from the hard work of our volunteers and from the support of the Topeka District, Kansas East Conference, and United Methodist Church's.

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**Our Ministry Areas:**

• Food Bank • Potato Give Away • Crafting/Mending • Computer Classes • Adult Reading Class • English Classes • Citizenship • Cooking/Nutrition Class • Christmas Distribution • Trunk-or-Treat • Translation Services • Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) • Bi-National Health Fair • Bishop's Roundup for Hunger • Back-to-School Party • Camp Chippewa • C.R.O.P. Hunger Walk

**Our Clientele 12/1/13 – 12/31/13:**

Persons below poverty level in the USA are 14.3% but in Topeka it is 18.9%. A significant number are children or senior citizens, thus too young or too old to work. The USA percentile is 43.6% while in Topeka it is 45.9%.

Gender Percentile:

53% Female,

47% Male

Ethnicity Percentile:

27% Caucasian,

50% Hispanic,

23% Other

**UM OPEN DOOR, INC.**

by Deann Smith, Executive Director

United Methodist Open Door (Open Door) was established in 1965 as United Methodist Urban Ministry of Wichita by a group of clergy and laity of the Kansas West Conference who desired to address the needs of those in the inner city. Today Open Door provides food, clothing and shelter to over 38,000 unduplicated individuals per year, including providing food to elders in rural communities. Below are a few items that are worthy of mention for the past year:

- The agency opened the doors to the Resource and Referral Center just a little over 2 years ago. The center combined some of our key services (free clothing store, administrative offices, and homeless day center) along with offering space to partner agencies in serving the homeless and other very low income people. This year has brought a continued expansion of services through partnerships with other agencies, such as GraceMed Health Clinic, Hunter Health,

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the Salvation Army Veteran Services to Families, KAMU Healthcare Navigator, Sedgwick County Shelter Plus Care housing for disabled homeless, Career Development Office, etc. The center also works closely with the Wichita Police Department's Homeless Outreach Team in assisting persons to receive the services they need to end homelessness.

- After 17 years of successfully serving homeless families through our Transitional Housing, the program was forced to end due to funding priority changes and mandatory funding cuts through the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Though this program is ending, Open Door has submitted a new application to HUD in hopes of funding a new housing program to provide rental assistance and case management to homeless families with children. We are hopeful that we will continue to provide housing to a very vulnerable population.
- In March, Open Door was given approval from the Great Plains Conference to begin a capital campaign to provide a new building for our two food box programs, the Community Food Ministry which serves a food box to 19,000 unduplicated individuals a year and the Commodity Supplemental Food Program that serves approx. 1,700 elders a month in 11 southcentral Kansas counties. The \$2.5 million campaign will allow the agency to replace the overused, too tight, run-down buildings with a much nicer, accessible and efficient building. Our current location is also no longer on the Wichita transit system which limits access for some who need food assistance. The agency will be in the "quiet phase" of the campaign (reaching out to friends of the agency and key donors) until 2015 at which time we will make a public announcement.

Open Door continues to appreciate the strong relationship it has with the Great Plains Annual Conference. The staff provides professional advice and referral recommendations to pastors/ laity who call with a specific need of a person in their congregation or community. We have also meet with church, ministerial and community groups about how they might meet the specialized needs of those in their

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community. We are always happy to share knowledge and support mission ministry wherever and whenever we can.

Open Door is an agency that seeks to share God's hospitality with all that come through its doors while assisting with the basic needs of life. That is accomplished with the strong base we have with the United Methodist Church through prayers, gifts and service for which we are very grateful.

**Retreat Centers****FOREST PARK CONFERENCE & RETREAT CENTER**

by Larry VanWalleghem, Board Chair

Forest Park Conference and Retreat Center has been serving the Topeka area as well as the state of Kansas and the Midwestern region for nearly 100 years. During that period innumerable people have been introduced to Jesus Christ through the ministry of camping. We take our mission statement "... to serve God's people through Christian hospitality in a nature setting." very seriously and endeavor to touch as many lives as possible.

Our clientele has been evolving in recent years and we find that we are deeply involved with the Hispanic population of Kansas. They are our single largest demographic and we have had approximately 20 camps in recent years that have been organized by, and focused on, the Hispanic community. We have developed ties to the local clergy and congregations and find this to be a rewarding as well as challenging niche.

Additionally we are very proud of our United Methodist heritage and continue to be a connectional ministry with the Great Plains Conference. Summer Assembly is the areas longest running UMC camp and has deep roots in the Forest Park facility. Each Summer 150 intergenerational campers meet to learn more about their faith, fellowship, worship and bond with fellow Christians. The evening worship service is typically led by a Kansas UMC pastor and is usually a person with a special calling to serving youth.

Forest Park also endeavors to be a good neighbor in the local community. We host an annual "Science is a Blast" presentation put on by the staff from the Discovery Channel and organized by Steve 'Mr. Wizard' Jacobs who has a long history at the camp. Approximately 250 students and teachers from the local area come and learn about the fun side of science while being surrounded by

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the symbols and settings of the church. This program is extremely well received and is a growing part of the East Topeka experience. Additionally we have hosted the Christian Motorcycle Association, local Boy Scout events, wedding receptions and there is even a baptism scheduled for this Summer. The local police, fire and KBI staff utilize Forest Park for both meetings and training exercises. There is a group that is dedicated to prison ministry that will be using our site as a launching point and given our proximity to the Women's Correctional facility we are hoping to build upon that foundation for future events.

Our ties to the United Methodist Church, and to the Great Plains Conference, are extremely important to not just Forest Park Conference & Retreat Center but to the people we serve. The grounds were originally built to house the Annual Conference of the EUB church and we view our role in the modern church as clearly being part of the UMC flame that ignites the ministry of Jesus Christ. We rely on the Conference for spiritual as well as material support. The askings program is a key part of our survival and any funding that can come from the UMC is vital. As we all know camping is not a self sustaining proposition in Kansas and our connectional relationships help us to survive. In return we provide key ministry programs to the youth of the area by providing a nature based location that is easily accessed and affordable. As stated earlier we also have extremely strong ties to the local Hispanic population which is in many ways an under served population.

We appreciate your concern and may God bless our continued relationship.

**E. South Central Jurisdiction****SOUTH CENTRAL JURISDICTIONAL CONFERENCE**

Dr. David Severe, Executive Director

Plans are well underway for the 2016 Jurisdictional Conference to held July 13-16, 2016 in Wichita, Kansas. The newly formed Great Plains Annual Conference will be our host, under the leadership of Bishop Scott Jones.

Delegates to this conference will be elected as early as this spring in some Conferences, and by all the Annual Conferences by spring

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of 2015. The delegate count to the Jurisdictional Conference will be 216, half lay, half clergy. This is forty fewer delegates than we had in 2012 when the Conference met in Oklahoma City. The reduction is due to two reasons: 1.) The total number of delegates to General Conference was reduced, to keep costs down. 2.) The rapid growth of the church in Africa has produced more Annual Conferences there each, though some are small, get at least one lay and one clergy delegate to the General Conference. So when the cap is reduced and the new Annual Conferences are accounted for, it required a sharp reduction in delegates apportioned to the US Annual Conferences.

The expenses to hold the Jurisdictional Conference come from the apportionment for the SCJ Administration Fund. Out of that annual apportionment of \$323,163, each year \$98,000 is held in reserve to fund the quadrennial meeting.

**LYDIA PATTERSON INSTITUTE**

by Socorro Brito de Anda, President

Lydia Patterson Institute opened its doors for the first time to the school year 1913-14, making 2013-14, the 100<sup>th</sup> session. We celebrate the time passed, and with it we celebrate the thousands of young men and women that have walked our halls. We celebrate the hundreds of young men who began their journey in ministry here and have dedicated their lives to the church. We celebrate the teachers, nurses, engineers, doctors and lawyers and many other professionals whose seeds were planted here. Most importantly, we celebrate Mrs. Lydia Patterson. Unfortunately, Mrs. Patterson lived a rather short life. In that life, she accepted her calling to ministry with the children of South El Paso, and her legacy lives on. Her love and inspiration for the welfare of those in need has lived for 100 years. This is made evident today in the number of teachers, staff members, and administrators who have dedicated their lives to changing those of the students. The incredible dedication of the staff is manifested in their years of service; 12 over 10 years; 5 over 20 years; 6 over 30 years; and Miss Cristina Woo who has served for 42 years. Mrs. Patterson did not know at the time, but her calling made for the calling of thousands of others who followed. She placed the first stone and, in the last one hundred years, a temple was built. In this temple, thousands have worshiped, thousands have been educated, and thousands have made a better life.

Today, the Student Lay Ministry Program is placing interns throughout the country. Some are in seminary and others are already leading churches. Ninety-seven percent of graduates are going to college. The 2013 graduating class received \$1.6 million in scholarships from United Methodist colleges and universities alone. Every student, past and present, begins to change his or her life the moment they step inside the walls of this temple.

The spiritual temple at Lydia Patterson remains intact, but the physical buildings have worn and tired. In preparation for the next 100 years, a capital campaign for renovation and a strategic plan for the latest state of the art technology in the classroom, labs, media and research and spiritual development centers is in place. The new chapel will provide the place where all the students, faculty and staff can worship together, and as a multi-purpose facility, will be shared with our community.

The cities of El Paso and Juarez have joined us in this venture, and have committed to a large portion of this capital campaign. The board of trustees, faculty, and staff has pledged 100%, and the students and alumni are equally dedicated to the success of this campaign. Lastly, we celebrate those who have made and continue to make this ministry, our friends and supporters. They are the foundation of our work. They are our leaders, mentors and inspiration. We have seen their commitment once more as we prepare for the next 100 years. We wish to thank those who have already stepped up and joined us by giving or pledging to the capital campaign. With the love of God, the love and prayers of those in ministry with us, and in memory of Mrs. Lydia Patterson, we will reach our goal and be prepared to carry her legacy for another 100 years.

#### **F. Institutions Beyond the Jurisdiction**

##### **AFRICA UNIVERSITY REPORT**

by James H. Salley, Associate Vice Chancellor for Institutional Advancement

The Great Plains Conference's very generous investment in the Africa University Fund is a God-send that brings miracles to life on our campus every day. We are deeply grateful to local congregations in Kansas West, Kansas East and Nebraska—now united to form the

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new Great Plains Conference—for being consistently supportive and very diligent in giving to the Africa University Fund (AUF).

The university community—students, faculty, staff and trustees, thank you and celebrate your ongoing investment in changing lives for the better. Thank you for helping to shape Africa University as a ministry through which young people discern their call and gifts, and become effective servant leaders.

**Leadership and Service:** In August, three 2013 graduates were commissioned as young adult missionaries by the General Board of Global Ministries, pushing the total number of Africa University alumni serving internationally as mission interns to seven in just two years. Thank you for providing crucial resources for equipping and nurturing global leaders.

“The church has a tremendous role to play in the transformation of the world,” said Jacques Kazemb, an AU graduate and mission intern who worked in outreach to at-risk children and youth in Brazil. “Through a project like the Shade and Fresh Water in Brazil, the Methodist Church is contributing to a positive change in many children’s lives.”

**Student Enrollment:** Sustained by the generosity of local congregations throughout the connection, Africa University’s enrollment grew to 1480 full-time students from 25 African countries in 2013. Females now account for 53% of the student body.

**Scholarships and Financial Aid:** Sacrificial giving by individuals and churches enabled Africa University to distribute more than \$1.8 million in scholarships and financial aid to its students. The university launched the Girl Child Scholarship Fund in order to assist more African women in accessing higher education. Through a new initiative to increase financial contributions from its alumni and others in Africa, the institution is working towards greater sustainability.

**Disciple-Making:** More than 450 students were awarded degree certificates in June 2013. There are close to 5,000 Africa University graduates currently at work in communities across sub-Saharan Africa and beyond. Every day, these graduates manifest the promise and

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power of the Gospel to bring light and hope to a troubled world. They are health workers, teachers, pastors, agriculturalists, peace-makers, business professionals and more—whose contributions are the substance of a future with hope.

You are moving forward together in the Great Plains Conference with a wonderful legacy of giving, so an investment of 100% or higher in the Africa University Fund in 2014 is definitely within your reach. In 2013, Nebraska invested 99.82% of its asking in the AUF, falling short of 100% by a mere \$40. Both Kansas East and Kansas West ended 2013 with shortfalls in giving to the AUF--\$4,060 and \$2,158 respectively. However, Kansas West invested 100% of its asking to the AUF in 2009 and 2012.

**In celebration of its 99.82% showing as a last effort for the AUF, Africa University is presenting the Nebraska Conference with a “100% Thank You” banner for 2013. The university is relying on you all, as members of the Great Plains Conference, to maintain your commitment to this visionary effort. We are counting on your generosity and prayers.**

- Please set a 100% investment in the AUF as your goal for 2014.
- Encourage your local church to go that second mile and become an annual scholarship donor.
- Consider leading an effort to have your district set up an endowed scholarship which can support one student a year in perpetuity.
- Take advantage of our new [Dream Insurance](#) program, which allows individuals to donate all or a portion of the proceeds of an affordable Term Life Insurance plan to Africa University.
- Remember to include Africa University in your will.
- Please pray without ceasing for the ongoing success of this important effort to equip disciples to contribute to a rich, impactful and vibrant future for their nations and for our global church.

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Together, we are changing Africa: Learning here. Living here. Leading here. Serving God. All the time. Everywhere.

**BOSTON UNIVERSITY**

by Mary Elizabeth Moore, Dean

Greetings in the Spirit of Jesus Christ! Thank you for your prayers and support for United Methodist theological education. This has been a bountiful year for Boston University School of Theology, beginning with the arrival of a passionate community of students from 35 states and 16 countries. The year has had many highlights.

**BREAKING NEWS:**

- **Doctor of Ministry:** The School has unfolded a new Doctor of Ministry program designed to enrich church leaders in traditional and non-traditional settings and to deepen their theological understanding and commitment to the practice of ministry. The DMin focuses on transformational leadership. It includes four intensive seminars on campus in August and January, a series of online courses, and opportunities for students to work closely with faculty as they research their own unique questions and visions.
- **Community Center:** The School's renovated Community Center has become a favorite gathering space – sustainable, hospitable, and accessible. It is the welcoming home for weekly community lunches, study, conversation, play, seminars, retreats, and parties.
- **Religion and Conflict Transformation (RCT) Clinic:** The RCT Clinic sponsors projects to address conflict in congregations, interfaith peacebuilding, restorative justice, and mediation.
- **Expanded Scholarship Options:** The School has expanded its scholarship options to include full tuition scholarships for UMC certified candidates for ordained ministry, African American Thurman scholars, Latino/a Raices scholars, and School of the Prophets scholars.

**DEEPENING SPIRITUAL LIFE:** The community enhances spiritual growth in many ways.

- **Building intentional living communities:** The School

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sponsors and helps support Theology House, Green House, and Beane House of Study, where students live with intentional and communal practices.

- Enhancing spiritual life through weekly worship, reading retreats, winter retreat, daily morning prayer, and small groups.
- Offering spiritual journeys, including the Vocations Vacation to ministry and service sites and the Seminary Singers tour to local churches.

**ENGAGING THE WORLD:** BU School of Theology students and faculty have traveled and served extensively in the world during the past year:

- **Giving** hundreds of volunteer hours across the Boston region, U.S. and world in church camps, homeless shelters, peace organizations, global United Methodist programs, and other settings.
- **Traveling** in study groups to Turkey (Ephesus), Israel & Palestine, Cuba, rural and urban ministry sites, and churches and service organizations across the US.
- **Sponsoring** conferences on global Christianity and the Dictionary of African Christian Biography
- **Serving** in local churches and community agencies in contextual education placements, courses, and special internships.

**PONDERING CRITICAL ISSUES:** The School's annual theme was "Free at Last," to honor Martin Luther King, Jr. and his immortal "I Have a Dream" speech. The community engaged in urgent questions regarding race, sexual orientation and gender identity, and poverty, creating open and respectful spaces to discuss themes that are important to, and controversial in, the church and larger society. The ministry of the Boston University School of Theology is to partner with you in serving the church and in caring for the larger human family and God's precious creation.

**CANDLER SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY**

by Jan Love, Dean and Professor of Christianity and World Politics

**Candler School of Theology** prepares real people to make a real difference in the real world. Our commitment to authentic discipleship and relevant ministry enables us to develop uniquely well-rounded leaders who are challenged academically, encouraged spiritually, and immersed in Christian service from the first day they arrive on campus.

As one of the 13 official seminaries of The United Methodist Church, Candler is grounded in the Christian faith and shaped by the Wesleyan tradition. As one of seven graduate professional schools of Emory University, Candler provides a rich context for learning and formation supported by the extensive resources of a top-tier research university. As a school located in the metropolitan area of Atlanta, Candler offers a learning environment that reflects the highly diverse communities of our 21st century world. There is no better place for ministry preparation that addresses our major denominational priorities: developing leaders, starting and growing churches, ministry with the poor, and improving global health.

Candler celebrates its Centennial in 2014, marking our 100th anniversary with commemorative events that reflect on our past and a conference on theology and the church that envisions the future. The yearlong celebration begins in August with the opening of the second phase of Candler's new 128,600-square-foot, LEED-certified building, seven years in the making.

Not only is Candler expanding its physical space this year—it is expanding degree offerings as well. In response to the changing needs of the church, Candler is introducing five new degrees to equip Christian leaders: the Doctor of Ministry, the Master of Religious Leadership, the Master of Religion and Public Life, and two dual degrees pairing divinity and social work and divinity and development practice. With these newest additions to our degree programs, Candler graduates truly will be ready to lead wherever God calls.

Candler's student body reflects the diversity and breadth of the Christian faithful. Our enrollment stands at 441, with 340 seeking the Master of Divinity, 47 the Master of Theological Studies, 21 the Master of Theology, 15 the Doctor of Theology, and 18 enrolled as Non-Degree students. The student population is 32 percent U.S. ethnic minority, 49 percent women, and the median age of the

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entering class is 27. Students represent 39 denominations, with half identifying as United Methodist.

We continue to emphasize preparing our students for leadership in an increasingly global context, and now offer 14 academic exchanges with theology schools in 12 countries across five continents. In addition, Candler has an ongoing summer internship program with the Methodist Church in the Bahamas, and participates each year in travel seminars to the Middle East and in World Methodist Evangelism Institute evangelism seminars, traveling in 2014 to Nigeria, Costa Rica, and Brazil.

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

**GARRETT-EVANGELICAL THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY**

by Lallene J. Rector, President

Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary continues its commitment to develop and nurture skilled, bold and articulate leaders for the church, the academy and the world. Since our founding 161 years ago, we have articulated and lived our core purpose: to know God in Christ and, through preparing spiritual leaders, help others know God in Christ.

Last fall, we welcomed 171 new students, bringing the fall Master of Divinity enrollment to 399. The gender/ethnic profile is: 51% female; 55% white; 20% Black; 5% Asian; 3% Hispanic/Latino/a. Fourteen percent of the student body is international. Thirty-five denominations, four continents, thirteen countries and thirty-three states are represented in the student body.

Seventy-percent of the students in all degree programs are United Methodist. Currently, 2 students from the Kansas East Annual Conference are enrolled in the various degree programs at the seminary.

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Garrett-Evangelical is committed to making seminary education affordable, and easing the financial stress on students. This academic year, the seminary awarded over 2.5 million dollars in financial aid, offered numerous federal work-study positions, and assisted with paid internship opportunities in diverse settings through field education.

In fall 2014, Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary begins a guaranteed tuition rate initiative for master's level students. Students are guaranteed the same tuition rate for two or three years, depending on the program in which they enroll. Tuition rates for new Master of Divinity students will be guaranteed through the Summer 2017 Term. Tuition rates for new Master of Arts or Master of Theological Studies students will be guaranteed through Summer 2016 Term. This initiative is yet another step in insuring students enter the world of ministry with as little student debt as possible.

Last September, the seminary celebrated the establishment of the fully-endowed Rueben P. Job Chair of Spiritual Formation. At the same time, we installed Dr. Frederick W. Schmidt as the Rueben P. Job Associate Professor of Spiritual Formation. Garrett-Evangelical is the first among Protestant seminaries in the United States to have a fully funded chair in spiritual formation.

Several initiatives to support clergy and lay education are under way. During the spring semester, fifteen academic classes were offered in an online format, some with a continuing education option. Among the options are:

- *Plus*, a first-of-its-kind cooperative executive education program of Garrett-Evangelical and Northwestern University's Kellogg School of Management, involving two-years of seminars led by experts in non-profit and church leadership for professionals in ministry;
- *Intersection*, an online continuing education opportunity, incorporating readings, online presentations by seminary faculty, and reflection on contemporary issues of life and ministry. Topics range from theology, biblical interpretation, and church history to ethics and the church in society. Continuing education credit is available. Additional information is available at <http://www.garrett.edu/intersection>.

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- A *Doctor of Ministry* program offering five tracks of study: Congregational Leadership; African American Congregational Leadership; Spiritual Direction; and Mission in the Contemporary United States; and the Association of Chicago Theological School's (ACTS) D.Min. program in preaching.

In the coming months, Garrett-Evangelical will roll out new programs online, in Evanston, in congregational settings, and on the campuses of select United Methodist-related colleges.

On January 1, 2014, I became president of Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary. I am grateful for the opportunity to serve the seminary and the church in this capacity. Garrett-Evangelical is blessed with a great heritage and a strong future. Please let us know if there are ways we can work with you as we continue to seek to be a seminary for the church and the world. Thank you for your prayers and support.

**UNITED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY**

By Wendy J. Deichmann, President

Is God calling you or someone you know to the ministry of Jesus Christ? If so, we invite you to explore how United can assist you in fulfilling God's purposes for your life and how you can help others in this journey. Come and check us out in person or online at [www.united.edu](http://www.united.edu)!

United is one of the fastest growing, accredited seminaries in North America. Why are Christian disciples and leaders signing up for our traditional and online programs? They are doing so because United is committed to teaching the Bible and the historic Christian faith, cultivating spiritual formation for personal and social holiness, and renewing the Church for the mission of Jesus Christ in the world. What could be more important or exciting?

In addition to expanding our service in the Midwestern US, United will continue to enhance its use of technology to deliver theological education in underserved regions in North America and beyond. United's hybrid/online UMC FLEX Master of Divinity degree was designed specifically to meet the requirements of the UMC for ordination and it is accessible anywhere with good Internet service. Our hybrid/online UM Course of Study is expanding each semester, along with UM Certification offerings.

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What's new at United? Three new professors joined our excellent team of faculty in 2012 and a search is underway for yet another. United and Aldersgate Renewal Ministries have developed a new partnership, and we have piloted a new certification program focused upon ministries with persons with disabilities. Each year, United's doctoral program adds new mentors and focus groups for advanced ministry study.

Please let us know if you have questions about how we can best assist you or, if you would like to help make it possible for an American or international student to study at United.

Enrollment at United continues to grow, and we invite you to call or visit soon!

For more information, please contact [admissions@united.edu](mailto:admissions@united.edu). Thank you for your prayers, partnership, service and support in the ministry of Jesus Christ!

**WESLEY THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, Washington, DC**

by David McAllister-Wilson, President

The past year has brought many blessings, change and growth to Wesley Theological Seminary. We continue to focus our work on preparing our students for leading churches that go out into the world and moving people to live the Great Commandment and Great Commission. Here are a few of the newest developments at Wesley:

- The Rev. Dr. **Robert K. Martin** joined the seminary as Dean and Professor of Christian Formation and Leadership.
- The Rev. Dr. **F. Douglas Powe** joined Wesley as the James C. Logan Professor of Evangelism and Urban Ministry. He directs the Urban Ministry program and Course of Study. **Paul Kang-Kul Cho** is serving as assistant professor of Hebrew Bible. The Rev. Dr. **Doug Tzan** is now teaching Church History part-time and is mentor to United Methodist students.
- **Mike McCurry** (former press secretary in the Clinton presidency) has been named Distinguished Professor of Public Theology and co-director of the National Capital Semester for Seminarians. The Rev. Dr. **H. Beecher Hicks**,

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senior minister of Metropolitan Baptist Church in Largo, Maryland, will serve as Distinguished Visiting Professor of Homiletics. With support from Lilly Endowment Inc., the Rev. Dr. **James P. Wind** (former president of the Alban Institute) has joined the faculty as Visiting Distinguished Professor. He joins our faculty for three years to lead a research project studying large congregations and the leadership they and their pastors wield in church and society.

- Lilly Endowment Inc. awarded Wesley a grant to research and develop a program to strengthen United Methodist elders' and future elders' financial literacy and financial-management skills.
- The Lewis Center for Church Leadership celebrated ten years of offering resources to help congregations reach more people and fund their ministry. See [www.ChurchLeadership.com](http://www.ChurchLeadership.com).
- Our Heal the Sick Initiative has graduated its inaugural classes for the Health Minister certificate and the Faith Community Nurse Certificate. The initiative is a unique program at Wesley to help congregations become involved in public health initiatives in their parish, part of our Center for the Missional Church.
- Lewis Center director the Rev. Dr. **Lovett Weems** and Wesley Board of Governors Chairman the Rev. **Tom Berlin** released the book *Overflow: Increase Worship Attendance & Bear More Fruit*.
- Completed construction of a new, LEED-certified residence hall.
- Now offers course auditing for \$100 per credit hour and CEUs for \$100 per unit.
- Five pastors from Beijing, China, joined us for the spring semester in a special program of study through the work of the Rev. Dr. **Kyunglim Shin Lee**, Vice President of International Relations.
- Wesley was named to Faith3.org's list, Seminaries that Change the World. This list was announced in the Huffington

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Post on November 12, 2013. One of the several reasons for the attribute was Wesley's Center for the Missional Church, which is headquartered at Wesley Downtown, in the heart of Washington, D.C.

Please be in prayer for Wesley Theological Seminary. We cannot do our ministry alone, and your participation with us in the greater mission of God enhances us mightily. We are striving to provide you with the kinds of educational opportunities that will take your ministry to the next level. In turn, we depend upon your participation in and in and contribution to our ministry as well. So, pray for us often, avail yourself of the school's offerings, give to Wesley, and identify and send us persons who are called and who have a high capacity for fruitful ministry.

**G. Miscellaneous****GREAT PLAINS UNITED METHODIST RURAL ADVOCATE (GPUMRA)**

by Russell Fincham, President

Formerly known as the Kansas Area United Methodist Rural Fellowship, we are now the Great Plains United Methodist Rural Advocate (GPUMRA). Besides name, there have been several significant changes in our organization. We have expanded our Executive Committee membership to eleven which includes members from Nebraska. The last word of our name has changed from "Fellowship" to "Advocate" which signals our greater focus upon being an advocate for the small and rural United Methodist Church in any way we can. The other major change in GPUMRA is the inclusion of an Advisory Council. We are particularly excited about this component. Our goal is to have two representatives from each district in the conference. Basically they will enable a two-way communication between the small and rural churches of their district and the Executive Committee. Each Advisory Council member or district team will have three tasks. Those are:

1. Be aware of what is going on in their district small and rural churches. This would becoming aware of areas of challenge or struggle and also stories of what successes churches are having.

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2. Communicate to the Advisory Council or Executive Committee those concern or needs of the small or rural churches in their district
3. Communicate to the district small and rural churches relevant information coming from the Executive Committee and Advisory Council.

In August of each year we will have a Gathering Celebration of the Advisory Council, Executive Committee plus all members of GPUMRA who can attend. Then we will worship, celebrate our ministries, hear reports and make decisions about ways we see the GPUMRA might be a supportive advocate for the small and rural church of conference or send recommendations to the National UMRA for possible consideration at General Conference. Our gathering celebration this year will be at Kearney, NE on August 15 and 16.

In conclusion, we invite all UM members of small and rural churches to become a member and part of GPUMRA. The \$10 membership fee is what supports the work we do but your membership lets us keep you informed by newsletter what is happening with GPUMRA and also the National UMRA. Plus, you have an invitation to join us at the yearly Celebration. If interested or if you want more information, contact Ron Williams. His address is 3839 Foxridge Dr., Manhattan, KS 66502-8934. His phone number is (785)587-4122.