

REPORTS

ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

Commission on Archives and History

Lona Dearthmont, Chair

The Great Plains Annual Conference owns and maintains archival collections at two facilities and provides funding for two half-time archivists. Christy Hyman is director of the Nebraska United Methodist Historical Center/Archives at Nebraska Wesleyan University. Sara DeCaro is archivist of the Kansas United Methodist Archives at Baker University.

The upgrade project in the Kansas United Methodist Archives, located in Collins Library, was completed and an open house was held October 27. The project, financed by a donation from the Rev. Leon and Catherine Hayen of Topeka, included planning, purchase and installation of highly efficient cantilevered and compact shelving units.

A Methodist intern, Melinda Rittgers, was hired. A Kansas Heritage Grant was awarded to the Great Plains Conference to digitize and publish membership records (older than 75 years) for online genealogical research. Sara DeCaro is the project director. Cherise New was hired as a digitization assistant.

In September 2016, Christy Hyman was hired as director of the Nebraska United Methodist Historical Center/Archives, located in Cochrane-Woods Library. She takes over for Karrie Dvorak, who resigned for family reasons in March 2016.

The archivists fielded well over one hundred requests for research, and also hosted dozens of in-person visitors and researchers. In the meantime, they steadily process incoming records that are being added to the collections.

The following ten churches, founded in 1866, were recognized on the floor of annual conference for celebrating 150 years of ministry in 2016:

Hopewell United Methodist Church, Sterling, Nebraska (Blue River District)

Centenary United Methodist Church, Lawrence, Kansas (Five Rivers District)

First United Methodist Church, Ottawa Kansas (Five Rivers District)

GREAT PLAINS CONFERENCE**Reports**

Louisville United Methodist Church, Louisville, Kansas (Flint Hills District)

Marysville United Methodist Church, Marysville, Kansas (Flint Hills District)

Easton United Methodist Church, Easton, Kansas (Kansas City District)

Mentor United Methodist Church, Mentor, Kansas (Salina District)

Clarks United Methodist Church, Clarks, Nebraska (Prairie Rivers District)

Valley Falls United Methodist Church, Valley Falls, Kansas (Topeka District)

Camp Creek United Methodist Church, Cummings, Kansas (Topeka District)

The following seven churches, founded in 1891, were recognized with certificates celebrating 125 years of ministry in 2016:

St. Luke United Methodist Church, Lincoln, Nebraska (Blue River District)

Hershey United Methodist Church, Hershey, Nebraska (Great West District)

Mullen United Methodist Church, Mullen, Nebraska (Great West District)

Lansing Crossroads United Methodist Church, Lansing, Kansas (Kansas City District)

Giltner United Methodist Church, Giltner, Nebraska (Prairie Rivers District)

Agenda United Methodist Church, Agenda, Kansas (Salina District)

Industry United Methodist Church, Industry, Kansas (Salina District)

The following three churches, founded in 1916, were recognized with certificates celebrating 100 years of ministry in 2016:

Hollinger United Methodist Church, Oxford, Nebraska (Gateway District)

Trousdale United Methodist Church, Trousdale, Kansas (Hutchinson District)

First United Methodist Church, Louisville, Nebraska (Missouri River District)

Personnel Committee

Craig Hauschild, Chair

Since the inception of the Great Plains Conference, the Personnel Committee has continually worked to clarify and strengthen policies

and procedures related to our 75 employees. This work is to protect Great Plains but also lend support to our employees and families. Two states with different employment laws is challenging. The voting members of the Personnel Committee are grateful for the expert staff leadership that helps guide these processes including Gary Beach, Scott Brewer, Carol Fusaro, and Nancy Lambert.

The Mission Alignment Team, a task force of the Connecting Council, brought forward the need to do a staffing alignment review. After three years, the question confronts us: "Is the Great Plains Conference staffed at the optimal level and with the right positions to make great churches, great leaders and great disciples for Jesus Christ leading to the transformation of the world?"

The decision was reached to hire an outside consultant to review our current alignment and study where we are in creating a new culture for the Great Plains Conference. Rev. Dr. John Wimberly, of Congregational Consulting Group was hired. John served congregations for 38 years, thirty of those years at Western Presbyterian Church in Washington, DC. John's quest for continuing personal, spiritual and professional growth led him to complete a PhD in systematic theology and an Executive MBA program. The latter program generated a sense of call to highlight the need for good business practices in the business side of a congregation's life. He wrote and leads seminars on his highly praised book, *The Business of the Church: The Uncomfortable Truth that Faithful Ministry Requires Effective Management*. He consults with congregations on issues such as the creation and implementation of strategic plans, congregational growth and the empowering use of endowments.

A special planning team joined the Personnel Committee in reviewing and sending suggestions to Dr. Wimberly as the report was prepared. Craig Hauschild, chair of personnel, traveled with Dr. Wimberly and sat in on most of the interviews and focus groups. He worked in providing direct feedback and editing. Darrell Stock, member of the Mission Alignment team, worked alongside Bishop Saenz and Craig, to make suggestions and establish the groundwork for the consultants work. Other team members included: Sara Boatman, Bob Cox, Mary Brooks, David Livingston, Laura Gregory, Jeff Slater, Chris Jorgenson, Bill Gepford and Emily Spearman-Cannon.

Part of the responsibilities of the Personnel Committee is to bring to the annual conference a **minimum compensation for clergy**. For 2018, we propose a 2 percent increase. The recommendation is:

GREAT PLAINS CONFERENCE**Reports**

Status	2018
Full-Time Local Pastor	\$36,156
Associate Member	\$38,496
Provisional Member	\$40,836
Full Member	\$43,176

A second recommendation is to discontinue the use of the salary formula to figure district superintendent and director salaries each year. A specialized formula was put into place to slowly bring equity to salaries after unification of the three conferences. The formula has served its purpose and equity has now been reached. In its place, the Personnel Committee proposes basing salary increases as it does for all other staff of the conference including, but not limited to, cost of living adjustments.

Board of Pension and Health Benefits

Kelly Williams, chair

Kelly Williams serves as chair and Janet Claassen, secretary.

The Board consists of six laity, one retired clergy member and five active clergy members. Ex-officio members include the Conference Treasurer, Rev. Gary Beach, the Sr. 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 Wespeth Benefits and Investments for the investment of our discretionary funds until such time the Investment Committee deems it necessary to move the funds.

The following represents benefits and other programs managed and reviewed annually by the board:

- **Health Insurance/Health Insurance Allowance**
 October 20, 2014 the annual conference voted to end the clergy health insurance plan and replace it with a health insurance allowance. The board did not believe it was fiscally wise for the clergy serving the local churches or the local churches of the Great Plains Annual Conference to return to group health insurance for the clergy member. At that time

Reports

it was decided to move to a health insurance allowance and allow the clergy members to go to the exchange to purchase their own insurance.

The board has continued to send out an annual survey in order to get feed-back from clergy members on how well that amount was working for them and their family. Included in that survey were questions in regards to ease of securing coverage and what method was used to purchase the coverage.

In the fall of 2016 open enrollment for the market place found 2017 premium rates with drastic high increases in the premiums, along with insurance providers no longer offering coverage through the exchange.

The board and staff heard concerns about the increases in premiums, along with the frustrations of finding a coverage that was adequate enough to meet the needs of the member and the family. The board listened to those concerns and made the decision to once again to look at group health insurance.

The board had Lockton secure bids on a group health plan to include clergy members serving a local church at three-quarter time and full-time. They were able to secure bids from four insurance providers.

Bids were also received from Wespeth/HealthFlex. Wespeth/HealthFlex offers six different level of coverages through their private exchange.

The survey results from this year indicate that there were members that were satisfied with the health insurance allowance and securing their own coverage through whatever method they chose.

Keeping the concerns of those that saw their rates go up and hearing that some were satisfied with the status quo the board is presenting two options to choose from.

1. Group employer health plan through Blue Cross Blue Shield (BCBS) of Kansas.
2. Status quo with increasing the health insurance allowance to \$15,850.

GREAT PLAINS CONFERENCE**Reports**

The BCBS plan will offer two different coverages: the standard PPO and a high deductible health plan (HDHP). The PPO plan has a \$1,000 deductible for single and \$2,000 deductible for family. The HDHP has a \$3,000 deductible for single and \$6,000 deductible for family.

Based on salary the clergy share of the PPO is as follows:

4%	single
5.5%	single + 1
7%	family

Based on salary the clergy share of the HDHP is as follows:

3%	single
4.5%	single + 1
6%	family

Local church share would be \$15,850 for all $\frac{3}{4}$ time and full-time appointments even if the clergy member waives coverage.

If the decision is made to continue with the status quo, the health insurance allowance would be \$15,850. Because of a law passed at the end of 2016 (and the regulations for that law issued in March 2017) it will now be possible in the future to tax shelter a portion of the healthcare allowance. Limits on that will vary year to year but currently indicate a single person might be able to tax shelter about \$5,000 of the allowance and a family of two or more might be able to tax shelter about \$10,000 of the allowance. To take advantage of this each church/charge will have to set up a Qualified HRA. If conference chooses to maintain the system of a healthcare allowance the conference will make sure education/training is available to enable clergy and churches to take advantage of this opportunity.

The \$15,850 was arrived by calculating what was needed to fund the group employer health plan and the fact that the numbers we received last year on the average rate in each district couldn't be compared to what we received this year.

Since the Board felt that some increase was needed in the health insurance allowance and that the amount was kept at the same level for three years the \$15,850 was an appropriate amount should the decision result in remaining with the status quo.

Reports

- **Past Service Rate (PSR)**

The past service rate is a defined benefit based upon years of service through December 31, 1981. This is the rate received by those that have vested years of service in the Pre-82 Pension Plan.

The board set a projected goal of an annual increase of 2% or COLA which is reflected in the Comprehensive Funding Plan.

2017 PSR is \$759.00. An increase of 2 percent (\$16.00) for 2018 would bring the PSR up to \$775.00. Any increases to the annuity PSR shall be funded immediately in the year in which the increase occurs.

- **Contingent Annuitant Percentage (CAP)**

The CAP is the rate of pension that surviving spouses shall receive from the Pre-82 Pension Plan.

The current rate is 85 percent for the former Nebraska and Kansas East conferences, and the rate for the former Kansas West conference is at 100 percent.

The Board set the goal of reviewing the rates annually with the possibility of moving the rate to 100 percent sometime in the future.

The current funding level in the Pre-82 Pension Plan will not allow for an increase at this time.

- **Retirement Benefits/Funding Percentage/Use of Reserves**

The Conference has an over-funded position in the Pre-82 Pension Plan and substantial pension reserves. In the past the board has used the over-funding and reserves to reduce the overall cost of the pension benefits to the local churches. The over-funding of the Pre-82 Pension Plan is used first with the pension reserves as a backup if needed.

The over-funding in the Pre-82 Pension Plan has been used while maintaining a funding balance in excess of 120 percent.

Recommendation for the 2018 local church funding is as follows:

GREAT PLAINS CONFERENCE

Reports

	2017	2018
CPP death and disability	3%	3%
CRSP defined contributions	3%	3%
CRSP defined benefit	2%	2%
Total	8%	8%

Full-funding for the clergy pension plan and CPP is 15.2 percent. The difference between what local churches pay (8 percent) and the full-funding cost (15.2 percent) is subsidized by the Conference Board of Pension and Health Benefits

Those members serving 25 percent the local churches will fund 10 percent into the members UMPIP account. The 2 percent balance required will be funded from the Pre-82 Pension Plan over-funding and then out of the pension reserves if needed.

- **Funding Percentage**

The board's funding level for the Pre-82 Pension Plan is not to be reduced below 120 percent.

- **Special Pension Grants**

1. 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 percent).
2. Kathy Kirkus, dependent daughter of Eldo Kirkus, clergyperson of the former Nebraska Conference (25 percent of pension rate times years of service of father).

- **Incapacity Leave Health Care Allowance**

Effective January 1, 2017 those receiving CPP medical leave benefits will receive a health care allowance with the following schedule:

- First 24 months the health care allowance will be \$14,232 annually.
- After the first 24 months payments for the clergyperson will be \$300.00 monthly, along with \$300.00 monthly for the spouse (3 yr. term) and \$300.00 monthly for dependents until the age of 26 (3 yr. term). After the completion of 3 years the allowance will be discontinued for the spouse and any eligible dependents.

- **Comprehensive Protection Plan (CPP)**

Effective January 1, 2017 eligibility is as follows:

 - All three-quarter time ordained pastors, all three-quarter time student local pastors and all three-quarter time local pastors will be covered by the CPP. Costs to the local church are 3 percent of plan compensation.
 - Ordained clergy members serving one-half time will receive benefits through UMLife Options with the actual cost being paid by the local church.

- **Virgin Pulse Health Miles**

This program is available to active clergypersons serving three-quarter time or more along with the spouse, retired clergypersons/spouse, and the conference lay staff/spouse. The participant can earn actual dollars by completing their activity goals.

- **Short-term Disability**

Short-term disability funding is available to assist member churches in the event a full-time or part-time (1/2 time or more) clergy or District Superintendent Assignment (DA) is unable to perform the duties of their appointment due to a documented medical disability when the period of the clergy or DA's absence exceeds 30 days but is anticipated to be less than 180 days. A statement from the treating physician with the estimated duration of absence is required.

The local church is required to submit monthly statements to the Sr. CBO that documents the name of the interim pastor, dates served and amounts paid. The board funded three short-term disability requests.

- **Retiree Health Insurance**

The conference partners with One Exchange through Wespeth Benefits and Investments, for Retiree Health Insurance. One Exchange is an exchange that will assist each retiree in selecting the private Medicare plan that best meets their medical needs and budget.

Nebraska retirees retiring through 2019 that meet the eligibility requirements will receive a reimbursement account (HRA) providing they use One Exchange in securing their coverage. The coverage must continue through One Exchange in order for the HRA to be available. Securing coverage outside One Exchange will cancel the HRA and it can't be re-instated.

An annual Retiree Health Valuation is required by Wespeth Benefits and Investments.

GREAT PLAINS CONFERENCE
Reports

- **Farmer Fund Emergency Grants**

A request for assistance from the Farmer Fund Grant Program (Program) is made through the board on an application form provided by Wespeth Benefits and Investments. Distressed clergy members or former clergy members of the annual conference, their spouses, former spouses, former surviving spouses; or surviving dependent children (including adult dependent children) are eligible to apply for a grant. An application for benefits requires the member to substantiate financial resources by completing the income and expenditures statement. Maximum available through the grant is \$4,000.00. The clergy member can only receive one grant per calendar year.
A statement of approval/acknowledgement of circumstances is required by the district superintendent.
Written guidelines and applications are available from the benefits department.
The board received one Farmer Fund Grant request and it was approved.
- **Crouse Fund Grants**

Crouse Fund Grants are submitted to the cabinet by the district superintendent (DS) for approval once the DS has determined the need. Funds can only be used for medical expenses after insurance.
Maximum available through the grant is \$3,000.00
Written guidelines are available from the benefits department.
The cabinet received two Crouse Fund Grant requests and they were approved.
- **Use of Reserves**

Upon a request from the Mission Alignment team the board continues to draw 5 percent of pension-designated reserves to help pay for Conference Staff benefits.
The board established a 5 percent fund spending of the pension reserves to be utilized to offset conference staff benefit cost, with health insurance benefits coming from the share of unrestricted funds.
- **Life Insurance**

We continue to offer affordable voluntary life insurance. This benefit is available to clergy members and conference lay staff members who work at least 30 hours per week. The benefits can be portable when employees terminate.

- **Vision and Dental**
We continue to offer affordable vision and dental insurance. This benefit is available to clergy members and conference lay staff members who work at least 30 hours per week. These benefits are optional coverage's and the costs are to be paid by the participant on a pre-tax basis.
- **Critical Illness and Accident**
These optional benefit coverages are available for clergy members and conference lay staff members who work at least 30 hours per week.
- **Lockton Consultant Services**
The board continues a contractual relationship with Lockton. As our broker we are provided updates/reporting requirements in regards to the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and Lockton conducts the bidding processes on all of the benefits made available to conference members and staff. Lockton also provides a variety of training webcasts and meetings.
- **2018 Comprehensive Funding Plan**
The board is required to submit a comprehensive funding plan each year to Wespath Benefits and Investments.
- **Housing Resolution**
In order to meet Federal Guidelines an annual housing resolution must be approved at annual conference and printed in the journal.

Items for Action, Petitions and Resolutions

The following are the recommendations of the Board of Pension and Health Benefits of the Great Plains Conference of the United Methodist Church for 2018:

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

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

GREAT PLAINS CONFERENCE**Reports**

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 clergy persons 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 percent of the pension, severance or disability payments received from plans authorized under The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist (the Discipline), which includes all such payments from Wespath Benefits and Investments, during the period January 1, 2018 through December 31, 2018 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 plan, annuities, of funds authorized under the Discipline, including such payments from Wespath Benefits and Investments and from a commercial annuity company that provides an annuity arising from benefits accrued under a Wespath Benefits and Investments 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 contributions to or accrue a benefit under, such a plan, annuity or fund for such an active, a retired, a terminated or a disabled clergyperson'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 clergyperson'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 clergyperson'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 clergyperson 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 clergyperson or former clergyperson 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.

2. Clergy Retirement Security Program (CRSP) Funding

- Use the Pre-82 Pension Plan over-funding to fund the 2017 and 2018 CRSP-DB portion while maintaining a minimum funding level of 120 percent. While maintaining a minimum funding level of 120 percent, use the Pre-82 Pension over-funding to fund the 2017 and 2018 UMPIP contributions needed (2 percent) to bring the amount up to the funding level of those serving 25 percent.
- Maintain the CRSP defined benefit (CRSP-DB) contribution funding at 2 percent of compensation.
- Maintain the CRSP defined contribution (CRSP-DC) funding and CPP funding at 3 percent of compensation for each.
- Maximum total contribution for pension and CPP at the local church level will be 8 percent for 2018 with the understanding that it may be increased in future years. Full-funding is currently 15.2 percent. The difference between what local churches pay (8 percent) and the

GREAT PLAINS CONFERENCE

Reports

full-funding (15.2 percent) is subsidized by the Conference Board of Pension and Health Benefits.

- The Pre-82 Pension Plan spousal benefit (CAP) shall remain at the current level of 85 percent for (former) Nebraska and Kansas East and 100 percent for (former) Kansas West. This will be reviewed annually with the goal to increase it to 100 percent across the board when over-funding permits that change.

3. **Past Service Rate**

Continue the PSR increases at or near the level of 2 percent or COLA. 2018 PSR will be increased to \$775.00, a 2 percent increase. Any increases to the PSR is required by Wespath to be funded immediately in the year in which the increase occurs.

4. **Funding Level**

A minimum funding level of 120 percent is to be maintained to protect the Pre-82 Pension Plan commitment.

5. **Special Pension Grants**

Continue to provide Special Pension Grants 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 percent).
- Kathy Kirkus, dependent daughter of Eldo Kirkus, clergyperson of the former Nebraska Conference (25 percent of pension rate times years of service of father).

6. **2018 Comprehensive Funding Plan** Prepared by Wespath.

7. **Health Insurance/Health Insurance Allowance**

1. Select group employer health plan through BCBS. Or....
2. Remain with the status quo with the health insurance allowance.

2018 Comprehensive Benefit Funding Plan

Introduction

The 2016 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 Wespath Benefits and Investments (Wespath) for review and be approved annually by the annual

conference, following the receipt and inclusion of a favorable written opinion from Wespath. This document is only a summary of the information contained in the actual signed funding plan and does not contain all the information required for a comprehensive view of the conference's benefit obligations. You may request the full contents of the 2018 comprehensive benefit funding plan from your conference benefit office.

CLERGY RETIREMENT SECURITY PROGRAM (CRSP)

Defined Benefit (DB) and Defined Contribution (DC)

Program 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 program is designed to provide participants with one portion of their overall retirement benefits. CRSP replaced the Ministerial Pension Plan (MPP) effective January 1, 2007, which had previously replaced the Pre 82 Plan 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 United Methodist Church, and a defined contribution (DC) plan, which provides a retirement account balance established and funded by the annual conferences.

Current funding plan information:

The Clergy Retirement Security Program (CRSP DB) annuities total liability as of January 1, 2016, is \$(1,422,046,473), while total plan assets are \$1,530,170,830, resulting in a current plan funded ratio of 108 percent. The Great Plains Conference portion of the liability is 3.3740 percent and the 2018 contribution is \$3,277,309. The conference anticipates that the amount will be funded by Direct Billing, Pre 82 Surplus. 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 Conference has elected to cover clergy serving 50 percent + plus under CRSP effective January 1, 2018.

Effective January 1, 2014, the CRSP DC plan was reduced from a 3 percent to a 2 percent of plan compensation non matching contribution. Clergy can earn up to an additional 1 percent CRSP DC contribution by contributing at least 1 percent of their plan compensation to UMPIP; therefore, if a participant contributes at least 1 percent of plan compensation to UMPIP, the individual will receive a contribution of 3 percent to CRSP DC. The 2018 CRSP DC

GREAT PLAINS CONFERENCE**Reports**

contribution is anticipated to be \$1,342,540 and will be funded by Direct Billing.

MINISTERIAL PENSION PLAN (MPP)**Plan overview:**

Supplement Three to the Clergy Retirement Security Program (CRSP), also known as the Ministerial Pension Plan (MPP), provides clergy with a pension benefit 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. MPP requires that exactly 65 percent of the account balance must be annuitized when the funds are to be distributed. The remainder may be rolled over to UMPIP, another qualified plan or an IRA, or it may be paid in a lump sum.

Current funding plan information:

The Ministerial Pension Plan (MPP) annuities' total liability as of January 1, 2016 is \$(3,422,875,264), while total plan assets are \$3,600,174,516, resulting in a current plan funded ratio of 105 percent. The required contribution for 2018 is \$0. The Great Plains Conference's percentage of the total liability is 3.0219 percent. Future MPP annuitants have a total account balance of \$3,787,199,647 and the Great Plains Conference's portion of that balance is \$94,410,005 or 2.49 percent of the total.

PRE 82 PLAN**Plan overview:**

Supplement One to the Clergy Retirement Security Program (CRSP), also known as the Pre 82 Plan, provides clergy with a pension benefit 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. If a clergyperson retires within the conference (and does not terminate), the minimum benefit payable is based on two factors:

- 1) Years of service with pension credit approved by each conference on the recommendation of the Conference Board of Pensions (CBOP) in accordance with plan provisions and The Book of Discipline.
- 2) The conference pension rate (past service rate) the dollar amount chosen by the conference as the amount payable for each approved year of service with pension credit (may change from year to year).

The number of years of service with pension credit is multiplied by the pension rate, and the product is the minimum annual benefit payable to those clergy eligible for Pre 82 Plan benefits. In certain

Reports

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 82 Plan. At the time that a participant retires, the DBSM account is converted to a life based benefit and, at that point, the clergy's benefit is the greater of the PSR or DBSM benefit. If the conference increases the PSR, the clergy's benefit is recalculated; but the DBSM based benefit does not change.

Current funding plan information:

The 2018 PSR recommended to the Great Plains Conference will be \$775, representing a 2 percent increase from the 2017 rate. The conference expects future annual increases to be approximately 2.00 percent.

The contingent annuitant percentage is recommended to remain at the 85/100 percent level.

ACTIVE HEALTH BENEFIT PROGRAM**Program Overview**

The Great Plains Conference offers the following active health benefit to its active eligible participants (current conference staff only).

Current funding plan information:

The total cost of the program for 2018 is anticipated to be \$1,058,126 and will be funded by apportionments, earnings on benefit reserves and personal contributions from staff. It is anticipated that increases for future years will average 8 percent.

The rationale for these changes is: Per our broker we are expecting an 8 percent cost increase. The 2017 budgeted amount is based on a 7.6 percent increase. Premium costs went up and we are projecting an 8 percent increase per our broker.

Claims Incurred But Not Reported

The Great Plains Conference provides the following health plan to its eligible participants: Cigna is the current health insurance provider. As of 12/31/2018, the estimated IBNR (Incurred But Not Reported) claims total is \$0. Cigna confirmed that the reserve for the run-out was established during the conference's first year under the Level-Funded Contract. If actual run-out claims exceed the reserve, Cigna covers it.

Additional Plan Sponsor Funded Coverage

The Great Plains Conference has elected to provide a grant to those clergy members on CPP medical leave.

The current cost of this benefit is \$150,696.00.

GREAT PLAINS CONFERENCE**Reports****POST RETIREMENT MEDICAL BENEFIT PROGRAM (PRM)****Program Overview:**

The Great Plains Conference currently offers Stipend for Post Retirement Medical coverage for clergy members serving the Nebraska Conference as of 12/31/13 with 5 years of service.

Current funding plan information:

The plan sponsor's intention for 2018 is to: Retain current plan benefit. PRM benefits provided are as follows: Closed group no annual increases. Members retiring through 2019 will receive funding. We do not provide a cost of living increase or any kind of increase.

Based on the most recent PRM valuation dated 02/01/2017, the following is the funded position of the PRM benefits:

1. Expected Post Retirement Obligation (EPBO) net plan sponsor cost	\$6,286,635
2. Accumulated Post Retirement Obligation (APBO) net plan sponsor cost	\$6,277,186
3. Assets (in plan and outside) designated for PRM	\$7,153,743
4. Service cost (SC) net plan sponsor cost	\$6,722
5. Over-funded APBO, [3. 2.]	\$876,557
6. Number of annual payments	20
7. Portion of unfunded APBO, [5. / 6.]	\$0
8. Ongoing funding contribution, [4. + 7.]	\$6,722

Future increases/decreases to the assets or APBO will be funded over the duration of the program as calculated in the PRM valuation report, or five years if not available.

These values are based on a 3.55 percent long term discount rate, a 6 percent long term expected rate of return on assets, and a valuation year medical trend (inflation rate) of 0.00 percent with an ultimate medical trend (inflation rate) of 0.00 percent, beginning in 2016.

In addition to the PRM funding contribution listed above, the projected annual plan benefit cost for 2018 (subsidies, HRAs, claims or premiums) is \$573,443.

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. It is an Internal Revenue Code 414(e) "church plan" funded by plan sponsor insurance premiums. Generally, clergy are eligible to participate in CPP if they satisfy the eligibility requirements, including full time appointment with plan compensation of at least 25 percent of the Denominational Average Compensation (DAC). Plan sponsors may elect to cover participants with three quarter time appointments and/or to continue to cover clergy who, due to certain leaves or appointments, are not otherwise eligible to continue coverage.

The CPP adoption agreement executed by the Great Plains Conference contains its elections to cover or not to cover categories mentioned above.

Current funding plan information:

For 2018, the Great Plains Conference has an expected required contribution to the Comprehensive Protection Plan of \$0, which is anticipated to be funded by: The anticipated average increase in future years is expected to be 2 percent per year. The estimate for 2018 reflects the CPP holiday in the amount of \$1,564,756 which is still being collected through direct billing.

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, Roth and/or after tax contributions through payroll deductions. Participant contributions, various optional plan sponsor contributions and investment earnings comprise the individual's retirement account balance.

Current funding plan information:

Conference office lay employees working an average of 20 hours per week or more are eligible after 3 months for a plan sponsor funded pension contribution of 6 percent of salary. Lay employees are required to make contributions of 3 percent toward their retirement through payroll deductions to the UMPPI. The conference's estimated contribution for 2018 is \$125,766 and will be funded via: Apportionments, CRSP.

The Great Plains Conference, as of January 1, 2018 is planning on sponsoring the UMPPI for clergy serving churches quarter time. The conference's estimated contribution for 2018 is \$22,409 and will be funded via CRSP.

Council on Finance & Administration Policies

1. Central Treasury

The Great Plains United Methodist Conference (conference) shall operate a central treasury under the direction and supervision of the conference treasurer in accordance with the policies and procedures of The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church, the conference and its Council on Finance & Administration (CFA). The funds of all boards, councils, committees and task forces of the conference (hereinafter called agencies or individual agency) as well as districts and related corporations and their units shall be held in the central treasury, unless otherwise authorized by the CFA.

The conference treasurer shall be the custodian of all Mission Share (apportionment) funds, non-budgeted funds, special offerings and other designated funds. The conference treasurer shall make accounting of all receipts and disbursements in accordance with The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church, and the policies and procedures approved by the CFA.

The Conference designates the treasurer and controller as authorized signers for all checks and other disbursements. Permission is given for a local signer on all "petty" cash accounts related to district offices, camps, campus ministries, and new church starts for which the conference is managing the accounting.

Donor restricted funds given to the Kansas East, Kansas West, and Nebraska Conferences are respected as to both purpose and geography as assets were combined into the conference. Unrestricted funds given to the former three conferences were combined for the benefit of the conference as a whole.

2. Fiscal Year

The fiscal year of the Conference shall be January 1 to December 31. All local church remittances that are postmarked within five business days of January 1, will be credited to the immediately preceding fiscal year, unless otherwise designated by the church. All remittances by local churches postmarked and received after that date shall be credited to the next fiscal year, regardless of fiscal year designation. Any variance to this deadline, due to extraordinary circumstances, will be at the discretion of the Conference Treasurer.

3. Mission Share (Apportionment) Formula

The mission share formula for the conference will be based upon a percentage of each church's total operating income, with total operating income to be equal to the amount reported by each local church as the "Total income for annual budget/spending plan" on Table 3 of the Local Church Report to the Annual Conference (annual statistical report). The conference will use 10 percent of this amount as the mission share formula for the base budget.

4. Mission Agency Support

Each local church in the conference will be asked to contribute 1 percent of its total operating income to the mission work of key partner agencies. This amount is over and above the mission share tithe. These agencies are separately incorporated and have a historic missional tie to the work of the conference. In each budget, the list may be adjusted by action of the annual conference. The CFA will recommend a list each year. Money given to Mission Agency Support will be divided proportionately among the agencies listed in the budget section.

5. General Church Special Sunday Offerings

Human Relations Day – January 14, 2018

UMCOR Sunday - March 11, 2018

Native American Ministries Sunday – April 15, 2018

Peace with Justice Sunday – May 27, 2018

World Communion Sunday – October 7, 2018

United Methodist Student Day – November 25, 2018

6. Conference Advance (Specials)

The Great Plains United Methodist Conference Advance list is recommended each year by the Mercy and Justice Team for approval by the annual conference. All ministries on this list have the privilege of approaching the churches of the conference to raise funds in support of their efforts. The full list of approved conference advances shall be published each year as a report to the annual conference.

7. Special Appeals

No agency, institution or organization beyond those in the Mission Agency Support or conference advance lists shall make a special conference-wide appeal to the local church for funds without the approval of the annual conference session, upon recommendation

Reports

of the CFA. In case of extreme emergency, approval may be given by the Connecting Council upon recommendation of the CFA.

8. Annual Conference Budget Process

The conference budget is to be developed in the following manner:

a. In the fall, a letter will be sent out to all conference councils, boards and agencies advising them of the process for submitting budget requests and direction regarding budget building. Boards and agencies shall submit their budget request according to the prescribed process to the conference treasurer no later than January 31.

b. As soon as practicable after the completed reporting of the local church statistics, CFA shall project the income of the conference based on the current mission formula, the expected income from the Budget Reserve Fund, the expected income from the Missional Opportunity Fund and the allowance for unpaid mission shares. The projected income shall be provided to the Mission Alignment Team.

c. The Mission Alignment Team (as selected by the Connecting Council) shall study the budget requests, consult with the agencies of the conference, and recommend to the CFA the total sums they recommend for the respective groups.

d. The CFA shall examine the work of the Mission Alignment Team and bring a recommendation to the Connecting Council and the annual conference of a budget that includes the full amount apportioned to the conference for the several general funds authorized by the General Conference, and that amount shall be apportioned to the churches (The Book of Discipline, ¶613.3).

9. Budget Administration

a. Meeting expense reimbursement:

i. The mileage rate for conference and district board, agency and council meetings shall be 40 percent of the standard rate established by the Internal Revenue Service for business expense. Clergy and lay participants in such meetings shall submit expenses for reimbursement through the conference, not through their local church. For the sake of both economic and environmental stewardship, the conference encourages carpooling and video venue usage with this policy.

ii. Dependent (child and/or adult) care reimbursement to people attending approved meetings is \$5.00 per hour for one dependent, \$8.00 per hour for two dependents, and \$10.00 per hour for three or more dependents. The total shall not exceed \$50.00 per day for one participant.

iii. Lodging may be reimbursed at actual expense if attendance at such meetings requires an overnight stay due to distance traveled. Lodging will be arranged for by leadership of such conference or district boards. Shared rooms will be expected when appropriate.

iv. Meals may be reimbursed if attendance at such meetings requires an overnight stay due to distance traveled. Meals will be arranged for by leadership of such conference or district boards. Reimbursement to participants will be at \$24 per day with that amount prorated for partial day, based on the length of meetings and the travel required.

v. At or immediately following the close of any fiscal year, the CFA shall have the authority to pay any remaining General Church and South Central Jurisdiction mission shares from available cash.

b. Before disbursal, all grants to churches, organizations, and individuals shall either:

i. be specifically approved by an established and approved conference structure or

ii. be in accordance with grant-making processes and policies established by an established and approved conference structure. All grant-making policies shall be reported to CFA and subject to its review.

c. From time to time, it is necessary for the conference to purchase goods or services or make other financial commitments such as borrowing funds or entering lease agreements. For purposes of determining the dollar amount of commitments subject to this policy, the amount of commitment shall be the total of all payments to be made under the verbal or written agreement.

Before making purchase or other financial commitments all such commitments that exceed \$5,000 shall require the approval of one of the following: Director of Clergy Excellence, Director of

GREAT PLAINS CONFERENCE**Reports**

Congregational Excellence, or Conference Treasurer (For example, a forty-eight month software licensing requiring annual payments of \$4,000 would require the approval of one of the three persons noted above, as the total payments to be made under the agreement, \$16,000, exceed the \$5,000 threshold noted above.)

In addition, any such commitments that exceed \$50,000 shall also require the approval of the Council on Finance and Administration. (For example, a forty-eight-month software licensing requiring annual payments of \$20,000 would also require the approval of CFA, as the total payments to be made under the agreement, \$80,000, exceed the \$50,000 threshold noted above.)

In applying this policy, note that **the approval or approvals required must be obtained prior to signing contracts, purchase orders, loan or lease agreements, or other documents that commit the Conference to purchase goods or services, borrow funds, or lease equipment or other assets.**

The following transactions are exempt from the approval requirements for financial commitments described in the paragraph above:

- i. Employee compensation payments contemplated in the conference's annual budget
 - ii. Payroll and other taxes levied by federal, state or local governments
 - iii. Payments to local churches, the General Church, and Jurisdictional Conference
 - iv. Commitments in connection with clergy and employee benefit plans
- d. All available funds remaining in the conference budget shall be transferred to conference reserves. Notwithstanding the forgoing sentence, those available funds remaining in the accounts of the three related corporations: New Church Development, Inc., United Methodist Campus Ministry, Inc., and United Methodist Camps, Inc., as well as accounts for the work of the Board of Trustees related to property management, and Missional Opportunities shall not be so transferred.
- e. In certain limited circumstances, the conference will account for carryover funds, monies unused during a financial year which

Reports

are transferred to an individual budget for the following year. Only under the following circumstances will carryover funds be accounted for:

- i. Self-supporting ministries or events for which no Mission Shares are provided.
- ii. Shared ministries with ecumenical partners of other denominations.
- iii. Expenses related to General and Jurisdictional Conferences
- iv. Funds allocated for large capital expenditures by the Conference Board of Trustees
- v. Ministries or events of the conference funded all or in part by grants from external entities
- vi. The Missional Opportunities Fund

f. Spending of Permanently Endowed Funds

Based upon the funded status of endowed funds as of January 1 of the current year, conference groups authorized to expend such funds shall abide by the following policies:

- i. If the account of a permanently endowed fund is funded at more than 110 percent of corpus then the appropriate committee can spend any amount of accumulated earnings in any given year.
- ii. If the account of a permanently endowed fund is between 100-110 percent of corpus then the appropriate committee can spend 5 percent of corpus in any given year.
- iii. If the account of a permanently endowed fund is between 95-100 percent of corpus then the appropriate committee can spend 3 percent of corpus in any given year limited to not allowing the account to drop below 95 percent funded.
- iv. If the account of a permanently endowed fund is at or below 95 percent of corpus then the appropriate committee cannot make any draws until the account rises above 95 percent funded status.

g. Conference Reserves

The Conference maintains reserves as described below:

GREAT PLAINS CONFERENCE Reports

Pension Reserve Fund

The conference has designated a Pension Reserve Fund in the amount of \$10,000,000. This fund is restricted by the annual conference and is to be administered by the CFA. This fund is to provide additional protection against stock market downturns for the purpose of meeting potential pension obligations. Each year as part of the budget process, the Treasurer will calculate the thirty-six-month average of the Fund and CFA will determine and apply a percentage not greater than 5 percent to that average to be designated as an income source to support for the next budget year. It shall be withdrawn from the Pension Reserve Fund during the budget year as directed by the conference treasurer.

Missional Opportunities Reserve Fund

The conference has designated a Missional Opportunities Reserve Fund in the amount of \$3,000,000. Each year CFA may designate an amount up to 5 percent of the Missional Opportunities Reserve Fund to be available to the conference for missional opportunities according to policies set up by the Connecting Council. Any team of the conference, including the Extended Cabinet or Appointive Cabinet, can request money from the Missional Opportunities Fund for any conference-wide strategic purpose or one that implements or strengthens one of the conference's missional priorities.

General Reserve Fund

The remaining balance of conference reserves are for support of the conference budget. Each year as part of the budget process, the treasurer will calculate the thirty-six-month average of the fund and CFA will determine and apply a percentage not greater than 5 percent to that average to be designated as an income source for the next budget year. It shall be withdrawn from the General Reserve Fund during the budget year as directed by the conference treasurer. The CFA may also designate a special distribution of the fund if its earnings make that prudent and possible. The CFA shall consult with the Investment Committee before making the recommendations contained in this paragraph.

The General Reserve provides for cash flow needs of the conference and shall be used at the direction of the CFA. The goal of the General Reserve shall be to maintain an annual balance of no less than ten (10) percent not to exceed twenty

Reports

(20) percent of the conference budget. General Reserve balance above twenty (20) percent at the end of the fiscal year shall be reported to the Connecting Council.

h. Non-Budget Fund Accounts

The conference treasurer may receive and disburse funds for designated purposes, separate from the conference budget. Such funds shall be listed as “Non-Budget Fund Accounts.” All Non-Budget Fund Accounts must be sponsored by an agency of the Conference.

i. Income from money held in Non-Budget Fund Accounts may be credited to the respective account as determined by the CFA.

ii. When an unrestricted Non-Budget Fund Account has been terminated, or has been inactive for a period of one year, the balance shall be transferred to the conference reserve, unless otherwise determined by the CFA.

Investments Policy

Investments of the conference funds shall be made by the conference treasurer, under the direction of the Conference Investment Committee under the policies and procedures for all investment transactions and balances as described below.

1. Purpose

The purpose of the Great Plains United Methodist Conference Investment Policy is to provide governance and oversight to the Investment Committee of the conference with the intent to facilitate and not hinder conference committees, commissions, institutions and agencies in the execution of their duties related to their investment portfolios and in the use of their funds.

In recognition of fiduciary responsibilities and the mandate of The Book of Discipline (§ 613.5), the CFA has approved this Investment Policy governing the Investment Committee of the Conference. This Investment Policy shall comply with the policies related to Conflict of Interest and Investment Management of Annual Conference Pension and Pension Related Funds under § 1508 of the 2012 Book of Discipline.

2. Delineation of Responsibilities

Under The Book of Discipline (§ 612.1), the purpose of the CFA shall be to develop, maintain, and administer a comprehensive and

GREAT PLAINS CONFERENCE**Reports**

coordinated plan of fiscal and administrative policies, procedures, and management services for the annual conference. The CFA is responsible for establishing principles, policies, standards and guidelines for the investment of all monies, assets and properties of the conference. The CFA is responsible for the financial integrity and oversight of the financial resources of the conference.

By this Investment Policy, the CFA delegates, to the extent provided, to the Investment Committee the management and operations of the conference's investment assets, which are made subject to this Investment Policy. Under this Investment Policy, the conference's investment assets are comprised of funds under the responsibility of the CFA, the Board of Trustees (BOT), the Council on New Church Development (CNCD) and the Board of Pension and Health Benefits (BOPHB), except for funds within the conference pension plans. The Investment Committee shall establish investment objectives for the conference funds under the responsibility of the CFA, BOT, CNCD, and BOPHB, except for funds within the conference pension plans, so as not to hinder the stewardship of their respective conference funds as required by the United Methodist Book of Discipline or conference policies and procedures.

The Investment Committee shall be fully accountable to the CFA. The CFA shall review the Investment Policy and the work of the Investment Committee, as needed, to determine the effectiveness of and the overall results of the investments.

The Investment Committee shall:

- a. Define and develop investment goals and operational guidelines;
- b. Select and discharge Investment Managers, and carry out any other duties required for the legal operation of the Investment Committee, including but not limited to hiring outside vendors to perform various services;
- c. Monitor and evaluate the performance results and risk posture of the Investment Manager(s) to insure they are striving to achieve the investment goals and objectives as formalized by the Investment Committee.
- d. Provide annual written accounts of the investment results, accounting summary and any significant developments to the CFA, BOT, CNCD, and BOPHB and to the conference at its annual meeting;

- e. Provide annual written evaluation of the performance of the Investment Managers to the CFA, BOT, CNCD and BOPHB;
- f. Require all portfolios be managed with the aim of optimizing funds available for mission in a manner consistent with the maximization of total return (consistent with the preservation of capital), the Social Principles of The United Methodist Church and shall fully comply with the United Methodist Book of Discipline;
- g. Establish and maintain effective communication procedures between the Investment Committee and the CFA, BOT, CNCD, BOPHB, staff and outside service providers;
- h. Monitor and control investment expenses; and
- i. Report to the CFA any significant deviations from this policy for prior written approval before they are implemented.

The Investment Committee may delegate the execution and administration of certain Investment Committee responsibilities as appropriate to the conference treasurer who serves as its staff;

3. Fiduciary Responsibility

Persons that are charged with investing funds have a fiduciary responsibility for those funds. Fiduciary responsibility requires those responsible for investments to fulfill the legally imposed duties of loyalty, care, and prudence. The members of the Investment Committee are fiduciaries subject to the rules and laws governing fiduciary behavior.

The Duty of Loyalty prohibits self-dealing by persons who are fiduciaries. They are not permitted to take part in investment decisions that would create a conflict of interest. All investment decisions are to be made with a view to the interest of the beneficiaries, in this case the various agencies, committees, boards and councils of the Conference providing funds for investment, rather than to the personal interests of the fiduciary. When conflicts do arise, they should be disclosed to the chairperson of the Investment Committee (or if a conflict of interest involves the chairperson, then to the conference treasurer) immediately. Advance disclosure in writing will provide evidence of the disclosure in the event the issue of conflict of interest is raised. Any fiduciary with a conflict involving an investment decision should abstain from any participation in that decision and document the abstention in the minutes of the meeting.

GREAT PLAINS CONFERENCE**Reports**

The Duty of Care requires that a fiduciary act at all times in good faith and in a manner which is in the best interest of the beneficiaries. Fiduciaries are to be adequately informed about alternatives available at the time of decision. Where specific instructions are left regarding legacies, those instructions must be followed unless changed by court order. The duty of care includes prudence in the investment context (including diligence in attending meetings), efforts to ascertain relevant information prior to decision making, balanced judgment, adequate assessment and balancing of potential investment risks and returns and adequate diversification of investments.

Fiduciary responsibility cannot be delegated. The decision of the Investment Committee to engage Investment Manager(s) will not absolve the Investment Committee from its ultimate responsibility for the care of the funds. In order to discharge adequately the duties of care and loyalty, the fiduciary will need to demonstrate that appropriate procedures were used for selecting the Investment Manager(s) and for monitoring the results of the advice received. The Investment Manager(s) should be trustworthy and competent to perform the work as outlined by the Investment Committee. The loyalties of the Investment Managers(s) must run to the beneficiaries, not to the individual members of the Investment Committee.

Fiduciaries are permitted to accept and rely on the advice of an Investment Manager where they can demonstrate that their initial decision to engage the Investment Manager was well-founded and where subsequent development do not give rise to a basis for suspending that reliance.

The standard of care when making decisions is the Prudent Expert Standard, defined as:

“... the care, skill, prudence and diligence under the circumstances then prevailing that a prudent person acting in a like capacity and familiar with such matters would use in the conduct of an enterprise of a like character and with like aims.”

4. Members of the Investment Committee

The Investment Committee shall be comprised of nine voting members, who shall be appointed by their respective councils, boards, and committees, as follows:

- a. Four representatives from the CFA,
- b. Three representatives from the BOPHB,
- c. One representative from the BOT;
- d. One representative from the CNCD.

Reports

conference staff may attend Investment Committee meetings with voice, but without voting rights, on Investment Committee matters.

The Investment Committee members shall be appointed annually by their respective councils, boards and committees. For purposes of consistency, it is desired that the Investment Committee members will serve multiple years, but not to extend past their terms on their respective councils, board and committees. The Investment Committee, from among its voting members, shall annually elect the chairperson and other officers as deemed necessary. The officers as so elected shall perform the duties traditionally handled by officers with those titles.

The Investment Committee may appoint subcommittees and taskforces to prepare recommendations and review particular issues. These subgroups will not have the authority to act, but shall be information gathering and reporting groups.

5. Investment of Pooled Funds

To the extent possible, funds from individual boards, agencies, councils and committees from within the conference shall be pooled for the purposes of investment. Investors in a pooled fund investment will benefit from economies of scale, which allow for lower trading costs, diversification and management. The pooled fund investors will proportionally share costs, capital gains and losses and earnings. The determination of the funds to be pooled shall be done in consultation with the conference treasurer. Proper accounting and reporting procedures will be established and used to keep accurate records for the purpose of proportional distribution.

6. Time Horizon

The time horizon for investments shall be based on the liquidity needs of each conference account as specified by the conference treasurer. Capital values fluctuate over shorter periods and the Investment Committee recognizes that the possibility of capital loss does exist. However, historical asset class return data suggest that the risk of principal loss over a holding period of at least three to five years can be minimized with a long-term investment mix.

7. Risk Tolerance

The Investment Committee intends that the investment portfolio should be managed in a manner that seeks to achieve the stated rate of return while limiting principal fluctuations over the established horizon for each conference account. Financial research has demonstrated that risk is best minimized through diversification of

assets, except in very limited circumstances when diversification may not be prudent. The Investment Committee would present a documented finding as to the nature of such circumstances before limiting diversification.

8. Asset Allocation

The purpose of allocating among asset classes is to insure the proper level of diversification and risk for each investment portfolio. The primary considerations in the asset allocation decision process are:

- a. maintaining inflation-adjusted purchasing power;
- b. growing the corpus of the funds to meet future obligations;
- c. achieving a minimum return in excess of inflation but with minimal annual fluctuations in the corpus;
- d. satisfying the cash liquidity needs of short-term obligations; and,
- e. maintaining the longevity of the assets and their distributions while taking into consideration that there may be no additional contributions.

When mutual funds, commingled funds, ETFs and funds in general are used as an investment vehicle, then it is understood the Investment Committee has adopted the investment policies of those funds. With the adoption of this Investment Policy, the conference establishes the funds into which it allocates its assets as set forth on Appendix A.

9. Investment Performance Benchmarks

The investment performance of all portfolios will be measured against commonly accepted performance benchmarks. Consideration shall be given to the extent to which the investment results are consistent with the investment objectives and guidelines as set forth in this Investment Policy.

10. Investment Manager(s)

An Investment Manager must be knowledgeable and experienced in the prudent investment process, so that they may assist the Investment Committee in reaching investment objectives effectively. Investment Managers shall be selected through a process to achieve the desired investment objectives as stated in this Investment Policy. The Investment Committee may engage one or more Investment Managers from the following categories:

- a. A United Methodist institution;
- b. An independent Investment Manager who receives a fee based on portfolio value;
- c. A bank trust department (not all bank trust departments can offer this service) whose fees may be based on portfolio value. The fees usually vary widely depending on the services needed and

are based on a percentage of the managed assets, depending on the type of account, types of assets managed, and market value of the portfolio.

Deciding when to replace a portfolio manager is often subjective as much as objective, however it is a decision that the Investment Committee will be responsible for and will make when deemed necessary.

11. Responsibilities of Investment Managers

Each Investment Manager will have discretion to make all investment decisions for the assets placed under its jurisdiction, while observing the operating within the guidelines, constraints and philosophies as outlined in this Investment Policy. Specific responsibilities of the Investment Managers include:

- a. Exercising discretionary investment management, including decisions to buy, sell or retain individual securities and to alter asset allocations within the guidelines established by this Investment Policy;
- b. Reporting on a timely basis, quarterly investment performance results in adherence to the Global Investment Performance Standard (GIPS) net of all external and internal fees, as governed by the CFA Institute;
- c. Communicating any major changes to the economic outlook, investment strategy or the investment objective progress of the funds' investment management;
- d. Informing the Investment Committee regarding any qualitative change to the investment management organization, e.g., changes in portfolio investment management personnel, ownership structure, investment philosophy, etc.; and,
- e. Voting proxies, if and as requested by the Investment Committee, and communicating such voting records to the Investment Committee on a timely basis.

12. Rebalancing

Changes in the mix of assets or assignment of assets to different Investment Managers shall be made by action of the Investment Committee at a regular or called meeting with the advice and consultation of the Investment Manager(s). The Investment Committee shall undertake to maintain its desired asset allocation within 5 percent of the determined mix for any particular assets, except under unusual market conditions.

13. Socially Responsible Investment Guidelines

The Investment Committee shall pursue intentional investment decisions that further the principles of economic and social justice consistent with the goals outlined in the 2012 Book of Discipline and Social Principles of The United Methodist Church.

The Book of Discipline (§717) states: “Sustainable and Socially Responsible Investments, In the investment of money, it shall be the policy of The United Methodist Church that all general boards and agencies, including the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits and all administrative agencies and institutions, including hospitals, homes, educational institutions, annual conferences, foundations and local churches, make a conscious effort to invest in institutions, companies, corporations or funds with policies and practices that are socially responsible, consistent with the goals outlined in the Social Principles. All United Methodist institutions shall endeavor to seek investments in institutions, companies, corporations or funds that promote racial and gender justice, protect human rights, prevent the use of sweatshop or forced labor, avoid human suffering and preserve the natural world, including mitigating the effects of climate change. In addition, United Methodist institutions shall endeavor to avoid investments in companies engaged in core business activities that are not aligned with the Social Principles through their direct or indirect involvement with the production of anti-personnel weapons and armaments (both nuclear and conventional weapons), alcoholic beverages or tobacco; or that are involved in privately operated correctional facilities, gambling, pornography or other forms of exploitative adult entertainment. The boards and agencies are to give careful consideration to environmental, social, and governance factors when making investment decisions and actively exercise their responsibility as owners of the companies in which they invest. This includes engaging with companies to create positive change and hold them accountable for their actions, while also considering exclusion if companies fail to act responsibly.”

14. Records

The Investment Committee shall keep a proper and prudent record of all-important documents, meeting minutes and other information relating to the management of the Funds. They shall be available at Custodian of the Records, which shall be the conference treasurer.

15. Amendments and Revisions

Amendments or changes to this Investment Policy shall be made to and approved by the CFA and incorporated directly into the policy as a revision and restatement or acknowledged and noted in an addendum until such time as the Investment Policy is revised and restated. The committee may amend Appendix A from time to time upon approval of CFA. Following each such amendment the committee shall replace the respective with one that reflects the amendment approved by CFA.

Surety Bond

The conference shall obtain adequate Bond coverage for the Conference Treasurer and staff. Local churches shall provide adequate bonding of their treasurer(s). The Conference provides bonding for local church treasurers and others handling money only to those congregations that have obtained property and liability insurance through the Great Plains Property and Liability Insurance Group. Congregations not participating in this program are responsible for obtaining adequate bonding.

Annual Audit of Conference Treasury

An annual audit of all conference financial records shall be conducted by an independent certified public accountant as selected by the CFA upon recommendation of its Audit Review Committee. The Audit Review Committee will review such audit and present it to the CFA for final approval. The entire audit report shall be included in the Conference Journal.

Audits of Boards, Agencies and Institutions

The CFA has a fiduciary responsibility to the conference in administering conference funds. Therefore, the CFA is required to review the financial statements of organizations to which grants or contributions of conference funds are made. The CFA shall appoint an audit committee that will have on its membership at least one member of the CFA plus additional members recruited for their expertise. This committee shall work with the auditor of the conference as well as review audits, reviews, and compilation reports of boards, agencies and institutions as described below.

Reports from an independent Certified Public Accountant are required annually from each agency or institution that receives funds from the conference treasury in accordance with the requirements listed below. Funds shall not be transferred to any agency or institution that has not forwarded its annual audit, review or compilation report for the preceding year within six months' time after the close of its fiscal year. (The Book of Discipline, ¶1617) Agencies of the conference using the conference central treasury for all their financial activity shall be included in the conference audit and are not required to submit separate audit reports.

In addition to audit and financial reports submitted to the conference, organizations receiving conference funds shall also provide to the conference a copy of all other required communications received

GREAT PLAINS CONFERENCE**Reports**

from the external auditor. These communications may include, among other items, comments regarding any significant deficiencies in the design or the operation of the organization's internal controls.

1. Audit, Review and Compilation Report Requirements:

Each agency or organization that has annual gross receipts of \$500,000 or more shall submit a copy of its audited financial statements, together with any required communications from its external auditor and management letter (if applicable).

Each agency or organization that has annual gross receipts of between \$250,000 and \$499,999 is required to submit a copy of its financial statements together with a review report from a CPA.

Agencies and organizations with annual gross receipts of less than \$250,000 must submit financial statements accompanied by a compilation report from a CPA with a CPA review required every third year.

Agencies and organizations with annual gross receipts below \$500,000 may request a variance from the requirements listed above. Any variance granted is valid for the current reporting year only. A variance from these requirements shall not be granted for more than two consecutive years. The organization granted the variance shall submit the following information:

- a. Financial statements. The agency shall submit financial statements that reflect its financial position and results of operations for the fiscal year then ended.
- b. Tax statements. The agency shall provide documentation stating that all necessary tax returns (including payroll tax returns) have been filed in a timely manner. Documentation shall also be required regarding the status of any unpaid taxes to federal, state or local authorities as of the date of the request.

2. Other Circumstances:

Grants or contributions of conference funds to organizations not meeting the above requirements shall not be made without special approval. Special approval shall require a favorable vote of at least 2/3 of the members of the CFA present and voting.

Mortgage Indebtedness

Any institution/agency whose board is elected by the conference, and that has mortgage indebtedness, shall provide an annual report to the conference showing the:

1. Total indebtedness
2. Amount paid on indebtedness last year
3. Plans to retire the indebtedness

If any such institution/agency plans to mortgage assets or to pledge endowment funds or to transfer funds from endowments to operating budgets and total indebtedness exceeds 10 percent of total assets or one million dollars, whichever is less, that mortgage must be approved by the conference prior to the transaction, or in an emergency between sessions of the conference, by a joint session of the conference cabinet and the CFA.

Protection of Contact Information

Contact information for clergy, churches, and laity held by the conference is for the use and benefit of the conference. Councils, boards, and agencies of the conference, conference and jurisdictional Advances, local churches and districts, and agencies of the General Church may request contact information. Except as provided below, contact information held by the conference, or provided to its respective agencies and institutions by the conference, shall be considered confidential as to outside parties and shall not be provided to any person, group or business beyond those for whom the contact information was compiled, without the written approval of the CFA.

Contact information for clergy, churches, lay members of annual conference, and laity serving in conference or district leadership is printed in the Conference Journal. Directory information placed on the conference website is limited to churches, clergy's business contact information, and a few specific lay leadership positions. Information is not provided in a downloadable list.

Local Church Report to The Annual Conference (Tables 1, 2, & 3)

The local church shall electronically submit the Local Church Report to annual conference no later than 5 p.m. on the last business day of January each year.

If a report is not received by the due date:

1. The only figures that will be reported will be prior year membership and benevolences sent to the conference treasurer.
2. When calculating the church's Mission Share, 10 percent shall be added to the prior year's operating income.

GREAT PLAINS CONFERENCE

Reports

3. The Journal record shall indicate that the report was not received or not received in time to be used for Mission Share calculations.

The pastor is responsible for the accuracy of the information submitted and assuring the report is received by the deadline (The Book of Discipline ¶1340.2c(2)(f)). Information about submission of these reports will be sent to the pastor as soon as the General Council on Finance and Administration makes such information available.

Correction of errors with these reports after final submission should be made by the last business day of February each year. If errors are discovered after that date and the adjustment would affect Mission Shares, the district superintendent would need to be contacted. Changes would only be made for extenuating circumstances at the discretion of the district superintendent and the conference treasurer.

Local Church Audits

Church members and others provide substantial financial resources to local churches, and expect church staff and lay leadership to provide proper oversight of such resources to ensure these resources are (1) used in a manner consistent with that expressed through the church's annual operating budget and designated gifts and (2) adequately safeguarded from improper use or loss. In light of expectations, every local United Methodist church, at a minimum, shall conduct an audit (review) as defined and described in the Local Church Audit Guide published by the General Church Council on Finance and Administration. The guide may be obtained at www.gcfa.org.

In addition to such minimum requirements for all churches and consistent with the expectations for integrity, transparency and accountability described above, larger churches shall periodically subject their accounting records and controls to assessment by an independent certified public accountant. Specifically, larger churches (i.e., those with annual total receipts of more than \$500,000) shall adopt one of the following two options (**for purposes of this section, "total receipts" of each local church shall be annual total combined funds received through the operating budget; designated or restricted gifts given for a particular purpose, including special offerings collected throughout the year; monies received for capital buildings or improvements or for debt service; contributions received for endowed funds, preschool tuition and fees received; and any funds received from other sources**):

Reports

1. Have an audit performed by an independent certified public accountant (CPA) in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards; or
2. Have independent CPA perform a set of agreed-upon procedures established by the CFA.

For purposes of this requirement, the frequency of having either option 1 or option 2 performed shall depend on the annual total receipts of each local church from all sources as described above. For purposes of determining the applicability of this requirement, "total funds received" shall be the **average annual** total receipts (as defined above) for the prior three years. (For example, for purposes of applying this test in 2017, local churches would determine the average of total funds received for the years 2014-2016.) If average total funds received by a local church exceed \$2,000,000, the local church should have audit work performed by an independent CPA under either option 1 or option 2 **annually**.

For those local churches who have average total funds received of less than \$2,000,000 but more than \$1,000,000, those churches should have audit work performed by an independent CPA under option 1 or option 2 **once every two years**. For those who have average total funds received of less than \$1,000,000 but more than \$500,000, those churches should have audit work performed by an independent CPA under option 1 or option 2 **once every three years**. For any year in which a larger church (as defined above) is not required to have work done by an independent CPA under option 1 or 2, such churches shall conduct an audit (review) as described in the first paragraph of this section.

GREAT PLAINS CONFERENCE Reports

Great Plains Budget Summary

	2016			2017		2018	
	Approved Budget	Actual	Act as % Bgdt	Approved Budget	Proposed Budget	\$\$\$ Chng from 2017 to 2018	% Chng from 2016 to 2017
INCOME:							
MISSION SHARES						\$1,983	
Less: Allowance for Unpaid Mission Shares	\$14,873,247	\$14,751,282	99.2%	\$14,560,893	\$14,244,434	(\$316,459)	-2.2%
Net Mission Share Income	\$13,870,841	\$13,199,744	95.2%	\$13,601,726	\$13,411,188	(\$190,540)	-1.4%
% of Mission Share Asking	93.26%	89.48%		93.41%	94.15%		
Other Income:							
Restricted Reserve-Budget Support (5%)	\$1,889,161	\$1,358,031	71.9%	\$1,873,829	\$1,831,306	(\$42,523)	-2.3%
Restr. Reserve-Budget Support Special Distribution	\$39,132	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$133,963	\$133,963	(\$40,000)
Use of Missional Opportunity Reserves	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$49,069	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total Income	\$15,799,134	\$14,657,775	92.1%	\$15,524,654	\$15,376,475	(\$148,179)	-1.0%
EXPENSES:							
I. Episcopal Office							
General Church Ministries for Episcopacy	\$762,774	\$682,268	89.4%	\$731,601	\$735,550	\$3,949	0.5%
Episcopal Office Expenses	\$55,516	\$56,092	101.0%	\$24,977	\$184,081	\$159,104	637.0%
Episcopal Residence Maintenance	\$16,850	\$16,760	99.5%	\$16,850	\$15,000	(\$1,850)	-11.0%
District Personnel	\$2,215,703	\$2,224,766	100.4%	\$2,270,517	\$1,922,023	(\$348,494)	-15.3%
District Office Expenses	\$348,310	\$245,992	70.6%	\$295,500	\$298,840	\$3,340	1.1%
Cabinet Operations	\$684,700	\$601,205	87.8%	\$642,300	\$654,000	\$11,700	1.8%
Total Episcopal Office Budget	\$4,083,853	\$3,827,083	93.7%	\$3,981,745	\$3,809,494	(\$172,251)	-4.3%
II. Clergy Excellence							
General Church Ministries for Clergy Excellence	\$812,368	\$726,633	89.4%	\$834,404	\$838,907	\$4,503	0.5%
Board of Ordained Ministry	\$188,500	\$158,540	84.1%	\$175,500	\$175,500	\$0	0.0%
Trans Into Ministry Mission Share Request	\$97,307	\$86,860	88.5%	\$147,162	\$208,066	\$61,866	42.0%
Clergy Excellence Office/Programming Expense	\$87,750	\$88,037	100.3%	\$87,000	\$117,500	\$30,500	35.1%
Clergy Excellence Personnel	\$388,250	\$376,732	97.0%	\$392,306	\$397,536	\$5,230	1.4%
Total Clergy Excellence Budget	\$1,564,175	\$1,436,802	91.9%	\$1,636,121	\$1,738,511	\$102,390	6.3%
III. Congregational Excellence							
III. A. Leadership Development:							
General Church Ministries for Leadership Development	\$396,604	\$354,756	89.4%	\$407,323	\$409,521	\$2,198	0.5%
SCJ Ministries for Leadership Development	\$117,555	\$105,149	89.4%	\$121,062	\$97,643	(\$23,439)	-19.4%
Leadership Development Ministries	\$107,000	\$23,930	22.4%	\$72,000	\$80,500	\$8,500	26.7%
Small Membership Church Ministries	\$90,000	\$46,603	51.8%	\$115,000	\$105,000	(\$10,000)	-8.7%
Campus Ministry Mission Share Request	\$572,690	\$572,690	100.0%	\$636,285	\$617,968	(\$18,317)	-2.9%
Camping Mission Share Request	\$677,160	\$677,160	100.0%	\$685,094	\$712,500	\$27,406	4.0%
Safe Gatherings	\$30,840	\$96,229	312.0%	\$90,950	\$115,100	\$24,150	26.6%
Total Leadership Development	\$1,991,849	\$1,876,517	94.2%	\$2,127,734	\$2,148,232	\$20,498	1.0%
III. B. Vital Congregations:							
Resource Center Mission Share Request	\$27,920	\$27,782	99.5%	\$26,920	\$28,920	\$0	0.0%
Youth Ministry	\$116,400	\$83,406	71.7%	\$110,900	\$112,400	\$1,500	1.4%
Ethnic Justice Share Request	\$702,148	\$492,326	70.1%	\$500,855	\$442,424	(\$58,431)	-11.7%
New Church Starts Mission Share Request	\$597,899	\$597,899	100.0%	\$539,856	\$545,259	\$5,399	1.0%
Total Vital Congregations Budget	\$1,444,367	\$1,201,413	83.2%	\$1,178,531	\$1,126,999	(\$51,532)	-4.4%
Congregational Excellence Office Expense	\$83,300	\$65,061	78.1%	\$78,403	\$65,700	(\$12,703)	-16.2%
Congregational Excellence Personnel	\$773,219	\$731,054	94.5%	\$768,349	\$517,059	(\$251,290)	-32.7%
Total Congregational Excellence Budget	\$4,292,735	\$3,874,045	90.2%	\$4,183,016	\$3,857,990	(\$325,027)	-7.1%
IV. Mercy and Justice							
General Church Ministries for Mercy and Justice	\$2,366,212	\$2,116,487	89.4%	\$2,470,452	\$2,483,784	\$13,332	0.5%
Disaster Response	\$18,600	\$5,515	29.7%	\$18,600	\$18,600	\$0	0.0%
Mercy and Justice Ministries	\$169,545	\$137,406	81.0%	\$150,500	\$158,600	\$8,100	5.4%
Mercy & Justice Office expense	\$13,900	\$17,409	125.2%	\$18,200	\$20,200	\$2,000	11.0%
Mercy and Justice Personnel	\$159,727	\$158,599	99.3%	\$163,432	\$163,839	\$407	0.2%
Total Mercy and Justice Budget	\$2,727,984	\$2,435,416	89.3%	\$2,821,184	\$2,845,023	\$23,839	0.8%
V. Administrative Services							
General and SCJ Ministries for Admin Services	\$393,678	\$352,131	89.4%	\$404,366	\$420,704	\$16,338	4.0%
Administrative Committee Expenses	\$97,750	\$82,840	84.7%	\$97,500	\$91,002	(\$6,508)	-6.7%
Administrative Services Office Expense	\$141,410	\$165,468	117.0%	\$144,465	\$167,850	\$23,365	16.2%
Information Technology	\$174,400	\$181,015	103.8%	\$174,400	\$174,400	\$0	0.0%
Annual Conference Expense	\$118,700	\$92,068	77.6%	\$119,300	\$129,600	\$10,300	8.6%
Conf Office Building Maintenance expense	\$213,000	\$209,331	98.3%	\$211,500	\$189,157	(\$22,343)	-10.6%
Trustees: Insurance, Auto, Dist Office & Parsonage	\$475,000	\$480,173	99.9%	\$439,800	\$412,450	(\$27,350)	-6.2%
Communications Program Expense	\$163,150	\$148,170	90.8%	\$152,999	\$145,350	(\$7,649)	-5.0%
Communications Personnel	\$322,601	\$322,568	100.0%	\$335,798	\$342,074	\$6,276	1.9%
Administrative Services Personnel	\$880,699	\$820,665	93.2%	\$860,027	\$922,870	\$62,843	7.3%
Total Administrative Services Budget	\$2,980,387	\$2,834,429	95.1%	\$2,932,588	\$2,975,457	\$42,869	1.5%
Missional Opportunity fund request	\$150,000	\$150,000	100.0%	\$0	\$150,000	\$150,000	\$150,000
Total Great Plains Conference Budget	\$15,799,134	\$14,657,775	92.1%	\$15,524,654	\$15,376,475	(\$148,180)	-1.0%
Net Income (Loss)	\$0	\$0		\$0	\$0	\$0	

2017 JOURNAL Reports

402

Great Plains Budget Summary

	2016			2017		2018	
	Approved Budget	Actual	Act as % Bdg	Approved Budget	Proposed Budget	\$\$\$ Chng from 2017 to 2018	% Chng from 2016 to 2017
Other Billings:							
NE billing (Beginning January 1, 2016 NE churches are no longer being billed for this program)							
Retiree Health Insurance Supplement	\$558,229	\$0	0.0%	\$0	\$0	\$0	
Mission Agency Support:							
1% of line 67 for Agencies	\$1,487,325	\$1,144,248	76.9%	\$1,456,089	\$1,424,443	(\$31,646)	-2.2%
Colleges/Universities							
Nebraska Wesleyan Univ - Lincoln, NE	\$130,000	\$90,016	69.2%	\$60,000	\$115,100	\$55,100	91.8%
Baker University - Baldwin City, KS	\$130,000	\$90,016	69.2%	\$126,100	\$115,100	(\$11,000)	-8.7%
Saint Paul School of Theology - KS/OK	\$130,000	\$90,016	69.2%	\$126,100	\$115,100	(\$11,000)	-8.7%
Kansas Wesleyan University - Salina, KS	\$130,000	\$90,041	69.3%	\$126,100	\$115,100	(\$11,000)	-8.7%
Southwestern College - Winfield, KS	\$130,000	\$90,016	69.2%	\$126,100	\$115,100	(\$11,000)	-8.7%
Health & Welfare Institutions							
Aldersgate Village (Good Sam. Fnd) - Topeka, KS	\$75,000	\$52,133	69.5%	\$72,750	\$67,600	(\$5,150)	-7.1%
Asbury Park, (Good Sam. Fnd) - Newton, KS	\$25,000	\$18,511	74.0%	\$33,950	\$31,500	(\$2,450)	-7.2%
GraceMed Health Clinic - Wichita and Topeka, KS	\$55,000	\$43,029	78.2%	\$48,500	\$45,100	(\$3,400)	-7.0%
Released & Restored - NE	\$16,325	\$12,054	73.8%	\$29,100	\$27,000	(\$2,100)	-7.2%
EmberHope (Youthville) - KS	\$30,000	\$58,719	195.7%	\$33,950	\$31,500	(\$2,450)	-7.2%
Epworth Village - York, NE	\$30,000	\$35,575	118.6%	\$33,950	\$31,500	(\$2,450)	-7.2%
Tyree Health and Dental Clinic - Wichita, KS					\$19,100	\$19,100	
Ministries with the Poor							
United Methodist Ministries - Omaha, NE	\$200,000	\$138,889	69.4%	\$194,000	\$182,300	(\$11,700)	-6.0%
Justice for Our Neighbors - NE	\$160,000	\$110,862	69.3%	\$155,200	\$144,400	(\$10,800)	-7.0%
Friendship House of Hope - Ogdan, KS	\$37,000	\$25,945	70.1%	\$18,430	\$17,000	(\$1,430)	-7.8%
Wesley House - Pittsburg, KS	\$60,000	\$43,590	72.7%	\$70,000	\$65,100	(\$4,900)	-7.0%
Fellowship and Faith - Topeka, KS	\$14,000	\$17,947	128.2%	\$9,700	\$9,000	(\$700)	-7.2%
Living Hope-Omaha, NE	\$0	\$0	0.0%	\$50,000	\$38,300	(\$11,700)	0.0%
UM Open Door - Wichita, KS	\$55,000	\$67,815	123.3%	\$72,500	\$67,400	(\$5,100)	-7.0%
Genesis Family Health (UM Mex-Amer Minist), KS	\$55,000	\$51,593	93.8%	\$53,000	\$49,300	(\$3,700)	-7.0%
Ecumenical/Interchurch organizations							
Interchurch Ministries of Nebraska	\$0	\$0		\$0	\$0	\$0	0.0%
Rural Response Hotline, NE	\$25,000	\$17,311	69.2%	\$13,313	\$23,200	\$9,887	74.3%
Kansas Christians United	\$0	\$0	0.0%	\$0	\$0	\$0	0.0%
Retreat Centers							
Forest Park Conf & Retreat Ctr - Topeka, KS	\$0	\$170		\$0	\$0	\$0	0.0%
Total Mission Agency Support Budget	\$1,487,325	\$1,144,248	76.9%	\$1,452,743	\$1,424,800	(\$27,943)	-1.9%
Net Mission Agency Support Income	\$0	\$0		\$3,346	(\$357)	(\$3,703)	

2018 Assumptions

DS/Director salary increase 2.71% (0% in 2017)

Personnel salary increase for all other staff at 2% (1.62% in 2017)

For Information Only - included in the above budget							
General Church Apportionments							
Episcopal Office	\$762,774	\$682,268	89.4%	\$731,601	\$735,550	\$3,949	0.5%
Africa University	\$72,543	\$64,890	89.5%	\$74,487	\$74,889	\$402	0.5%
Black College	\$324,061	\$289,866	89.4%	\$332,836	\$334,632	\$1,796	0.5%
Ministerial Education	\$813,368	\$726,633	89.4%	\$834,404	\$838,907	\$4,503	0.5%
World Service	\$2,366,211	\$2,116,487	89.4%	\$2,470,452	\$2,483,784	\$13,332	0.5%
General Administration	\$285,663	\$255,534	89.4%	\$293,546	\$294,829	\$1,283	0.5%
Interdenominational Cooperation	\$63,664	\$56,861	89.4%	\$65,266	\$65,600	\$333	0.5%
Total General Apportionments	\$4,687,204	\$4,192,529	89.4%	\$4,802,382	\$4,828,300	\$25,918	0.6%
South Central Jurisdiction Apportionments							
Mt Sequoyah	\$22,687	\$20,288	89.4%	\$23,368	\$0	(\$23,368)	-100.0%
Lydia Patterson Institute	\$94,868	\$84,861	89.5%	\$97,714	\$97,643	(\$71)	-0.1%
SMU Wesley Foundation	\$0	\$0	#DIV/0!	\$0	\$0	\$0	0.0%
SCJ Mission And Administration Fund	\$44,431	\$39,745	89.5%	\$45,764	\$52,630	\$6,866	15.0%
Total SCJ Apportionments	\$161,986	\$144,894	89.4%	\$166,846	\$150,273	(\$16,573)	-9.9%

Board of Trustees

Rev. Steve Flader, chair

The Great Plains Conference Board of Trustees' responsibility is to evaluate, maintain and protect conference-owned property over the two-state area. This includes 13 district parsonages, three conference buildings, 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, sell or otherwise dispose of discontinued local churches. We assist local churches in protecting their property in furtherance of United Methodist principles and mission.

Maintaining district parsonages is one task given to the board by the Book of Discipline. Major updates to district parsonages include:

Blue River District parsonage: Bill Ritter, DS, completed bathroom renovations including retiling, new flooring, and new fixtures. We are currently taking bids for replacement of the driveway;

Dodge City District parsonage: continue re-sloping dirt from side of house and escape window;

Elkhorn Valley District parsonage: replaced washer, dryer, dishwasher, and disposal, cleaned long dryer vent, and are beginning replacement of landscaping that was removed last year;

Gateway District parsonage: sale was completed;

Great West District parsonage: beginning work for sale;

Hays District parsonage: beginning work for sale;

Hutchinson District parsonage: installed new lighting in living room, removed large tree that was too close to the house causing upheaval of sun porch, and replaced water heater;

Missouri River District parsonage: beginning work for sale;

Parsons District parsonage: beginning work for sale;

Prairie Rivers District parsonage: removed trees and replaced fence;

Wichita West District parsonage: replaced stove, dishwasher and refrigerator. We are beginning work for sale.

In maintaining the three conference offices, we have replaced marble tiles on the exterior columns at the Lincoln office. In the Wichita office, we completed the division of one large office into two and replaced eight panel window wood exterior doors with more secure metal doors. There were no major changes at the Topeka office this year.

During the transition time between Bishop Jones moving out in mid-August and Bishop Ruben Saenz Jr. and wife Maye moving in in late September, we signed a contract to renovate the Episcopal residence by replacing carpeting on the main floor and upstairs with hardwood in the great room and laminate elsewhere; repainting all of the main floor and upstairs and selected areas of the basement; replacing laminate and tile countertops with granite, replacing the backsplash, and replacing the double ovens, microwave, dishwasher, refrigerator, cooktop, and downdraft vent in the kitchen. We are currently looking at options for increased exterior lighting.

The Trustees work also includes property issues related to discontinued local churches. The following churches or properties have been sold or disposed of within the last year: Grace UMC, Wichita, Kansas church; Mt. Olivet UMC, Wichita, Kansas church; Trinity UMC, Iola, Kansas church; Wellfleet, Nebraska UMC church; University UMC, Kansas City, Kansas church; Hepler, Kansas UMC church; Pleasant View UMC, Beloit, Kansas church; Soldier, Kansas UMC church; and South Haven, Kansas UMC church. 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. The net proceeds from the sale of Grace and Mt. Olivet, Wichita Kansas were transferred to the Urban Closed Church fund for future urban ministry needs. Current properties being maintained until sale or disposal can be completed are: Lyle UMC, Kansa church; Scranton UMC, Kansas church; and Ebenezer UMC, Burns, Kansas church.

The Board of Trustees completed the sale of the formerly leased conference owned property to the United Methodist Open Door Inc. of Wichita to continue their food ministry outreach to the citizens of the city.

Because Bishop Saenz continues to reside in Wichita, the Board of Trustees is renting an apartment 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.

Patrick McKaig, conference property manager and Gary Beach, conference treasurer and director of administrative services, conduct and oversee much of the Trustee work, on a daily basis. The Trustees could not effectively perform our responsibilities without their good assistance. I also commend and thank them and those who have served this past year on your Conference Board of Trustees. They provide a wealth of experience and wisdom and continue to work diligently in the best interests of our conference.

I made three motions at Annual Conference: 1. I move that the three Great Plains Conference offices, currently located in Lincoln, Ne, Topeka, Kansas, and Wichita, Kansas be consolidated into a single office location. 2. I move that the Great Plains Conference Office be located in Topeka, Kansas and 3. I move that the Great Plains Conference Board of Trustees be authorized to purchase, lease, sell or transfer such properties as may be necessary to effect the consolidation of offices in Topeka in accordance with Par. 2515 of the 2016 Book of Discipline. All motions were approved.

Episcopacy Committee

Rev. Maria Campbell, chair

The Episcopacy Committee (as per paragraph 637.3 in *BOD*), supports the bishop in the oversight of the spiritual and temporal affairs of the church, with special reference to presidential responsibilities; is available to the bishop for counsel; and keeps the bishop advised concerning conditions within the area as they affect relationships between the bishop and the people of the conference agencies. The committee has held two meetings with Bishop Saenz and seeks to encourage and support his leadership of our conference and his witness in the world.

It was a significant year in the life of the Great Plains Conference. We said farewell to Bishop Jones and celebrated his work as bishop of the Kansas East, Kansas West and Nebraska conferences. His leadership facilitated our transition to become the Great Plains Conference. Under his guidance, the transition for his departure and the welcome of the new bishop was well-orchestrated. Nancy Lambert, the assistant to the bishop, and Barb Campbell, the administrative assistant to the bishop assisted in making the transition as smooth as possible. A celebration to recognize Bishop Jones' ministry with us was held during the conference and a print was commissioned to celebrate his ministry with us.

We also welcomed Bishop Ruben Saenz and celebrated his assignment to the Great Plains Conference. A Service of Assignment was held on Saturday, Oct. 15, 2016 at St. Mark's United Methodist Church in Lincoln, Nebraska to confer on him the signs of his episcopal office. This was especially meaningful as he was newly elected as a bishop in July at the South Central Jurisdictional Conference. (We were triple blessed to have six delegates to the Jurisdictional Conference in 2016 which helped to communicate our missional priorities and who would be needed to fulfill them.)

The Episcopacy Committee is grateful for the opportunity to walk alongside Bishop Saenz as he seeks to lead the conference into an era of missional effectiveness for the building of God's kingdom here on earth. His commitment to the Lord, as well as, his faithfulness to the gospel and its call will bless and strengthen our Great Plains Conference.

We trust that God has sent us the leader needed to guide us as we continue to strive to be faithful followers of Jesus Christ.

Treasurer/Director of Administrative Services Report

Rev. Gary A. Beach

I appreciate the opportunity to, one last time, share with you how our conference ended the year 2016, how we are doing through the first five months of 2017, and some comments about the privilege it has been to serve as your treasurer and director of administrative services.

Regarding year-end 2016 – our conference raised **89.48% of Mission Shares, up from 88.08 percent** in 2015. We have shown an increase of 1 percent or more every year since the creation of the Great Plains Conference. Thanks for your assistance in moving us in this positive direction! I'd like to recognize the laity and clergy of districts and local churches that have led the way. Would the laity and clergy of the **Gateway District** of Nebraska please stand and be recognized for paying **98.73 percent** of their Mission Shares in 2016. This is the highest figure ever achieved by any of our districts since the creation of our new conference! Now would the laity and clergy of the **Blue River District** of Nebraska please stand and be recognized for paying **97.61 percent** of their Mission Shares in 2016. Right up until the last day or two this district was in the lead but their results too are exceptional! Now would the laity and clergy of the **Prairie Rivers District** of Nebraska please stand and be recognized for paying **95.07 percent** of their Mission Shares in 2016. Six more districts achieved between 90 and 95 percent payout: **Great West, Elkhorn Valley, Hutchinson, Flint Hills, Salina, and Kansas City**. And two others, **Hays and Missouri River** missed 90 percent by only a fraction of a percent. Now, I would ask that all clergy and laity, regardless of district, to stand if your church paid 100 percent of its Mission Share in 2016. If your church paid 100 percent 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 if they have not already been distributed.

GREAT PLAINS CONFERENCE
Reports

As an update for 2017, at the end of May we are behind just slightly compared to one year ago. With a bit more effort the conference will be well on its way toward our goal of reaching 90 percent payout in the year 2017!

But Mission Shares are but one aspect of our financial life together. We also set as a goal to raise 1 percent of a church's operating income for **Mission Agency Support** to undergird financially the separately incorporated institutions that are related to our conference. In 2016 collectively we raised 69.82 percent, an increase of about 1.5 percent over 2015! And, beyond that, a number of churches designated additional funds for specific institutions on the list raising the equivalent of another 7.74 percent of the goal (however, that money was not spread proportionately among the institutions so not all received equivalent amounts from these gifts). But, on average, the institutions received about 77.56 percent of the goal set!

In just a few minutes Dave Platt, chair of our audit committee, will report on the audit for 2015 we received after Annual Conference one year ago as well as preliminary information of our audit for 2016. I trust you will be pleased with his report. As well as that of Brent Messick, chair of our Investment Committee, who will be reporting shortly on the larger state of our finances. You need to know that our conference is the envy of others around the country for the strong financial base that undergirds us. I am fortunate to serve in such a conference! It has made my work, and the work of my staff so much easier! Speaking of staff, I am so very grateful for the hardworking staff in the administrative services department that helped bring together our three former conferences into the Great Plains Conference that exists today. No one in my role could possibly succeed without a hard-working dedicated staff to keep finances, benefits, technology, and property not only under control but managed well. If I have had any success at all it is due to their efforts on your behalf!

Last year I announced my upcoming retirement early in 2016. That was done so that CFA would have the time to find a good replacement and for that replacement to work alongside me for an extended period of time. Last year you elected Scott Brewer to follow me in this role. And he was, due to the forethought of CFA, about to start work at the beginning of 2017. It has been a joy to work with Scott since that time! That overlap of six months, I believe, will allow him to take over the position so much better prepared for the work ahead. He will be a great treasurer and director of administrative

Reports

services! You are in good hands! When some positions turn over, like the president of a board of directors, there is often something like a “passing of the gavel” to symbolize that transition. A few years ago some of my clergy colleagues gave me a gift in honor of being a clergy with a business background. It was this tie showing Mickey Mouse counting piles of money. So, Scott, here’s the “passing of the treasurer’s gavel” recognizing this transition.

I close by saying how grateful I am for the opportunity to have served in this capacity beginning in March of 2010 in Kansas East, adding Kansas West in July of 2011 and then being asked to serve in the same capacity for the Great Plains Conference. While I had a degree in business administration and accounting I thought years ago I had left all that behind when I answered the call to ministry and was ordained 42 years ago. Funny how things work out isn’t it! That degree didn’t go to waste after all. But this work followed 20 years of ministry in local churches (Paola, Pittsburg: First, St. Marys-Emmett-Belvue, Council Grove, and Ottawa: First), a stint as district superintendent of the Flint Hills District, and then nine years as director of connectional ministries. All have been a blessing to me and I am grateful for each and every role. And I am grateful for all the support I have received from all of you through it all. May God continue to bless the Great Plains Conference!

CONNECTING COUNCIL

Nancy Lambert, Director of Clergy Excellence/Assistant to the Bishop

The Connecting Council meets twice each year (October and April) to align conference initiatives with the missional priorities of the conference, to act as a decision-making body between annual conference sessions as permitted in the Plan of Organization, and to develop communication across the conference. Membership consists of the bishop, cabinet, directors, conference and district lay leaders, chairpersons of many conference teams and committees, as well as clergy and lay at-large members.

The October 2016 Connecting Council meeting focused, in part, on reviewing with Bishop Saenz the process that led to the formation of the Great Plains Conference to understand who we are as a conference. Because of this meeting, it was evident that the Plan of Organization does not provide enough clarity for the role of the Connecting Council and its relationship to annual conference. A resolution and item for action are before you for annual conference

GREAT PLAINS CONFERENCE
Reports

decision.

- Resolution #1, found on page 98 would allow the Connecting Council to develop a Rules, Policies, and Practices document further clarifying purpose, accountability and flexibility of the annual conference and the Connecting Council and other structural teams.
- The Connecting Council also asked for approval of additions to the Power and Duties of the Connecting Council originally named in the Plan of Organization, which is found on page 98.

In 2017, the Connecting Council has taken the following actions:

- Approved a staffing study, led by Rev. John Wimberly, which was completed April 1, 2017. The reason for the staffing study was to evaluate the existing staff design and office locations to determine a more effective and efficient way to support and resource the local churches. The study report was reviewed by the Connecting Council and the resulting decisions were to:
 - Recommend a single office location, with responsibility for determining a location to the Trustees, for vote at annual conference.
 - Approve hiring an executive director who would assume assistant to the bishop function among other responsibilities;
 - Eliminate the “specialist” positions of hispanic, new church development, and small membership ministry coordinators and adding these to the portfolio of the congregational excellence director;
 - Add a clergy wellness component to the clergy excellence director job description
 - Approve revision of the property manager job description with a greater emphasis on buying and selling property for the conference;
 - Approve expanding the part-time lay leadership coordinator position to full-time;
 - Cease publication of the GP Connect magazine, with the final issue to be in July 2017;
 - Approve a study of the Resource Center usage, continuation, and future location;
 - Approve creation of a team to evaluate the administrative assistant system in the conference (conference office and district offices) to determine appropriate number needed and assess which

- district office locations are needed;
 - Direct conference staff to review all information and technology systems and enact needed overhaul as well as to work to improve customer service;
- Approve use of Missional Opportunity Funds for coach training in June 2017;
- Recommend to the annual conference a modification to the Safe Gatherings policy that defines “direct contact” (see page 98);
- Recommend to the annual conference that the delegation elected for the 2016 General Conference be the delegation to represent the conference at the called session of General Conference in 2019. A new delegation would be elected at annual conference 2019 for the 2020 General Conference.

Connecting Council motions passed

Proposal for Revisions to the Power and Duties of the Connecting Council

This policy seeks to refine the powers and duties of the Connecting Council as we continue to live into our new shared life as the Great Plains United Methodist Conference.

Responsibilities of the Connecting Council:

- 1) Review and evaluate the conference’s missional progress.
- 2) Align major initiatives of the GPUMC.
- 3) Enhance deep communication with all parts of the GPUMC.
- 4) To establish an internal structure necessary for the accomplishment of its work.
- 5) Take such actions between sessions of the annual conference as permitted, including:
 - a) As recommended by the Personnel Team, establish and maintain a comprehensive staffing plan for the annual conference, including number of staff, functions of staff, and location(s) of staff, for the fulfillment of the priorities of the GPUMC within the annual budget approved by the annual conference.
 - b) As recommended by the Personnel Team, establish and maintain the Great Plains United Methodist Conference staff handbook containing the personnel policies and practices for the staff of the conference.

Proposed Changes to Safe Gatherings Policy

Rationale: These changes help to clarify the scope of the policy by defining which persons must be trained.

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 in any activities or events sponsored by the Great Plains Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church, including its districts and programming agencies.

Under “Definitions”

Direct Contact – with children, youth or adults from vulnerable populations is defined as the care, supervision, guidance, transportation or control of such persons or routine interaction with children, youth or adults from vulnerable populations.

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 a youth under the age of 16 may assist as long as he or she is working with and under the direct supervision of a certified individual who is at least 21 years of age.

PROPOSAL FOR DELEGATION

The delegation to the 2016 General Conference continue as the delegation for the Great Plains Annual Conference through the special session of General Conference in 2019.

CLERGY EXCELLENCE

Clergy Excellence Director Report

Rev. Nancy Lambert, director of clergy excellence/assistant to the bishop

Clergy excellence staff continue to focus on developing clergy leaders for the conference. Our primary focus begins with the people who are in seminary on through the life-time of service in the local church,

Reports

with the goal of developing excellent clergy leaders. Conference staff work with the Board of Ordained Ministry, the Transition into Ministry program and the cabinet to develop leaders who are growing in their skills and competencies. In addition,

- The Rev. Ashlee Alley has worked with summer camps and youth gatherings such as the OneEvent to connect with young people who are growing in their faith and exploring where God might be calling them.
- The Clergy Excellence staff and the Board of Ordained Ministry partner with Congregational Excellence staff in promoting and deploying college interns into the local church. Pastoral Interns work directly in a local church, shadowing the pastor, working with laity, making hospital visits, attending meetings. They are learning the ins and outs of leadership in the church first hand which will help them discern if pastoral ministry is the right vocation for them.
- Clergy Excellence (including Transition into Ministry and Board of Ordained Ministry) is partnering with Congregational Excellence (including New Church Development) and the cabinet to provide quality training for clergy coaches, which will be at the end of June 2017.
- Clergy Excellence staff organized continuing education for
 - o Leadership development (Bearing Fruit w/ Tom Berlin)
 - o Preaching (Great Preaching for the Great Plains; Preaching Rocks)
 - o Worship (Worship Workshop for Small Member Churches)
 - o Personal development and self-knowledge (Process Communication Model and Emotional Intelligence)
- Orders and Fellowship in January is planned with Chairs of the Order of Elders and Order of Deacons, and Fellowship of Local Pastors and Associate Members. This year the focus was on reaching the young people with the good news of Christ. Stephen Cady, the main speaker for annual conference, was also the primary speaker for Orders and Fellowship. Other presenters included some of our own clergy and conference staff.
- Orders and Fellowship in January 2018 will be the Academy of Faith and Money, led by Clif Christopher. The academy focuses on stewardship and financial leadership in the local church.
- Boundary trainings are organized by Clergy Excellence staff to help remind clergy of the responsibility that accompanies the role of spiritual leader in the church. All clergy are to renew their Boundary certification every four years.

Board of Ordained Ministry

Rev Amy E Lippoldt, chair

We know the reputation of the Board of Ordained Ministry is all about paperwork but we are actually about the business of PEOPLE. Specifically, clergy people. Specifically, helping disciples hear the call to set apart ministry, then helping them grow in giftedness to serve the church, then supporting clergy throughout a lifetime of ministry.

Ten ways we strengthened the clergy cohort in 2016-2017

1. Support for nearly 40 people taking the first steps into ministry through the bi-annual Candidacy Summit
2. Support for five college aged students as pastoral interns. Two have graduated and are headed to seminary.
3. Reorganization of mentoring at all levels including new curriculum and the recruitment of dozens of new mentors at Orders and Fellowship 2017
4. Awards totaling \$25,000 in Culture of Call Grants to local church, campus ministries, camps and even a district! www.greatplainsumc.org/cocgrant
5. Support for an Extension Course of Study school at Hays, KS starting in Fall 2017 via Saint Paul School of Theology
6. Adoption of anti-plagiarism policy/procedures and review of all credentialing requirements to make sure they fit with the needs of the Great Plains and reveal the leadership skills we seek
7. Awards totaling more than \$100,000 of seminary/COS scholarships, along with efforts to maximize accessibility of all scholarship funds to increase awards in the future
8. Grants for continuing education and support for Clergy Excellence Programming
9. Recommendation of 16 persons for provisional membership/commissioning and 20 persons for full membership/ordination
10. Excellent team work, discernment and unity among 50 amazing BOM members, all those who serve on District Committees, and our outstanding Clergy Excellence staff

Thank you for your trust and support. If you made it to the end of this report, congratulations! Come find me at Annual Conference and whisper one of three key BOM words: “fitness, readiness, or effectiveness” and I’ll have a piece of candy for you!

Transition into Ministry Program

Rev. Ashlee Alley, Clergy Recruitment and Development Coordinator

The Transition into Ministry (TiM) program invited 3 young clergy

into the program in 2012. In the five years since, the program has grown numerically and in maturity. The vision statement for the TiM program since 2015 is as follows: TiM Pastors will be excellent preachers, collaborative clergy and confident leaders who will empower the laity and be empowered to flourish in ministry. The TiM program will aid Clergy Excellence staff in identifying best practices for training and developing all Great Plains clergy for excellence in ministry.

In appointive year 2016-2017, two new TiM Pastors were invited into the program. Thus, for Phase 1 (the first two years of the program that includes a mentoring component) the program included the following: four pastors served as Associate Pastors in teaching congregations, and one pastor was serving as a solo pastor for a total of 5 pastors in Phase 1. The Phase 2 group included the following: one pastor moved to a new solo appointment and joins four who have served in their appointments for one year. The ten pastors served in the following districts: Dodge City, Five Rivers, Hays, Kansas City, Missouri River, Wichita East and Wichita West.

The TiM Program is connected to two of the Conference Missional Priorities: 1.) enhancing the ministry of local churches with Christ-centered excellence and 2.) Leadership Development. Regarding the first priority, pastors in the TiM Program have the opportunity to expand their preaching and worship leadership skills through training, a sermon planning retreat and avenues for meaningful feedback in preaching. For the priority of leadership, pastors receive mentoring and support as their pastoral identity is forming and they establish foundational practices of becoming a strong pastor. We've taken a step forward in cultivating leadership skills through introducing the Fruitfulness Grant, a grant for the churches in years 3-5 to be able to grow in fruitfulness and for pastors to grow their leadership skills.

The TiM program ultimately provides a training ground for young clergy, the churches they serve and helps to identify practices for clergy development that influence clergy excellence more broadly. Looking ahead to 2017-2018, four pastors will be serving in their fifth and final year of the program. In anticipation of the program being fully mature, the TiM Board is preparing for a more extensive evaluation of the program.

CONGREGATIONAL EXCELLENCE

Vital Congregations Team

Rev. Eric Ford, chair

The mission of the vital congregations team is to equip and connect local congregations so that they may become more vital and effective in the mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. Vitality is intrinsically linked to a church's local context; therefore, to be vital, a church must intentionally be on a journey of learning, growing and leading as disciples of Jesus Christ.

Our vision is to see every congregation in the Great Plains Conference be a great church for the transformation of the world. To better serve, equip and connect all local congregations of the Great Plains Conference, the vital congregations team will manage its work through four sub-teams: hispanic ministries, lay ministries, small membership churches, and vital congregations. The following list outlines our 2018 priorities:

Hispanic Ministries:

1. Equipping effective leaders for hispanic ministry,
2. Developing congregations who are contextually aware and culturally competent to reach multiple generations of Hispanic/Latinos.
3. Encouraging cross-cultural and bi-vocational appointments by providing resources to the cabinet.

Lay Ministries:

1. Improve the communication of Lay Servant Ministries - purpose and practice - across the conference for both laity and clergy.
2. Increase the number of lay servants in training across the conference.
3. Assure close coordination between district directors, district lay leaders, and district superintendents regarding the strategy and training needs across the conference.

Small Membership Churches:

1. Provide an 18 month ABIDE process for churches with average weekly worship attendance under 50.
2. Host the annual Small Wonders conference.
3. Offer small churches the opportunity to have Vacation Bible School via summer interns.

Vital Congregations:

1. Work in conjunction with the cabinet in assessing the strength, health and vitality of our congregations.
2. Continue to refine vitality markers and connect congregations with best practices and resources.

General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM)

Danecia Jones, Senior Communications Specialist

The agency launched a new mission and vision at the start of 2017. The updated mission and vision simplify our role as the primary leadership development agency for The United Methodist Church.

MISSION

Our mission is to lead and connect the educational and ministerial life of The United Methodist Church.

VISION

We will continue to transform the world through the power of education and ministry in the Methodist tradition. We will serve God and the worldwide church in recruiting, nurturing, and educating lay and clergy leaders who seek wisdom and live ethically as God's peacemakers.

EDUCATION

The **Collegiate Ministry Office** at GBHEM hosted Imagine What's NEXT, a three-day event for young adults ages 18-26 to discern their call of lay or clergy leadership and learn ways to connect that God-given call through the work of the church. Nearly 700 students participated in NEXT, an increase of nearly 40 percent from prior years.

The **Young Clergy Initiative** funds innovative projects across the church to attract young people to ordained ministry. The \$7 million initiative has funded more than 75 projects. A biennial event, **Exploration** provides a platform for young adults ages 18-26 to hear, discern, and respond to God's call to ordained ministry. In 2015, 475 attended Exploration. The 2017 event will take place in Portland, Oregon, November 3 – 5.

The agency has a **Global Methodist Education Network** that includes more than 1,000 institutions of higher education around the world. GBHEM supports **Schools, Colleges and Universities** across the U.S.

The Schools, Colleges, and Universities Office at GBHEM hosted 30 of the school's presidents at the CEO Meeting of the Council of Independent Colleges in Orlando, Florida in January 2017. In addition, the office hosted 35 presidents at the National Association of Schools & Colleges of The United Methodist Church (NASCUMC) winter meeting in Washington, D.C.

Global Education and New Initiatives at GBHEM provides technical assistance, financial support, scholarships and recruitment aids for five target regions across the globe: Africa, Asia Pacific, Latin America, Europe and the U.S. Global Education works with the United-Methodist related schools, particularly institutions of higher education and theology schools. In addition to schools, the office supports international and regional associations, as well as oversees the Methodist Global Education Fund for Leadership Development. The **Black College Fund** invests in the hopes and dreams of those students attending United Methodist-related historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs). The Black College Fund distributes 95 percent (on average more than \$9 million) of all funds received equally to the 11 HBCUs. The fund provides for faculty development, infrastructure maintenance, and for students who need financial support and scholarship, helping the HBCUs to keep tuition and fees competitive. The Black College Fund was pleased to announce that five of its HBCU's enrolled 22 Hispanic students as part of the Latino student access program in 2016.

The agency works with the Commission on **Central Conference Theological Education** (CCTE) to distribute grants for the theological education of pastoral leaders in the Central Conferences. The 2012 General Conference established a \$5 million CCTE fund, and more than 250 grants have been awarded across 22 countries to date. Due to its impact, the fund was doubled at the 2016 General Conference. New grant recipients were announced in March 2017.

In 2016, GBHEM's Office of **Loans and Scholarships** awarded 2,025 students with more than \$3.1 million in scholarships and 406 students with more than \$1.9 million in loans. The loans and scholarships are open to United Methodist students and seminarians who are seeking to further their education.

GBHEM reestablished its **publishing ministry** in 2016 to engage, nurture, and advocate for the intellectual life of The United Methodist Church. Through this ministry, GBHEM produces academic resources for the constituencies of the agency, including single-author and multi-author works, as well as edited volumes. More than 10 new and revised books have been released under the publishing ministry.

MINISTRY

In partnership with Discipleship Ministries, GBHEM provides e-readers to theological schools in remote areas of Africa and Asia, offering access to the latest textbooks and references books. The **E-Reader Project** has distributed nearly 1,500 devices to 22 theological seminaries, loaded with publications in English, French, and Portuguese.

Individuals pursuing **licensed and ordained ministry** find the resources they need to overcome challenges and barriers sometimes encountered when responding to God's call in GBHEM's Candidacy Office. The office coordinated a successful Board of Ordained Ministry Quadrennial Leadership Development in fall 2016. In addition, the office revised the BOM Handbook following General Conference along with the conference relations resources for the 2016 Book of Discipline. The Candidacy Office is also developing an eight-year Clergy Assessment Process and GBHEM's Effective Ministry Assessment (EMA) leadership development tool.

Course of Study and **Specialized Theological Education** provides resources for local pastors to gain the education and training needed for service across the church, with courses available in Spanish. The office launched Portuguese Course Study programs in 2016 and will continue to expand. GBHEM launched three new education options for part-time pastors in December 2016: an Extension of the Course of Study School of Ohio (COSSO) located at United Theological Seminary, a satellite Course of Study program with Saint Paul School of Theology in Hays, Kansas, and a pilot Escuela de Cursos de Estudios (ECE), a Spanish Course of Study, in Denver, Colorado.

Chaplains and pastoral counselors are credentialed through the **United Methodist Endorsing Agency**, which provides resources for chaplains and counselors serving inside and outside the walls of the church. UMEA supports those working in 25 ministry settings such health care, military, prison, workplace, marriage and family, specialized and more. The office is completing the second pilot initiative to evaluate the effectiveness of a hybrid Clinical Pastoral Education program sponsored by GBHEM.

GBHEM leads clergy continuing education programs, providing resources for spiritual formation and professional development to help ensure an effective clergy for the church. **Clergy Lifelong Learning** provides an innovative platform for ministry through the multilingual UMC Cyber Campus. In addition, the office organized the 60th anniversary celebration of full clergy rights for women in

GREAT PLAINS CONFERENCE**Reports**

August 2016 at the United Methodist Clergywomen gathering, which included 450 attendees from 27 countries, speaking six languages. This office continues to provide guidance in cross-cultural/cross-racial leadership development throughout the denomination.

The agency supports **deacons and diaconal ministers** as they lead the people of God into ministries of compassion and justice, and interpret the needs of the world to the church. The office of Deacon Ministry Development and Provisional Membership led the celebrations for the 20th anniversary of the “recovery” of full-member clergy deacons for the church. In addition, a new certification in parish nursing was created, and the certification in camping and retreat ministries was updated (in collaboration with Discipleship Ministries).

New Church Development, Inc.

Chad Anglemyer, chair

The purpose of New Church Development (NCD) is to support the missional priority of the conference by planting great new faith communities.

THE SOIL

The prayers, presence, gifts, service and witness of the Great Plains Conference is the soil out of which our new churches emerge. The covenant that we share through our annual conference allows our new church planters and their teams to build and share the grace and love of Jesus Christ where they are planted.

THE ENVIRONMENT

NCD provides the environment necessary to facilitate the process of church planting. This is accomplished in large part through the establishment and ongoing training and in three key areas:

Planter Incubator

Anyone wanting to explore leadership possibilities and kingdom calls are welcome at Planter Incubator sessions. This is a structured multi-session group process lead by conference staff and outside resource people that help participants navigate through creation of a ministry plan with particular focus on church planting. Not all who go through this will be planters but all will find their voice, their place and their ministry.

2016-2017 Activity:

- In early 2017, 10 participants pitched their plant plans in the first ever Shark Tank experience. This allowed them to help find their voice for perfecting and casting a vision - the first step in making dreams become reality.
- 20 lay and clergy trained and assessed in Planter Incubator.

Core Crucible

The Crucible is a testing grounds for planters and core teams to build the leadership that will be the essence of the new church plant. This community of planters and leaders provides an intentional experience on a monthly basis to gather and encourage one another while sharing best practices. The faculty team presents information and training on pertinent issues facing new church plants such as financing, fund-raising, partnerships, community involvement, ministry opportunities, self-assessment of competencies and team-building. Crucible provides a deep support system and holds participants accountable to benchmarks.

2016-2017 Activity:

- 7 new Core teams participated in Core Crucible
- 9 leaders trained for planting new faith communities.

Church Quest

The Church Quest program is the support system provided for new church plants. Encouragement and assessment to become a successful plant by becoming self-sustaining, self-sufficient, and self-governing. This process begins with an appointment by the cabinet in tandem with New Church Development.

2016 – 2017 Activity:

- 2 plant plans accepted in 2016
 - Esperanza de Vida, Kansas City, KS
 - Aldersgate Renew, Wichita, KS
- 2 plant plans accepted in 2017
 - Neighbors, Lincoln, NE
 - Olathe Grace Satellite, Olathe, KS
 - ConectioN Point, Lincoln, NE

THE HARVEST

There are currently 8 active church plants and 2 plants discontinued in the past year. New Church Development seeks to begin 20 new faith communities in the Great Plains by the year 2020. NCD references this as the 20 by 2020 strategic plan that was approved at the 2015 annual conference.

2016-2017 Church Plants: LifeBridge (KC, KS); Urban Abbey (Omaha, NE); Aldersgate Renew (Wichita, KS); Esperanza de Vida (KC, KS); Saint Mark SE Campus (Wichita, KS); Neighbors (Lincoln, NE); Olathe Grace Satellite (Olathe, KS); ConnectioN Point (Lincoln, NE).

GREAT PLAINS UNITED METHODIST CAMPS, INC.

Stuart Mack, chair, Sara Shaw, Coordinator of Camping Ministry

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 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. See more at: <http://www.greatplainsumc.org/camps#sthash.ecSfZoSC.dpuf>

Last year we set a goal to use the call to ministries cards to identify youth feeling a call to ministry and to track how many campers made an important decision about camp. Between all the Great Plains Camps there were over 400 campers who made an important decision about Christ and about 175 youth who are feeling a call into ministry of some sort. We expect to see these numbers increase this summer and each following summer. Below are some of the reasons why we expect to see such a continued growth.

CAMP IS SUCH AN IMPORTANT MINISTRY.

“Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it.” Proverbs 22:6 (NIV)

Why do we send our children to sports camps, music camps, girl scout camps or boy scout camps? We send them because we want our children to work as a team and to gain valuable skills from their coach to help them be successful in life now and in college and as

adults. Summer church camp is no different except that campers are gaining skills that will help them to grow their faith by learning how to engage others in Christian community by gaining skills learning how to pray, worship, Bible study, devotions, and live and work in Christian fellowship. Campers learn to listen to their coach, Jesus, to be the best they can be. I would contend that attending a Christian camp should be the number one priority each summer for a child with a faith in God will have a compass and ability to be successful in God's eyes by living a life of love and service to others making this world a better place for everyone who encounters this love.

"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." John 13:34-35. (NIV).

"For countless individuals, camp has been a place where the presence of God is so apparent, that they can't help but grow and experience joy! Every day we open the doors, we serve our guests and campers with the intention that they can deepen their relationship with Jesus Christ. We teach those things you're teaching in the church, but we teach them in canoes, and on rock walls, and around campfires! Who couldn't use a little variety and a few new memories to link to their understanding of the Gospel? In my opinion, we ALL could!"
Justin & Amy, Camp Comeca

SENDING CAMPERS TO CAMP HELPS MY CHURCH, MY CHILD, AND ME.

"God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body." 1 Corinthians 12:18-20 (NIV)

There is a difference only you can make! If every person discovered their God given purpose and part in life and lived accordingly, amazing things would happen in our communities both in the church and community at large. Camp helps our children (and adults!) to find their God given purpose in life. When living according to God's purpose, a person will be excited and energized and active because that person will be living in joy and peace according to their God given DNA through love and service to others. A person who decides to follow Jesus as Lord and savior will discover their purpose for living. Through retreats, public events, volunteering, donating services, summer camps, and personal witness the camp invites, welcomes, and ministers to the church and community.

“A new command I give you: love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” John 13:34-35. (NIV).

“Each year there are multiple campers that give me friendship bracelets that they have made at camp. Each bracelet is more than just a bracelet, it is a memory. A memory of conversations. A memory of each goal that a camper reached. A memory of my friendship with that camper. At the end of each summer I save each bracelet as a forever memory in a small box. In this box, one has a special place in my heart. This bracelet is a simple white strand of string tied together at the ends. This bracelet was given to me by a camper named Noah. Noah had a difficult time opening to people. On the last night of camp that week, after countless hours of spending time with him, he came to me teary eyed. What he said next will stick with me forever. He looked at me, tears rolling down his cheeks, and said, “Meg, I’m going to miss you. I don’t want to leave camp. I want you to keep this to remember me.” He then slipped his simple white string off his wrist onto my wrist and thanked me for teaching him about God. That is my story, my “Why Camp”. Those little moments like that make me realize how important my job is and why camp is such a powerful ministry tool.” Meg, program director Camp Norwesca

WHY SHOULD PARENTS/CHURCHES SEND THEIR CHILD(REN) TO CAMP?

“Be still, and know that I am God” Psalms 46:10 (NIV)

As a community of faith, we believe in providing every opportunity to impact lives through intentional Christian Community. Camp provides a setting and experience away from the crazy pace of everyday life where campers have a chance to ‘be still and know God’ and listen and hear God’s voice in their lives. The Holy Spirit moves and changes hearts eternally. Once a heart is sparked, the fire can grow through the continued prayers and support from the church community and individuals as mentors and teachers through the life of the local church. Camps are an extension of the Great Plains Conference churches. Support, volunteers and service from local churches are welcomed to make summer camps effective and glorifying to God. Camp for many is where the Holy Spirit acts as the catalyst to change a life eternally to God’s glory and God’s purposes.

Camp is where children and youth can thrive. They are given a chance to explore and grow in a safe, unplugged, organized chaos environment. While at camp campers will develop and experience:

- Friendship: Friends are one of the most vital forces for shaping a child’s character, and camps create an environment where

Reports

friendships form and grow. Campers encourage kids to share adventure with peers from diverse backgrounds over five or six days under spiritual guidance, allowing friendships to mature.

- **Self-discovery:** The overpowering sights and sounds of the digital world stifle personal reflection and creativity, while the camp's natural setting and challenging programs create moments for self-awareness and creative thought.

- **Spiritual input:** Christian camps present the gospel through chapel services, Bible study groups, counselor-led sharing times, and campfires, providing opportunities for campers to make spiritual choices and receive counseling.

- **Role models:** At camp, kids and leaders interact constantly in worship, play, adventure, discovery and meals—the stuff of daily life. In this setting, the friendship of older Christians makes a great impact.

- **Creation:** Our world of wire and concrete dulls the spirit to the wonders of the nature. Many youngsters spend most of their hours indoors, going out only to move from one indoor place to the next. Campfire worship, nature hikes, outpost overnights and week-long out trips bring campers close to creation. The near presence of forest, field, hill and lake stirs campers' hearts.

- **Change of pace:** Within the camp's full schedule are pockets of leisure that provide the camper with breathing room. Away from the distractions common to life at home, and immersed in a Christian community, campers often find new life perspectives. God's Spirit always deals with hearts one on one and camp often provides the stillness that is mandated in Scripture: "Be still, and know that I am God" (Ps. 46:10).

- **Leadership growth:** The camp, more than any other Christian agency, provides openings for entry-level leadership experience. Most camp leaders once were campers. A significant percentage of Christian leaders first tasted leadership in a camp and trace their sense of calling to a camp experience.

GET INVOLVED IN CAMPING

Call the camp directors of the camp closest to you. They can help you get involved. Volunteer at camp. Review Curriculum with camps. Have a retreat at camp. Take time away and have a little renewal vacation for yourself at camp. Bring your church to camp. Send children from your church to camp and come with them to help during that week of camp. Send children from your community to camp regardless if they are with your church or not. Use camp as an outreach tool to share Christ's love with your community.

Campus Ministry

Rev. April Wegehaupt, Chair of GPUMCM

Great Plains United Methodist Campus Ministry, Inc.

The Great Plains United Methodist Campus Ministry Board fulfills missional priorities of the conference under Congregational Excellence in leadership development.

Our continued vision is to develop 2,000 student leaders to be disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world by the year 2020.

Our adopted philosophy for ministry is, “Campus Ministry is a movement of grace empowering students to live transformed lives to transform the world.” We seek to achieve this philosophy by creating spaces where students can encounter grace, experience equipping love, and discover engaging transformation.

Campus Ministries in the Great Plains have three core values.

- 1. Missional.** The campus ministry is a missional outpost to the campus. Colleges are mini-cities with residents who have their own language, rules and values. Our campus ministers, just like any out-of-country missionary, must learn this culture in order to minister to this society in which the college student is immersed. Also, just like an out-of-country missionary, our campus ministries must raise money in order to support themselves. The conference supports only a portion of their budgets and everything else, from volunteer hours, building needs and ministerial funds come from generous partners who understand the importance of campus ministry to college students.
- 2. Methodist.** Methodists started when John and Charles Wesley, and a few of their friends gathered together in a ‘holy club’ at Oxford University. The club met to discuss religious concerns and to help each other lead disciplined, methodical lives of worship, study and service. Because of their method, other students called them “Methodists.” 200 years later the United Methodist Church is still on campuses with opportunities to invite students to gather in worship, service, study and fellowship.
- 3. Movement.** Campus ministries are an extension of the church, reaching students and young adults in this generation. The campus ministries go to the students,

Reports

invest in their lives, invite them to practice their faith, and connect them with a loving God so that they can be sent out in the world with a God's view of who they are and how God is calling them to use their gifts in the world. Higher education and campus ministries send forth students and invite students in constant invitation to a transitory student population.

Through many transitions in 2016 the GPUMCM Board has worked to address concerns of adequate funding for ministry sites, we continue to look into building evaluative measures flexible enough to be applied to each unique campus, determine where support is needed for not only each ministry, but each minister, and the local boards that support those ministries.

Reports

The following are several steps the GPUMCM Board is working to live into its 2020 vision, some of these steps have already been put into practice:

- We have implemented a new grant allotments application with detailed narrative assessments of ministry vitality.
- We are hosting an annual conference dinner to share the story of campus ministry and unique dynamics of doing ministry with students on college campuses.
- We are developing local church connections, and encouraging local church contributions and fundraising to their unique ministry sites.
- Conducted site visits in the Fall and Spring semesters with district superintendents, UCMCM Board Representative, conference staff, local board representative, campus minister, students.
- Training local boards in each state-school or private-school campus ministry.
- We have been asking our Great Plains churches who knows students who may be attending college to share their information and the information about our United Methodist campus ministries.
- *We are restructuring the times we meet together as campus ministers and Campus Ministry Board to work towards being the most effective we can be with our time and resources.

The Great Plains has **10 Campus Ministries and 4 United Methodist Schools.**

United Methodist Schools –

- Nebraska Wesleyan University (Lincoln, NE),
- Kansas Wesleyan University (Salina, KS),
- Baker University (Baldwin City, KS)
- Southwestern College (Winfield, KS)

Our Great Plains United Methodist Campus Ministries are present at the following campuses:

- University of Nebraska-Lincoln - (Lincoln, NE)
- University of Nebraska - Omaha (Omaha, NE)
- University of Nebraska - Kearney (Kearney, NE)
- Creighton University (Omaha, NE)
- Kansas State University (Manhattan, KS)
- University of Kansas (Lawrence, KS)
- Emporia State University (Emporia, KS)
- Fort Hays State University (Hays, KS)
- Washburn University (Topeka, KS)
- Wichita State University (Wichita, KS)

Want to Know more? Look us up at www.greatplainsumc.org/campusministries

MERCY AND JUSTICE

Mercy and Justice Team

by Rev. Sarah Marsh, chair

The Great Plains' Mercy and Justice Team exists to equip and empower local congregations in the work of mercy and justice ministries as we work together to make disciples for Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. We have focused our efforts since the formation of the Great Plains Annual Conference on bridging the gap between responding to a need (mercy) and seeking long-term change (justice), in order for justice to become part of the language and DNA of our annual conference. Last summer the team transitioned from three years of leadership with Rev. Kent Little to a new chairperson, Rev. Sarah Marsh. The team works closely with Rev. Kalaba Chali, the Great Plains' Mercy and Justice Coordinator. Over the last year, the team has focused on strategic planning, stewardship and grant-making, leadership development and education, as well as global and domestic mercy and justice ministries.

Strategic Planning

The team is currently revising a strategic plan to guide the work of the next five years. Progress to date has resulted in three overarching aims designed to bend the culture of our annual conference towards justice:

- We will seek to increase the percentage of local congregations involved in progress oriented justice ministries by ten percent over a five year period.
- This will require integrated and ongoing vision and ministry development across the Great Plains (episcopal

Reports

leadership, lay leadership, conference staff, and Mercy and Justice Team) for mercy and justice work.

- Additionally, we will work to ensure the Great Plains' budget reflects our annual conference mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ *for the transformation of the world*, with a minimum of ten percent of the total Great Plains' budget allocated towards mercy and justice ministries.

We plan to complete the strategic planning process this summer.

Stewardship and Grant-making

After a vote of the annual conference last year, our team pulled together a small group (the Poverty Alleviation Task Force, led by Rev. Patrick McLaughlin) to create a grant-making process for the \$60,000 allocated for relational anti-poverty ministries. Grants have been made to fourteen recipients.

The team has worked closely with conference staff over the last year to strengthen processes, relationships, communication and stewardship with our conference mission agencies. Point persons from the team have been assigned as liaisons to each of the agencies. A coordinated evaluation process was utilized for 2018 funding requests. We plan to continue to enhance clarity around criteria for funding and to work towards relational covenants with each agency.

Leadership Development and Education

Our social justice summer internship program, Micah Corps, continues to draw young adults from across the country for an intensive learning and serving experience. We have recruited two seminarians to co-lead this summer's program who will work with supervisor support to lead a cohort of ten interns in exploring faith and developing as leaders in justice.

We hosted a fall educational event in Lincoln, *For the Transformation of the World: The Great Plains Talks Race, Gender, Poverty, and Environment*, which featured General Secretary Rev. Susan Henry-Crowe of the General Board of Church and Society. The day-long event focused on addressing poverty in concert with related issues. Plans are underway for this year's fall event to be held in Wichita October 28. Jim Wallis of Sojourners will be the keynote speaker.

In collaboration with the 2016 Annual Conference Planning Team, we hosted Archbishop Elias Chacour from Galilee during our last annual conference session and mission lunch. Chacour shared from his experience of promoting peace and nonviolence in the Israeli-Palestinian peace efforts.

We also partnered with Clergy Excellence and district superintendents to offer training and resources for cross-cultural/cross-racial pastors and congregations. We provided grants to laity and pastors from these churches to attend trainings.

Global and Domestic Mercy and Justice Ministry

Two representatives from our team traveled to Nigeria in March to visit partners with the Jalingo Orphanage and to participate in a nation-wide gathering of the United Methodist Church in Nigeria at the Nigeria Roundtable. Discussions with the Jalingo Orphanage centered on reviewing our partnership covenant in light of current needs.

In December, leaders from across the Great Plains, including the Rev. Kalaba Chali, Rev. Mitch Reece (Wichita East DS), Rev. Bill Ritter (Blue River DS), Rev. Dee Williamston (Salina DS), Rev. Cindy Karges (Gateway DS), and two representatives from Young Adult Ministry traveled to Zimbabwe to strengthen relationships with the Zimbabwe United Methodist Church. As a result of that trip and conversations with Africa University, the Mercy and Justice Team has established three four-year scholarships for young adults identified through our mission partners in Nigeria, Zimbabwe, and Haiti.

In addition, the Mercy and Justice Team works on a host of local, national, and global issues through a number of sub-teams and task forces under its umbrella. These groups and their leaders include: Executive Team (Sarah Marsh), Micah Corps Planning and Visioning Team (Kalaba Chali), Peace with Justice Advisory Board (Andrea Paret), Commission on Diversity (Louise Niemann), Mission Partnership & Volunteer in Mission Grants (Kalaba Chali), Holy Land Task Force (Carol Garwood), Refugees Task Force (Hollie Tapley), Poverty Alleviation Task Force (Patrick McLaughlin), Creation Care Team (Carol Windrum), Immigration Rapid Response Team (Sandy Sypherd), Special Needs Task Force (Rose Roberts and April Wegehaupt), and the Global AIDS Task Force (Leellen Haynes).



Mission Agency Support

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
---	-----

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 Alabanza y Adoracion</i>	350
<i>Imperial Ebenezer Hispanic</i>	351
El Mesias UMC - Wichita KS	352
Evangelica UMC - Garden City, KS	353
Center of Grace - Olathe, KS	354
Native American Ministries	360
Sacred Winds Native Mission Cong - Lincoln, NE	361
Korean UMC - Wichita, KS	370
Danner Mem. Scholarship African-Amer Students	375
Living Hope UMC - Omaha, NE	376
New Visions Community UMC - Lincoln, NE	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	

David Upp Missionary Support, KS	984
Crossroads Center - Hastings, NE	991
First UMC Television Ministry - Wichita, KS	995
Sunrise Community Services - Chadron, NE	997

Disaster Response

By Russell Anderson, Chair

The conference year began with our continued presence on the DeWitt, Nebraska Long Term Recovery Committee. After the spring flood, 17 volunteers worked in the community for a total of 119 hours. The unmet needs were completed in September of 2016.

On July 7, 2016 Eureka, Kansas experienced an F-2 and a F-3 tornado. The path of both tornadoes affected much of the town. The Great Plains Conference was represented by 25 ERT volunteers, many of them working multiple days during the relief phase. A total of 1072 volunteer hours were worked. Some unmet needs are still surfacing and are being met by Disaster Response funds as they arise.

The communities of Mulvane, Belle Plaine, Haysville, Derby, Peck, Rose Hill, and Wichita, Kansas were impacted from four different floods that occurred during the months of August and September of 2016. Great Plains ERT's partnered with the American Red Cross to provide damage assessments. Through this collaborative effort, we were able to more quickly deploy ERT's to do muck out and debris removal quicker. ERT's began work the morning after the first flood, and our work continues today. To date, we have had a total 179 volunteers work 2402 hours. It is anticipated that the recovery phase in Mulvane alone will last until early in 2018.

Great Plains Disaster Response was awarded a grant by the Midwest Recovery Center for the hiring and training of two disaster case managers and a disaster case manager coordinator. The case managers were hired to serve Eureka and Mulvane, with working 2 days in one location, and two in the other. Their work began in late November of 2016 and it is anticipated to be done by late 2017. They work 40 hours a week, meeting with clients who were affected by the disaster, to help formulate a recovery plan and to help fulfill their unmet needs.

During October of 2016, we had 4 ERT's work in Fall River, Kansas for a total of 6 hours, and had 17 ERT's work in Severy, Kansas for a total of 127 hours. Both volunteer opportunities were due to a flood.

March and April of 2017, brought the worst wildfires Kansas and Nebraska had ever experienced. One ERT worked the Nebraska wildfire relief for a total of 36 hours. We had 12 ERT's work the wildfire relief in Reno and Clark Counties.

Following the tornado and apartment/home fires in the Kansas City area, we had 7 ERT's provide 16 hours of relief work.

To date (January 1, 2016 through April 11, 2017), the Great Plains Disaster Response Ministry has provided \$76,940.45 in grant assistance to home owners who have been affected by disasters. As we strive to "Be" the church through our prayers, presence, gifts, and service, the Great Plains Disaster Response Ministry works toward faithful stewardship of our time, talents, and resources.

Our goal for 2017 is to prayerfully revisit our policy and procedure guidelines so we can better meet the needs of those affected by disaster in more timely and effective ways. We are also examining the vast area of the Great Plains Conference and working toward strategically locating regional coordinators along with district coordinators. Our greatest need, first and foremost, to accomplish this is to insure all regional and district coordinator positions are filled.

General Board of Global Ministries – From Everywhere to Everywhere www.umcmmission.org

By Carol Ekdahl-Garwood, Conference Secretary of Global Ministries with information from General Board of Global Ministries.

Carol Ekdahl-Garwood serves as our Conference Secretary of Global Ministries (CSGM). The South Central Jurisdiction CSGM's held their 2016 fall meeting in New Orleans, Louisiana. The group had the opportunity to visit areas that were affected by Hurricane Katrina and met with author Ellen Blue, who wrote "[In Case of Katrina](#)". Much discussion was held around the subject of encouraging churches in our conferences to welcome and invite missionaries who are itinerating through our areas to speak in their churches, to encourage churches to contribute to The Advance, and to consider entering in to a covenant relationship with a missionary, mission project, or ministry.

In 2016, \$631,454 was donated to the projects of The Advance by individuals and groups/churches in our conference.

100 percent of all donations given through The Advance go to the chosen mission project or ministry. Each Advance project has been vetted and approved by Global Ministries. The Advance works with church leaders around the world to ensure that projects are

Reports

aligned with the goals of the United Methodist Church in the local area, help develop partnerships that are mutually advantageous, tell the story of projects and missionaries, and report how giving is making an impact.

Global Ministries has personnel, programs and mission partners in over 100 countries. It facilitates international and domestic mission, including missionary service. Through the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR), Global Ministries provides humanitarian relief and development on behalf of the denomination.

The four mission goals of GBFM are (1) Make disciples of Jesus Christ, (2) Strengthen, develop, and renew Christian congregations and communities, (3) Alleviate human suffering, (4) Seek justice, freedom, and peace.

A Volunteer In Mission trip to the Holy Land has been planned for September 5 through September 16, 2017. The members of the group will be meeting with United Methodist Missionary, Reverend Kristen Brown as part of their educational experience.

If you wish to discuss hosting a missionary, need information on how to participate in The Advance, or have an interest in participating in the Volunteer In Mission trip, you can reach Carol Ekdahl-Garwood, Great Plains CSGM by emailing her at cgarwood62@gmail.com.

Peace with Justice Ministries

Andrea Paret, Peace with Justice Coordinator

<http://www.greatplainsumc.org/peacewithjustice>

[Facebook.com/peacewithjusticeministriesgp](https://www.facebook.com/peacewithjusticeministriesgp)

In our 2016 Book of Resolutions we read, "The United Methodist Church believes God's love for the world is an active and engaged love, a love seeking justice and liberty. We cannot just be observers. So we care enough about people's lives to risk interpreting God's love, to take a stand, to call each of us into a response, no matter how controversial or complex. The church helps us think and act out a faith perspective, not just responding to all the other 'mind-makers-up' that exist in our society."

Peace with Justice Ministries (PWJ) aims to make shalom visible and active in people's lives and communities. Many peace advocates across our conference are taking action, partnering with and speaking out on behalf of those whose voices are not heard, who are not

treated as cherished children of God. Peace advocates pray for peace, participate in vigils and peaceful protests, contact state and federal senators and representatives advocating for just laws that ensure human dignity for all, build relationships with neighbors from diverse backgrounds, support dialogue and diplomacy on the local and international level and stand with those who are persecuted and denied help. Jesus reminds us that how we treat the hungry, the thirsty, the homeless, the immigrant and refugee, the detained and prisoner, is how we treat him. We are called to welcome, support and empower those in need. “Whenever you did one of these things to someone overlooked or ignored, that was me – you did it to me.” (Matt. 25)

In 2016, 329 churches across our Conference contributed \$28,000 through the PWJ Sunday Offering. Half of the raised amount stays in our conference to support peace and justice work. The other half is sent to the General Board of Church and Society to support such work around the globe. **Thank you Great Plains churches for your support of the PWJ Sunday!**

Many peace advocates and church groups work tirelessly for peace and justice, giving of their time and resources. Activities that received financial support from PWJ Sunday funds throughout the last year include:

- Four representatives from our conference participated in the Ecumenical Advocacy Days in April 2016, focusing on racism, class and power.
- Members of the Holy Land Task Force joined a United Methodists For Kairos Response gathering to worship, pray, share, learn, and strategize how to continue to work for peace in the Holy Land.
- Caring for God’s creation included support of members of our conference who joined the water protectors at Standing Rock and an Elders for the Earth gathering.
- Immigrant Welcoming Communities/Sanctuary training with persons who had lived in detention centers and in sanctuary sharing about their experiences were offered. Congratulations to First UMC in Hastings for covenanting to be an Immigrant Welcoming Congregation.
- Students from Emporia Campus Ministries went on a Civil Rights Odyssey during spring break.
- Peace organizations in Kansas and Nebraska received support and collaborated with us.

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God” (Matt. 5:9).

OTHER

Committee on Lay Servant Ministry

Mary Feit CLSp, Director of Lay Servant Ministry

The mission of the Great Plains Conference Committee on Lay Servant Ministry (GPCCLSM) is to empower and strengthen the role of laity in the missional priorities of the conference. The mission will be enhanced by creating a culture of call, encouraging and supporting clergy/laity partnerships, offering both spiritual and leadership training opportunities and removing as many obstacles to lay leadership opportunities as possible.

The GPCCLSM creates a culture of call by offering the LSM Basic Course in numerous local churches throughout the conference. The Basic Course is an opportunity to study leadership and discipleship skills as well as gifts and talents of each participant. A culture of call is also enhanced by providing information about LSM to clergy as well as laity of the opportunities for training and service available within the Lay Servant Ministry process. These informational sessions will emphasize the need for CLSp and CLMs and encourage clergy to seek out and support promising candidates. We also encourage each district director to create at least one opportunity annually for lay servants to network.

Lay Servant Ministry is most effective in the presence of a dynamic clergy/laity partnership. The GPCCLSM supports and encourages such partnerships by offering lay and clergy leaders processes and opportunities to strengthen their partnerships as spiritual leaders so that the gifts of each can be used most effectively. Partnerships are also supported by a searchable database of all lay servants accessible to clergy and others.

The role of the lay servant in the mission of the conference is supported by offering a wide variety of LSM training throughout the conference which focus on developing leadership as well as discipleship skills. We advocate for laity by identifying the role of the Lay Servant in the conference strategic plan as well as providing informational sessions to district superintendents, district administrative assistants, clergy, laity, on the role of the Lay Servant. These sessions could be enhanced by a video describing the role of the lay servant and the recent changes in the CLM rules.

We are in process of exploring removing as many obstacles to lay leadership opportunities as possible. Dave Brant of Great Plains Conference staff has completed a study which compares and

Reports

contrasts the three CLM training programs available and has made a recommendation of the most efficient as well as comprehensive program. CLM candidates will be tracked through the database and interview process. We also are partnering with the conference lay leaders in order to explore shared opportunities to develop and empower leaders with focus on the mission of the conference.

Great Plains Conference Lay Leader Report

Courtney Fowler, Conference Lay Leader

As we make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world, we ourselves are transformed in the work of Christ. We endeavor to develop strong lay leadership to serve the mission field of the local church. We believe our churches are filled with talented laity committed to serving Christ and others and we encourage each person to discern their gifts for ministry.

Lay Leadership Team

In our fourth year as the Great Plains Conference lay leadership team, we have experienced transition among our associate conference lay leaders. We appreciate the gifts and service of Tom Watson of Kearney, Nebraska and Micole Harms-Brazell of Lincoln, Nebraska, both of whom chose to serve in other capacities beginning July 1, 2016. We were excited to welcome new members Keith Olsen of Grant, Nebraska and Lisa Maupin of Lincoln, Nebraska as associate conference lay leaders and look forward to sharing their gifts with the Great Plains. Courtney Fowler continues to serve as the conference lay leader. Carolyn May and Oliver Green continue in their role as associate conference lay leaders. In addition to the five-person leadership team, there are currently 17 district lay leaders.

A Year of Transition

During our 2016 Annual Conference, the Great Plains laity bid farewell to Bishop Scott Jones and his wife Mary Lou as they made an episcopal transition to the Texas Annual Conference. On September 1, 2016, the Great Plains welcomed Bishop Ruben Saenz and his wife Maye, who come from the Rio Texas Conference. Many of our laity participated in various activities related to this leadership transition within the Great Plains, including welcoming and listening sessions in each district. We continue to be part of the discernment process in our local churches and districts as we consider the future of the Great Plains.

General and Jurisdictional Conferences 2016

General Conference was held in Portland, Oregon in May. Courtney Fowler chaired the Great Plains 30-member delegation. Our delegation was a diverse representation of Great Plains laity and

clergy who brought caring, articulate voices on behalf of the conference. The Great Plains conference hosted the South Central Jurisdictional Conference which was held in Wichita, Kansas in July. Three new episcopal leaders were elected, including Rev. Ruben Saenz who was later assigned to the Great Plains (area) conference.

The Future of the UMC

One of the biggest developments to come out of General Conference was a motion to seek the leadership of the Council of Bishops to lead the church in a time of division. As a result, a special commission called the Way Forward Commission was formed of laity and clergy from across the UMC connection, and whose purpose is to discern a way to maintain unity amidst division and to report these findings at a 2019 special called General Conference. As the Great Plains laity, we add our prayers and support to this effort and call on all our members to hold the commission, their work and the process in prayer.

Great Plains United Methodist Women

Karen Dunlap, Conference President

“Nehemiah 8:10...for the joy of the Lord is your strength”.

As we enter our fourth year as the Great Plains Conference United Methodist Women, we have a foundation laid, we are building upon it as we look at new and continuing ways to positively impact the lives of women, children and youth in the Great Plains and around the globe.

In February, we were engaged in looking at the impact of state legislation on the lives of women, children and youth. It included a post card campaign in Nebraska regarding funding for agencies caring for children and youth. In April, we are holding our first conference-wide spiritual retreat to deepen our faith journey both individually and as an organization.

Our women have been selected to serve in key leadership roles beyond our conference – Louise Niemann serves as the Chair of the Committee on Nominations for the South Central Jurisdiction United Methodist Women and Charlotte Morrow is the President of the South Central Jurisdiction United Methodist Women. Charlotte along with Rose Roberts serves as a national organization Program Advisory Group member.

Louise Niemann serves as the President of the Board of Directors for Epworth Village, one of our National Mission Institutions.

Reports

For the third year in a row, we have exceeded our national pledge to mission and have given over ¼ of a million dollars as our pledge to mission. The Great Plains United Methodist Women lead the way – our giving is #1 not only in our jurisdiction but also nationally! In our three years as a conference we have given over \$2.25 million to mission.

With our United Methodist Women sisters, we put Faith, Hope and Love in Action as we:

- * sponsor two United Methodist Women's units in the Topeka Prison
- * sponsor an 8-day Mission Education Tour (METour) for young women ages 15-21 giving them the opportunity to participate in hands-on-learning about mission work in The United Methodist Church
- * collaborate with the conference Mercy and Justice Team to co-sponsor the Great Plains Cooperative Mission u at three sites – Salina, Kearney and Topeka. This year's studies are "Living as a Covenant Community," and "The Missionary Conferences of The United Methodist Church." The studies are open to everyone – men, women, clergy and laity. CEU's are available for clergy attending and lay servant credit is available for laity.

The national priorities for this quadrennium give us the opportunity to put our faith into action around issues of importance not only in the Great Plains but worldwide: Maternal and Child Health; Economic Justice; Racial and Gender Justice; and Climate Justice.

We put our Faith, Hope and Love in Action through our giving, our service and our local and global advocacy. We pray, we read, we study, we hold seminars, retreats, legislative events and so much more!

As we approach the 150th Anniversary of United Methodist Women in 2019, we join the unending line of women who have been transforming the world by putting hope, faith and love in action! We look forward with joy and anticipation to our continued journey as the United Methodist Women of the Great Plains.

MISSION AGENCIES

Colleges/Universities

Baker University

Dr. Lynne Murray, President

Baker University, the first university in Kansas, celebrated its 159th anniversary in February 2017. Since 1858, the university has been committed to providing quality education for the next generation in the United Methodist tradition. Our values statement includes: student learning and academic excellence; critical thinking, inquiry and freedom of expression; integrating learning with faith and values; connections; inclusiveness; service to the community.

The 2016-2017 academic year has brought much achievement to Baker.

The Rev. Kevin Hopkins is completing his third year serving as minister to the university. He is the third minister in Baker's long history. Osborne Chapel continues to be overflowing for Thursday Chapel services, which are student led and spirit filled. Area United Methodist Churches provide wonderful home cooked meals immediately following Chapel services in the chapel basement. The Baker Chapel Ambassadors have been a source of spiritual leadership on the campus for decades. Our Chapel Praise band and BU Concert Choir have made weekend visits to area churches. In January 2017, the Baker Chapel sponsored an interterm mission trip to Thailand. Rev. Hopkins and 12 others provided Vacation Bible School for missionary children. We are proud of our strong affiliation with the United Methodist Church.

Regarding Academic Affairs, we had a successful accreditation visit for our undergraduate School of Education and the School of Nursing received approval for an MS in nursing program. The College of Arts & Sciences (CAS) Exercise Science program became the first such program to receive a national accreditation in that field. Three new major programs were approved for CAS: Public Health, Recreation, and Medical Humanities. We also signed agreements with Washburn Law School and Cleveland University Kansas City to allow Baker students early admission to their graduate programs after three years at the undergraduate level.

Student Affairs had another successful year with a 13 percent increase in student activities and engagement from one year ago. Within 6 months of 2015 graduation, 99 percent of the CAS graduates continued their education or accepted full-time career positions. The Panhellenic Council won the Association of Fraternal Leadership and Values Council National awards in Public Relations, Self-Governance, and Judicial Affairs. Our community service student organization, Baker Serves, received a Kansas Volunteer Commission Grant to celebrate 9/11 with a week of service and remembrance. We have partnered with the Lawrence Sexual Trauma and Care Center to provide education to all incoming students, athletic teams, and Greek chapter houses, as well as provide free and confidential advocacy services to all students, faculty, and staff.

2016-2017 has been another outstanding season for the Wildcats Athletics program. The football competed in the NAIA National Championship game (Daytona Beach, FL), earned significant postseason awards, including five AFCA-NAIA All Americans, and finished the season with a 14-1 overall record. We are very proud of student-athlete Logan Brettell, Junior, being named NAIA National Player of the Year and CoSIDA Academic All-American of the Year. The Women's Soccer team advanced to the NAIA Fab Four tournament (Orange Beach, AL). Two student-athletes in our Wrestling program earned All-American Status at the NAIA National Championships (Topeka, KS). The Women's Basketball team qualified for the NAIA DI National Championship tournament (Billings, MT) and finished the season with a program high record of 30-5. The Dance Team earned 3rd place at the NAIA Competitive Dance National Championships (Oklahoma City, OK), earned four NAIA All-Americans, and received the NAIA Champions of Character Team Award.

I have been privileged to serve as Baker's 29th president for the past three years. We continue to raise funds to support scholarships for students and for academic and faculty excellence. I will continue to build on the foundation of past presidents and faculty members.

Kansas Wesleyan University Celebrates the Past, Embraces the Future

Matt Thompson, president & CEO

Kansas Wesleyan University's 130th anniversary year has provided numerous opportunities to celebrate the past and plan for the

Reports

future. Our history of academic exploration and excellence has created a culture that values innovation, relevance and education for professional, personal and spiritual growth. From two undergraduate students in 1886 to an enrollment of more than 650 full-time undergraduate and 81 graduate students today, our student body is rich in diversity, passionate about learning and energized for tomorrow's challenges.

Kansas Wesleyan has steadfastly offered relevant degrees that meet the needs of the workforce—from an emphasis on business, teaching and religion degrees in the early 1900s to its current degrees in such emerging fields as Emergency Management and Ecospheric Studies and Community Resilience.

Quality academics have been at the forefront of a KWU education since its inception. Today, that diligence garners national recognition. For the third consecutive year, KWU has been recognized for excellence in teaching, engaged students, vibrant community and successful outcomes as a College of Distinction™, Kansas College of Distinction™ and a Christian College of Distinction™.

Our commitment to quality education can be seen in our science programs where, in the past two years, a record number of students have earned spots as summer research interns through the National Science Foundation's Research Experiences for Undergraduates (REU) program. This spring, our eighth student is participating in a semester-long internship in Washington, D.C., with the prestigious Washington Center. This program, available to students of any discipline, is providing valuable hands-on experiences and networking opportunities that are leading to post-graduate opportunities.

Experiential learning opportunities enrich the KWU experience. Today, we call it the Power of **AND**. We encourage students to be involved in a variety of activities that help build leadership, character and collaborative skills that complement the intellectual proficiencies learned in the classroom.

The Coyote athletic teams continue to be among the top in the KCAC, and once again, KWU advanced teams to national NAIA tournaments. The debate team also excels on the national scene, taking first-place trophies from tournaments with fields that include large, state universities. We are proud of the quality fine arts programs at KWU, and we are particularly proud of our string orchestra, which was selected to perform at the Kansas Music Educators Conference this spring.

Spiritual growth is always at the forefront. We established new partnerships with the youth program at First United Methodist Church (Salina) and the regional Fellowship of Christian Athletes (FCA). Our director of campus ministry took four students to the NEXT 2016 conference in Atlanta—an event designed to encourage and support college students who dream of making a difference in the world right now for Christ. Each participant received free registration, thanks to local United Methodist churches in Salina and the Great Plains Conference Office.

Service to our community is an integral part of our liberal studies curriculum, and it is embedded into the culture at Kansas Wesleyan. Our students provide more than 14,000 hours of community service each year, and the 2015–16 softball team was recognized with the NAIA Buffalo Funds Five-Star Champion of Character Award for volunteering 1,900 hours of service to the Salina community.

As we conclude our 130th anniversary, we embrace the future with strategic initiatives that will attract students who are seeking the challenge of an academically rich environment. This generation of students is eager to pursue meaningful careers, engage in service to their communities, deepen their faith and stay active. We continue to be the university where all of those values are honored and nurtured. We are grateful for the partnership of the Great Plain Annual Conference as we nurture the next generation of leaders for our church and our world.

Nebraska Wesleyan University

Fred Ohles, president

Nebraska Wesleyan University seeks to continue our valued partnership with the United Methodist Church in the Great Plains. We do this through educating young and future leaders for the transformation of the world. Our mission is to be an academic community dedicated to intellectual and personal growth within the context of a liberal arts education and in an environment of Christian concern. This year we have made strides to more fully realize our mission.

We continue to partner with the Great Plains Conference in a number of initiatives that contribute to the formation of great churches, great leaders, great disciples and a transformed world.

Reports

We continue to partner with the Lydia Patterson Institute (LPI) in El Paso. Every year we welcome students from LPI waiving their tuition. To date we have equipped them with \$127,441 in tuition waivers. These students have provided leadership on campus and in Lincoln. As they graduate, they will be catalysts in their communities. In the future, we would like to increase the number of students we receive from LPI.

In partnership with the conference, this year we are sending a group of faculty and students to Haiti. We will work there with the Methodist church and school in La Gonave. Our focus will be to work with their teachers to exchange ideas regarding education. We are able to do this thanks to the work that Aldersgate UMC in Wichita realized this summer. We will be building upon the work they did there.

We hosted one of the Conference's Confirmation Days with the Bishop. We were honored to have more than 100 middle school students and their sponsors at NWU for a day of spiritual growth and faith understanding. We look forward to hosting more events like this in the future.

This summer we will resume hosting the Hispanic Youth Leadership Academy (HYLA). In partnership with hispanic ministries, we will celebrate our sixth session this summer. HYLA seeks to nurture United Methodist Hispanic youth, teaching them about the United Methodist Church and empowering them to continue their education through college. Other HYLA camps offered throughout the nation; ours is the only one offered in the South Central Jurisdiction.

NWU is committed to creating a culture of call on campus. To expand our reach, we attempt to do this at multiple levels. To help with vocational exploration, we took a dozen students to Imagine What's Next in Atlanta. This event, sponsored by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM), is geared toward college students. We designed our third annual "Envision" event on campus where students spent a night exploring their vocation. Later they were invited to join a small group to explore their vocation in greater depth. More than 100 students participated. We followed this event with an "Explore" retreat where students were able to make greater connections between their vocation and career choices. Finally, we began a small group for students specifically discerning a call to ministry. Eight students met for 6 weeks to discern if God is calling them to professional ministry. Through all of these efforts, more than 200 students have benefited from

vocational discernment on campus. We have more projects in mind to expand that reach next year.

In commitment to the Social Principles of the United Methodist Church, we offered a number of events to help the NWU community think ethically about its involvement in the world. Among them, we addressed the issue of the death penalty in Nebraska. We invited Joe Nigro, public defender in Lancaster County, to speak to us about the death penalty and the road to make Nebraska a more just place. Together with First United Methodist Church, we sponsored a trip to El Paso, Texas, and Juarez, Mexico. The trip enabled students to see the realities of a border town and the complexities of the immigration narrative that has taken hold of U.S. politics. We held our first Interfaith Week and hosted “Keeping Faith: Three Sisters of Story,” where Christian, Muslim, and Jewish women shared stories of faith and friendship among all three traditions. This event was very well attended by members of the NWU and Lincoln communities.

On the NWU campus, University Ministries’ programming focuses on helping individuals grow in their faith journey and building a spiritually healthy campus. Spiritual life is nurtured with a weekly worship service in our chapel. We support five faith-based student organizations, with more than 200 students involved every week. We offer multiple Bible studies weekly and provide resources to a variety of religious small groups on campus.

One of NWU’s greatest achievements this year has been our investment in the future. We secured enough funds to begin construction of a new science center. The Duane W. Acklie Hall of Science will be a state-of-the-art facility where students will be able to incorporate a number of scientific disciplines into their education. The building is scheduled to open in 2019.

We are honored that University Minister Eduardo Boussón was selected this year to serve on the GBHEM Board of Directors through 2020.

Our work as a university can only be possible through support of the churches from the Great Plains Conference, which helps provide scholarships to United Methodist students. During 2016-17, 158 United Methodist students received \$2,531,098 in scholarships, grants, and tuition waivers provided by Nebraska Wesleyan University. This includes 69 students who received \$55,650 in need-based Great Plains United Methodist Scholarships and three ministerial dependent students who received \$32,128 in ministerial discounts.

Your partnership helps us to be faithful to our mission and to the transformation of the world. Thank you for your support.

Southwestern College

Brit Bradley, director of marketing & communications

Southwestern College is growing and thriving. In August, president Brad Andrews reported that 174 freshmen had enrolled which is over twice last year's number and ranks as the second largest freshman class in the past 25 years. The college also welcomed 50 transfer students to the campus. In September, Southwestern College was named a Tier One college in the 2016 "U.S. News and World Report Best Colleges" annual ranking of the nation's colleges and universities. The college's Professional Studies program also was recognized in the report for its online bachelor's degree programs and online graduate programs in business and education. In February, BestColleges.com ranked Southwestern College ninth in its annual ranking of America's Best Online Colleges in the category of Best Online Bachelor's in Early Childhood Education Programs.

Now completing his second year with the college, President Andrews continues to develop Southwestern's strengths. The college is restructuring its upper-level leadership to be as effective and nimble as possible for the coming years. College leadership is also pursuing a new strategic plan that identifies four priorities for the next four years: academic strength, co-curricular strength, financial strength and strength of the physical campus.

One of the highlights of this past year was Southwestern's Worship Outreach band being selected as the house band for Imagine What's NEXT, a national gathering of college-aged United Methodists. Not only did Southwestern students lead the music for the event, one student was a featured speaker on the main stage, and two more SC students served on the planning committee for the event.

In addition to Worship Outreach, students continue to be active in Discipleship, Chapel, twice-weekly communion, and other campus ministries. We were pleased to have Bishop Saenz preach in Chapel earlier this year (and add a rock to the Mound)! Many Southwestern students are again participating in summer internships in the Great Plains Conference and other ministry organizations. We're also very pleased that two of this year's graduating seniors are headed to seminary in the fall and are hoping to pursue candidacy for ordination here in the Great Plains.

The Richard and Julia Wilke Institute for Discipleship at Southwestern College is gearing up to host their first Summit Youth Academy this summer. The Summit is led by several elders in the Great Plains Conference and is partnering with several local ministries. The program is funded through a High School Youth Theology Institute grant from the Lilly Foundation and is one of only two such funded United Methodist programs in the South Central Jurisdiction. The Summit seeks to give high school juniors and seniors a firm grounding in Wesleyan theology and help them hear God's call to a life of service. Next year's Summit dates are already set for July 22-28, 2018 – more info at www.summityouthacademy.org.

The Timothy Circle, another new program from the Institute for Discipleship, is launching its mentor training this summer. This online training is aimed at giving adults the tools, confidence, and resources to mentor young people in discerning their life's purpose – their call to serve God no matter their vocational field. The mentor training is being beta-tested by congregations in the Great Plains before the official launch in July. www.TimothyCircle.com

The Amp It Up band camp for high schoolers at Southwestern received a Culture of Call grant from the Great Plains conference to provide scholarships for minority youth. This year's camp featured masterclasses and a performance by Christian band "Stars Go Dim."

The Institute also created a new certification for laypeople at BeADisciple.com in conjunction with Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, D.C. Laypeople can earn a certification in Wesleyan Studies by completing six of the eleven online courses at BeADisciple.com. The classes all feature half-hour video lectures filmed in Oxford, England, with the world's leading Wesleyan scholars and historians. The courses cover a variety of topics including Methodist identity, early church history, Christian ethics, interfaith relations, and the intersection of faith and science. The courses offered so far have been very popular; the entire catalog will be offered on a recurring schedule by 2019.

Also worth noting is Southwestern's online, affordable master's degree for youth workers. More information can be found at www.beadisciple.com/masm.

HEALTH & WELFARE INSTITUTIONS

Aldersgate Village

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 a 196 skilled nursing care bed capacity. The community is set on a 168-acre campus at 7220 SW Asbury Drive in Topeka, Kansas.

As a non-profit faith-based organization, our Christian and socially responsible mission is to serve and advocate for those advanced in age. Through actively engaging mind, body and spirit, we make certain our residents receive love, care, respect and dignity in their most vulnerable years.

Major Accomplishments for 2016

The residents and staff at Aldersgate continue to celebrate the major capital improvement and \$1.2 M redesign of the Manchester Lodge Independent Living main lobby and reception area that was completed the previous year. The new lobby is a remarkable grand transformation; creating a flexible, friendly space for the independent living residents to help foster a sense of community and provide a warm, comfortable, social environment to enjoy. The organization also began working jointly with Shawnee County and the City of Topeka in 2015 to reinvigorate the 29th Street entrance by adding new signage monuments, improving traffic flows and linking Aldersgate's legacy with their vision for the future.

In 2016 we delightfully celebrated the completion of our beautiful new main entrance – what a stately impression this offers to all as they enter our campus. The organization also began another major capital improvement project in 2016 by developing and building new concept age-in-place villas on the Bracken Court cul-de-sac. The villas are scheduled to be completed in late spring of 2017 and will provide another added level of service by offering an accessibility design with peace of mind in modern, comfortable surroundings, allowing aging adults to live independently longer and not have to move again. At Aldersgate, we are proud to be innovative, working smart to improve the present while strategically planning for the future. New hopes and expectations for the coming months arise from our responsive business and health care initiatives.

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 Pastor Bob Sutton. Through this service, not only do residents enjoy worship services and Bible studies, they also have access to counseling and spiritual guidance for a number of life issues.

Aldersgate looks forward to working with Bishop Ruben Saenz as we seek continued support for the organization through the Great Plains Conference. Aldersgate also thanks Topeka district superintendent, Rev. Kay Scarbrough for her commitment and continued service on the Aldersgate Board in 2016. 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 2016 alone, Aldersgate Village provided \$209,000 in direct charitable care. In addition to charitable care, Aldersgate Village provides the largest volume of long term care services under Medicaid in Kansas - for which the reimbursement provides no financial margin. This amounted to more than \$3,518,000 in nursing care for the most vulnerable population – the frail and elderly who have exhausted their resources.

Aldersgate has been blessed with the collective talent, expertise and ambition needed to be one of the most well-respected retirement communities in the region. We are confident that by leveraging the talent of our skillful leaders and enhancing our core strengths, we will continue to deliver on our mission of service and realize an even more promising and fulfilling year in 2017.

Ember Hope

Shelley Duncan, president & CEO

As we prepare to celebrate our 90th year of providing quality services in Kansas, we reflect not only on the past 90 years, but also on the present and the next 90 years. The face of child welfare in Kansas has changed dramatically since 1927 but the past 21 years has probably seen the greatest changes due to the privatization of child welfare. With every new state contract, the focus has become increasingly competitive and seemingly based more on lowest cost as opposed to quality of care.

Despite the budgetary constraints the State of Kansas has placed on child welfare, EmberHope has accomplished great things in 2017. During the last fiscal year, EmberHope served over 3,000 clients throughout all of our programs.

For the current fiscal year, EmberHope has focused on three primary goals. These include financial position, organizational culture and leadership and trauma informed culture. While the fiscal year has yet to come to a close, as an agency we are consistently trending up in achieving our three goals. As of this report, EmberHope has achieved 85.3 percent of the three goals agency-wide. Each of our programs has benchmarks in the three areas that contribute to the overall goals of the agency.

Some of the many accomplishments in 2017 include EmberHope receiving the Functional Family Therapy grant from the Department of Corrections for 52 counties in western Kansas. This is an evidenced based program focusing on preventing juvenile offenders from further involvement with criminal behaviors. Additionally, our school-based program has increased and continues to receive requests from more schools in and around the Wichita area. This program works with children from kindergarten through high school providing mental health counseling to children that would otherwise not receive this needed service. Our Healthy Relationships program has also expanded in western Kansas due to the on-going success in the Dodge City area. Our programs in the state of Washington continue to grow and receive recognition within the state for the quality of services they provide. Our Newton campus continues to gain recognition for their experience working with victims of Human Trafficking and were asked to present at a conference. And our Community of Hope Foster Care ministry program continues to grow in numerous United Methodist Churches throughout Kansas.

Currently, there is a record high number of children in foster care in Kansas; climbing to over 6,500. While the number of children coming into care has been increasing, unfortunately, the number of foster homes in Kansas remains stagnant at approximately 2,500. Approximately 50 percent of foster families quit fostering within their first year and the number one reason is lack of support. To address the shortage, EmberHope has partnered with the United Methodist Church to form a Community of Hope. The purpose is to attract, engage, support and retain families in foster care with a team of volunteers. It is our intent to develop a network of individuals to use their time, treasures and talents to care for foster care children and families. Not everyone is called to foster but everyone can support our ministry in some way. If you or your church would like to become involved, please contact: Amy M. Tuttle, LMSW, Vice-President of Advancement at atuttle@emberhope.org or (316) 529-9187.

Epworth Village, Inc.

by Margaret Donovan, CEO

The year 2016 was a very busy and productive for Epworth Village. As part of the progression of our rebuilding process we developed a three and five-year strategic plan, increased our financial stability ending the year with an even healthier balance sheet than last year and had another clean audit opinion. As a United Methodist Women National Mission Institute and Christ-centered United Methodist ministry, Epworth Village serves God through serving at-risk children and families and served 166 children and 113 families through our in-home family services, foster care services, group home and learning center.

This past year, we began implementing strategies for growing and expanding our in-home family services and foster care programs. The majority of families and children we served were through our in-home services programs which is consistent with Nebraska state child welfare and juvenile probation policies and practices shifting toward keeping children in their homes while providing services to the children and their families and treating the whole family – and when the home situation presents the need for removal of children then making the most home-like placement with the highest priority and preference being foster care. This is to reduce the trauma on children associated with removing and separating children from their family. In line with emerging child welfare research and the shift in policy and practices, our in-home family services has become our fastest growing program with foster care second in growth. These changes in serving at-risk families and children are occurring quickly. The significant increase in the number of children and families we served through our non-residential programs, compared between the first 3 months of 2016 and the same months in 2017, is illustrative of this; our in-home saw a 278 percent increase in the number of children and a 135 percent increase in the number of families we served and a 22 percent increase in the number of children served through our foster care program. While over the past year our group home saw a fluctuating decline and then a more permanent decline in the number of boys served resulting from these policy changes, state budget/funding priorities and decreased utilization by the state agencies. However, this past year we have made more powerful and lasting impacts on the lives and long-term well-being of the children we served through focusing on treating and serving the *whole* family.

Through our strategic plan and work on our long-term strategic goals we re-assessed the current landscape of child welfare policies and practices, changing state budget priorities as well as future opportunities to better serve children and families and it became apparent that a move towards providing services for families as a *whole* needed to happen now. As a result, our board of directors made a mindful decision to discontinue our residential group home services and focus our time, energy and resources to continue growing our in-home family services and foster care programs. With this shift in focus Epworth Village will serve even more children, both boys and girls and their families. Now we will be on the front lines in providing preventative support and tools to families in need of healing. This will also allow expanded services, better support, and stronger families in our communities.

Our needs list will remain the same because the foster children and many families and single mothers we serve are in need of and use these items. Many families we serve are experiencing financial hardship and/or poverty and need these basic items that many of us can take for granted; so all donated items are and will be used by those we serve and are so appreciated.

We are grateful for the tireless and generous support from the United Methodist Churches and United Methodist Women who make Epworth Village and our mission possible. Together, as a part of the living Body of Christ, we will continue to serve and bring hope and healing to children and families with more powerful long-term impacts on their lives.

Grace Med Health Clinic

Dave Sanford, CEO

2016 was a year of growth and change for the health care ministry called GraceMed. First, we served a record number of unduplicated patients, 40,463 to be exact, through 91,887 patient visits. This number represents touching the lives of one out of every ten residents of the greater Wichita, Kansas area. Services provided included primary medical, preventive and restorative dental, vision, behavioral health and pharmacy services. With expansion to 12 Wichita-based clinics in 2017, we expect to increase the number of GraceMed patients to over 45,000.

In addition to our growth in Wichita, we took a step of faith and assumed responsibility for two community health center clinics

in Topeka, Kansas. Only 5,000 of 50,000 low-income residents in Topeka were accessing care through the community health center and we believed we could eventually make a significant impact in the community by joining with other local stakeholders to increase and enhance the existing health care services. Although we only provide primary medical services in Topeka now, our vision is to remodel a former Dillon's grocery store into a one-stop health care facility where medical, dental, vision, behavioral health and pharmacy services are available in the same location. We expect to open this new facility in 2018, yet continue to grow through 2017.

Also, GraceMed was invited by the McPherson, Kansas community to establish a new GraceMed clinic in their town. On May 15, 2017, we will open in McPherson and offer primary medical and dental services to area residents, particularly uninsured and underinsured residents.

Why do you keep growing, you may ask? First, God has called us to ensure that everyone has access to high-quality, affordable health care. We have a long way to go before that objective is fulfilled. And, secondly (and more importantly), the platform for providing health care is one of the most effective ways to share Christ and the hope he provides each of us in life. As patients develop professional relationships with their respective medical or dental providers, trust is established and with trust, we have the opportunity to pray with our patients and encourage them in their 'walk'. As the Spirit of God leads, we often ask patients if they have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and if not, would they consider such a relationship? Our mission is not only to heal the physical body, but also the mind and the spirit of each person who walks through our doors. Whether the Church recognizes it or not, we are one of the most effective evangelical organizations within the conference.

We do appreciate our relationship with the Great Plains Conference and the opportunity we have to enter UMC churches and share about our ministry. And we certainly appreciate the prayer and financial support from the conference, individual church mission committees, women's groups and individuals. At the same time, we often feel estranged from the Great Plains Conference; not quite knowing what our role is within the conference or whether our efforts are understood and appreciated. But, that's not nearly as important as being obedient to God and continuing to touch the lives of our patients and staff. With God's continued guidance and strength, we will continue to glorify Christ through our words and deeds until he comes again. Blessings to all!

Released and Restored

Rev. Ruth Karlsson, director

Released and Restored continues to share the grace, mercy and love of Christ Jesus with an extremely marginalized population group, prison and jail inmates, the “very least of the least of these.”

Released and Restored has three amazing staff persons, two of whom have been previously incarcerated. In addition we are blessed with a fabulous group of 19 dedicated volunteers, three of whom have, themselves, been previously incarcerated. These volunteers allow Released and Restored to provide structured re-entry programming to individuals to prepare them for their successful and productive return to local communities and neighborhoods throughout Nebraska.

In addition to our wonderful volunteers, we are privileged to also partner with Nebraska Wesleyan University, Concordia University and University of Nebraska-Lincoln to provide students service-learning opportunities. It has been a great joy and delight to have these young people choose us as their service-learning projects. They add much to our programs, and to a student, they each say their view of an inmate has been changed from the stereotypical to one that the individuals we serve are indeed human beings and deserve the opportunity to learn how to do things differently and thus not return to prison. Released and Restored provides its programming and clergy services at the following correctional facilities:

- Lancaster County Adult Detention Facility
- Lincoln Correctional Center
- Nebraska Correctional Center for Women
- Nebraska State Penitentiary
- Omaha Correctional Center
- Tecumseh State Correctional Institution

An exciting new development is that Released and Restored now provides its Life Skills/Re-Entry Prep to men housed on the Veteran’s Housing Unit at the penitentiary. We have been providing this program to general population inmates for the past seven years. With the creation of the Veteran’s Housing Unit, and the invitation by administrative staff at the penitentiary, our outreach opportunities have now doubled at the penitentiary. It is indeed an honor to serve those who have so nobly served our country.

We continue our collaboration with the New Visions Community in Lincoln. The Released and Restored offices, computer lab and classroom are located at the St. James Campus of the New Visions Community in Lincoln. In addition to the administrative

duties of running the organization, we also conduct our Life Skills/ Re-Entry Prep program there each week day for individuals from the Community Corrections Center-Lincoln. On each Saturday evening we conduct our Safe Haven program which is a delightful collaboration with the New Visions members.

The Safe Haven program provides a weekly opportunity for pro-social activity for women and men who have been released from prison or jail, or who are in recovery. Safe Haven provides individuals time to enjoy fun and fellowship in an intentionally safe and sober environment and it provides an alternative to going back to the anti-social and destructive patterns of behavior that resulted in incarceration in the first place.

More information is available at our website: www.releasedandrestored.org

If you'd like to become involved in a truly transformational ministry, please contact us. 402-806-0565 info@releasedandrestored.org
Released and Restored is Advance #713, of the Great Plains Annual Conference.

MINISTRIES WITH THE POOR

Ogden Friendship House United Methodist Church and the House of Hope

Rev. Diana Chapel, pastor and director

We live and serve out our ministry as a Matthew 25 church. It is our mission to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked and visit the sick and those in prison. With the wonderful support of the Great Plains Conference, local churches, UMW units, local businesses, civic groups and individuals we help to make a difference in the community of Ogden, Kansas.

While our church membership is small, the impact on this 2,000 resident community is significant. Ogden Friendship Ministries work closely with the community center, our local churches and elementary school to help in any way possible to bring hope and healing to a community with the lowest household income in Riley County.

With an operational staff of two (pastor/director and an intern), collaboration and volunteers make all the difference. The Kansas State Wesley House assists with our free after school program, reaching 25-30 children each week. Kansas State Leadership Studies students assist with community building activities co-sponsored by

Reports

Ogden Friendship House, including special dinners, Christmas and Easter family days. Outreach to Fort Riley soldiers is accomplished in cooperation with post chaplains. Outreach to women in prison and their loved ones is accomplished through activities and financial support to Kairos Inside and Kairos Outside ministries. Persons in recovery mediate Narcotics Anonymous and Alcoholics Anonymous programs four days a week. Dedicated volunteers help staff the thrift store, food pantry and mobile food pantry, in 2016: 2,717 persons (thrift store); 716 (food pantry); 4,753 (mobile pantry); 52 households for emergency aid (gas, utilities, rental assistance); and 3,480 meals to families, youth and seniors. This was all accomplished with a budget just under \$93,000 much of this support coming from grants and from your generous contributions.

In order to be more responsive for clients, we have extended our hours until 6 p.m. three times a week. This has met with very positive results. We have also reorganized the thrift store and pantry to create a new shopping room, allowing more housewares to be displayed for sale.

Our partnership with Ogden Elementary School has continued to be very strong. We are represented on the schools site council and have co-authored and co-administrated various grants that benefit the children in our community. Meals during parent-teacher conferences for school staff and special treats every month show the teachers and staff they are loved! Our next big event is a job fair working with parents of students; and for the children, job preparation as part of the school curriculum. The House of Hope has also been a community supporter of a Christian coffee house "The House" which is a safe haven for our teens and young adults, providing job skills and mentoring.

We will never know the impact we have made in this lifetime, nor will we fully realize the lives that have been touched. But here is one story to share. J.D. started attending our AA meetings. He encouraged his old drinking buddy W.B. to join him. They both achieved sobriety! J.D. and his wife joined the church. W.B. committed to joining too! However, he was diagnosed with late stage cancer and was sent to an out of -town care facility. He joined Ogden Friendship House UMC with the church family surrounding him with love in the care facility shortly before his death. Now W.B.'s 97 year old mother comes to church and considers us her church family. She is visited by the church monthly and attends church when she is feeling well enough. And J.D.'s mother also was recently baptized in our church at age 69. Praise God! Thank you all for making this possible.

Justice For Our Neighbors of Nebraska

Emiliano Lerda, J.D., LL.M., executive director www.jfon-ne.org

Justice For Our Neighbors of Nebraska (JFON-NE) is a faith-driven, nonprofit ministry welcoming immigrants into our churches and communities by providing free, high quality immigration legal services, education and advocacy. Our goal is to reduce poverty and inequality by providing holistic legal services that empower immigrants to participate in civic life and effect systemic change. Based in Omaha, Neb., JFON-NE is a member of the National Justice For Our Neighbors (National JFON) network, a United Methodist Ministry started and affiliated with the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) of the General Board of Global Ministries (GBGM).

JFON-NE serves the most vulnerable immigrants who have the fewest resources: those living in extreme poverty; victims fleeing domestic violence; children who have been abused and abandoned; refugees; and asylees who would be pressed into gangs, human trafficking, and other inhumane persecution if they were returned to their home country. The demand for immigration services grew in 2016 and early 2017 due to frequent changes in immigration law. JFON-NE anticipates even greater demand for its high-quality immigration legal services in 2017-2018 as deportation threats increase. We are thankful for the mission agency support that we receive from the Great Plains Conference which helps us fulfill the biblical mission to welcome the stranger as we're directed in Deuteronomy 10:19, "You shall love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt."

JFON is continuing our collaborations with Trinity United Methodist Church (in Grand Island, NE) and First United Methodist Church (in Lexington, NE) who supply space and volunteers to support monthly legal clinics in rural Nebraska. In addition, JFON-NE attorneys have a scheduled presence in Crete and South Sioux City, as well as legal clinics and one-on-one immigration legal consultations and services at strategically located sites throughout the Omaha metro area.

Staff attorneys work alongside volunteers at each clinic site. JFON-NE appreciates our partnership with Grace United Methodist Church in Omaha who rented office space for our attorneys at a very affordable rate.

In 2016, our increased staff capacity allowed JFON-NE to increase casework and build stronger collaborations:

- The JFON-NE legal team worked on 2,726 cases in 2016 for clients from 44 countries with a 98 percent success rate. Clients received free professional services from ten full-time, licensed

GREAT PLAINS CONFERENCE**Reports**

attorneys; six legal staff; two administrative assistants and three management staff members. The staff was supported by 125 volunteers.

- We saw a trend of significant increases in initial consultations this year in our Attorney of the Day, Detainee Pro Bono Project, and rural initiatives. Many cases continue for undocumented children who came to the U.S. in 2014.
- JFON-NE launched the Immigrant Workers Legal Partnership with Heartland Workers Center, adding a full-time JFON-NE attorney who assists immigrant workers who have been victims of labor and employment law violations.
- By using funding from the National Justice For Our Neighbors Network, JFON-NE is participating in the national conversation surrounding immigration law and policy by working on cases that have the potential to correct and/or change immigration laws.
- Last year, JFON-NE contracted with a professional evaluator to better understand our work, attract new funding, and position us for contracts with federal and state agencies responsible for implementing immigration policies.
- JFON-NE continues leadership and participation in NILAH (Nebraska Immigration Legal Assistance Hotline), to give low-income immigrants easy access to a range of quality immigration legal services.
- The completion of our three-year strategic plan paved the way for a new business plan that will guide our growth initiatives over the next three years.

2016 education and advocacy initiatives focused on clients, service providers, law enforcement and legislators:

- In 2016, JFON-NE staff conducted 122 presentations reaching 5,080 individuals. Many United Methodist churches and church groups were among those requesting presentations.
- JFON-NE worked with the Great Plains Immigration Rapid Response Team to create and share social media emails and posts that alerted congregations about threats to immigration advocacy.
- JFON-NE attorneys and staff protected immigrants' career dreams and livelihoods by providing legal expertise and technical support in drafting LB 947 (safeguarding professional licenses for work-authorized immigrants), delivering committed testimony, and issuing action alerts to make Nebraska LB 947 law.
- When an anti-refugee bill was introduced in the Nebraska legislature (LB 966), JFON-NE's legal director, Charles Shane Ellison, along with Rev. Nancy Lambert (on behalf of our former

Bishop, Scott Jones), joined forces to testify against it last February.

JFON-NE would like to express our gratitude for continued funding from The Great Plains Conference of The United Methodist Church. United Methodist volunteers' sacrificial contributions of time, talent and income allow immigrants to ultimately find places to belong, ways to contribute and friends who care about their lives here. Collaboration with the Great Plains Immigration Rapid Response Team and the Great Plains Refugee Task Force plays a vital role in our work to welcome newcomers. More information regarding JFON-NE and the clients whose lives were touched through The Great Plains Conference's support is available in our 2016 Annual Report. Please visit our website at www.jfon-ne.org.

United Methodist Open Door

Deann Smith, executive director

Open Door is a public charity that provides food, clothing and shelter to those in need in south central Kansas. The agency has:

- the largest food pantry in the Wichita area,
- distributes government commodities to elders in 11 Kansas counties,
- operates a day shelter for the homeless that serves over 210 a day,
- provides housing to homeless families and the chronically homeless
- provides intensive home-based case management with low income families to prevent homelessness.

Last year the agency served over 33,600 unduplicated individuals.

In 2017, Open Door successfully completed a \$2.75 million capital campaign to create a food distribution center in the north central part of Wichita. The new facility will replace the two existing well-worn buildings on North Mosley that house both our Community Food Ministry (largest food pantry in the area) and the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (government food program for elders in 11 counties in south central Kansas). This new adventure is possible through a partnership with the Great Plains Conference. In May 2015, the conference trustees closed on one of the former Cessna training buildings at 21st St. North and Opportunity Drive in Wichita. After raising the adequate funds, Open Door purchased the building from the trustees in October 2016 and began renovating the facility.

In April of this year, Open Door's two food programs began operating out of the new food distribution center. This was made possible with the generous gifts from individuals and organizations such as The J.E. and L.E. Mabee Foundation, Textron Aviation, Cargill, The Lattner Foundation, The Dwayne and Velma Wallace Foundation, The Goebel Family Star Lumber Foundation, INTRUST Bank, Delta Dental, The Daniel J. Taylor Foundation and many, many other private donors. A significant program readiness gift was given by the Kansas Health Foundation for equipment, furniture and fixtures. The new facility will allow Open Door to serve the most vulnerable for years to come.

Open Door is very thankful for the close connections between our ministry and the Great Plains Conference. Together, we are truly United Methodist in action!

For more information of ministries of United Methodist Open Door, visit www.umopendoor.org, email administration@umopendoor.org or call 316.265.9371.

The Big Garden/United Methodist Ministries

Nathan Morgan, executive director

The Big Garden/UMM's mission is to cultivate food security by building community gardens, creating opportunities to serve and providing education about issues related to hunger. The Big Garden was founded in 2005 with a goal of creating 12 community gardens in food-insecure neighborhoods of Omaha. In 2017 we have more than 150 gardens across Nebraska, Kansas and Southwest Iowa.

In March of 2016, The Big Garden purchased a former nursery to serve as our headquarters for our community gardening ministry. At nearly two acres, The Big Garden campus includes a large barn, an education building, office space and two large greenhouses. We will grow over 7000 organic vegetable seedlings that we will provide free of charge to our community garden network in these greenhouses. In 2016 we hosted over 200 United Methodist youth and adults through our Volunteers in Mission program. These youth and adults engaged in acts of service in community gardens and food pantries as well as learned about systemic issues related to hunger and how we are called to engage in acts of mercy and justice.

In 2016, our Grow-Your-Own summer program taught approximately 650 low-income children and youth each week in how to grow, cook and preserve fresh produce. Many of these children and youth suffer

from food insecurity, live in food deserts and seldom have access to fresh produce. Our evaluation of this program showed that, after 10 weeks, 85 percent of participants indicated that they knew how to plant seeds and 84 percent indicated they knew that composting was an important component of soil health. Most importantly, participants showed a willingness to try every type of fruit or vegetable they were exposed to during the 10-week program. We are convinced that if we want low-income children and youth to eat healthier and increase their consumption of fruits and vegetables, then they need to be growing them themselves.

Our plans for 2017 include expanding our Grow-Your-Own program to reach more low-income youth, providing life changing mission experiences to at least 10 VIM teams this summer, growing thousands of pounds of fresh produce that will be donated to food pantries and homeless shelters and conducting dozens of workshops on organic gardening practices with individuals in our community. We will also continue to work toward our goal of becoming an urban agriculture destination offering on-site demonstrations and workshops.

We are grateful for the support of the Great Plains Conference for our work. The investment of our annual conference in our work results in healthier bodies through our gardens and healthier minds and spirits through our educational programs and mission experiences.

Wesley House

Rev. Marcee Binder, executive director/pastor

Greetings from Wesley House! The demands of the underserved continue to increase which makes Wesley House focus on how to better serve our struggling neighbors. Wesley House is really striving to incorporate a justice ministry into the well-established mercy ministry. We are having success with this new endeavor.

The mission of Wesley House is to provide a safe, welcoming place for individuals and families of Crawford County to seek assistance, advocacy, education and hope for a brighter tomorrow.

The Food Pantry Nutrition Program targets Crawford County individuals and families who are faced with food insecurity. The Food Pantry is the largest in Southeast Kansas serving over 12,000 people in 2016. Clients can access the food pantry once a month as needed.

Reports

The Wesley House Homeless Day Shelter is available to any persons experiencing homelessness. It is open Monday-Friday from 9-4 p.m. The goal of this program is to identify barriers to stable housing and to work with the Homeless Case Manager in removing those barriers. This program offers our homeless neighbors a safe climate-controlled environment so that they can work on a provided computer to search for employment and housing opportunities. While at Wesley House, they can take showers, utilize our laundry facilities and enjoy a hot breakfast and lunch. The Identification Support Program helps individuals who do not have proper identification to secure their proper documents so that they can become employed and stably housed.

The Family Stability Action Program works with clients who have utilized the food pantry six times in a consecutive year. The Family Stability Action Program works to provide job skills, employment opportunities, budgeting, life skills, healthy eating and other tools that would help families become more stable in their lives. The Family Stability Case Manager will also link clients to community resources such as disease self-management programs, lifestyle change programs and other medical services.

Connections to Success has partnered with Wesley House to serve fathers in Crawford County. This collaborative program, Next STEPS, uses an evidence-based, holistic, model called Pathways to Success to provide personal and professional training, employment services and support and mentoring to unemployed and underemployed fathers. Next STEPS provides hope, resources and a plan with an aim to improve one's well-being and reduce poverty.

Commodity Food Senior Program is now available at Wesley House. Low income seniors who are ages 60 and over may qualify to receive CFSP food boxes. Boxes are distributed monthly at Wesley House. Seniors must enroll and qualify to receive the food box.

Wesley House, an Outreach Ministry of First United Methodist Church in Pittsburg, Kansas, is an IRS 501(c)3 charitable organization, an Advance Special of the Great Plains United Methodist Conference, and a United Way agency.

Website: wesleyhousemc.org Facebook: www.facebook.com/pittsburgwesleyhouse Twitter: [@wesleyhousemc](https://twitter.com/wesleyhousemc)

If you are interested in receiving our monthly e-newsletter please email us at wesleyhousenewsletter@gmail.com. This monthly publication will keep you updated on what is going on at Wesley House.

Please mail or drop off financial contributions and donations: 411 East 12th Street, Pittsburg, KS 66762
Phone: 620-232-3760 Fax: 620-232-6602

SOUTH CENTRAL JURISDICTION

Lydia Patterson Institute

Dr. Socorro de Anda, president

Every year, Lydia Patterson Institute (LPI) becomes a stronger ministry of the United Methodist Church with its eternal mission of changing lives and serving as a catalyst from despair to optimism through knowledge and faith. At least 400 lives are being touched daily. Students are prepared for a life of higher education, and many are brought to Jesus Christ with a promise to Christian service.

Three years ago, LPI added a middle school to its already highly successful high school program. With the addition of the 7th and 8th grades came the integration of the latest state-of-the-art technology available for the classroom. The 9th and 10th grades were upgraded last year, and the 11th and 12th grades were completed this school year. This makes our school the only one in the El Paso area totally technologically operated with Smartboards and E-Pads in every classroom and Ebooks in every subject.

The mission of Lydia Patterson is to form bilingual leaders for both church and society, and to provide them with the tools to break the cycle of poverty and make a better life for themselves and their families. This past school year, we graduated 83 seniors. All are in college today. On graduation night, we announced a total of \$1.6 million in scholarships from United Methodists colleges and universities alone. Our connection with other United Methodist institutions merits mention as to the success of our ministry.

Our job is to help students and their families move forward towards a higher socio-economic level. The challenges are plentiful, but we meet them with faith and optimism. Economic conditions across the border hinder the economic abilities of our parents. This year, the

Reports

price of gasoline was doubled, and the Mexican peso is in a constant state of devaluation. The effect of the downturns is a need for more scholarships to support our students.

Lydia Patterson Institute, your mission on the U. S. – Mexico border is a promise of hope to those fearing the uncertainties of border issues and the threats of deportation. At a time where politicians and government officials talk about building fences or higher walls, Lydia Patterson is building taller bridges between the two countries to bring families to more equitable means of living, and preparing its students to serve both sides of the border with dignity and integrity in a bi-national setting. We strive to form the bilingual leaders of tomorrow and our next generation of disciples for the transformation of a world of peace and harmony on our U. S. – Mexico borders and beyond.

Thank you for being a part of this redemptive ministry and for joining us in making it a vital one for the next 100 years. Our appreciation goes out to the Bishop and every United Methodist church in this conference and all those who support us with their dollars and their prayers. We extend a warm invitation to visit our campus, whether in a mission tour, work team, or personal stopover, and experience firsthand the life of one of the greatest ministries of the United Methodist Church.

UNIVERSITY & SEMINARY REPORTS

Africa University Report

James H. Salley

associate vice chancellor for Institutional Advancement

Africa University ended 2016 poised to celebrate its Silver Jubilee and eager to embrace new opportunities for transformative ministry over the next 25 years.

The university community acknowledges, with heartfelt gratitude, the faithfulness and generosity of the Great Plains Conference in helping Africa University to realize its mission. The Great Plains Conference maintained its strong support, investing 89.45 percent of the asking to the Africa University Fund (AUF) apportionment in 2016.

Overall, the AUF achieved a high level of support within The United Methodist Church last year. A total of 34 of the 56 United Methodist annual conferences in the United States invested 100 percent or more of their asking to the AUF.

The ongoing support of the Great Plains Conference is of vital importance to Africa University because the university draws its mandate, energy and capacity to transform lives from The United Methodist Church.

Therefore, we invite each of you, as members of the Great Plains Conference, to take time this year to celebrate its journey with Africa University. Please participate in the observance of the university's 25th anniversary. Encourage your congregation to remain steadfast and aim to invest 100 percent of its asking to the AUF and other general church funds in 2017. Engage in a season of daily prayer for Africa University. Join Africa University's honorary alumni association. Consider hosting a special "AU@25" event or an Africa University Sunday in your local church or area. Use your event to increase awareness of Africa University's ministry and invite attendees to each give \$25 each in honor of the 25th anniversary.

Celebrate your role in making Africa University all that it is today and all that it will be in the future. Remember that regardless of the challenges that arise, United Methodists sustain this ministry together — praying, loving and sharing our blessings — and there is no other way that we could do it!

Great things are on the horizon for Africa University in the next quarter century. Your Africa University is continuing to evolve and serve by:

- Restructuring its academic units in order to remain relevant and provide a broader-based education to meet new demands in the African workforce.
- Providing leadership formation experiences and learning for more than 1,400 full-time students each year.
- Generating new knowledge and capacity to support peacebuilding and to improve food security, human rights, and leadership for the African continent.

Thanks to your generosity, the dream of the global United Methodist Church is alive in the contributions of the Africa University's 7,000+ graduates. More than 90 percent of these graduates are still in Africa, serving communities in 32 countries. Currently, more than two dozen Africa University graduates are missionaries in Africa, Latin America, Asia and Europe, under the auspices of the General Board of Global Ministries (GBGM).

Without Africa University, "I am sure that I would not have the mental maturity and spiritual growth that I have now," said Albert Wakili, an AU graduate who is a Global Mission Fellow. Wakili is currently serving as a youth and children's worker at Blanchardstown Methodist Church in Dublin, Ireland, one of the newest and most

ethnically diverse congregations in Irish Methodism. Wakili plans to return to Nigeria later this year, when his two-year term with the GBGM ends.

Thank you for your unwavering witness in response to the call to faith, hope, and renewal in the world. We pray that blessings continue to abound for all who lead and serve in ministry in the Great Plains Conference.

Candler School of Theology

Jan Love, dean and professor of Christianity and World Politics

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

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

In order to keep pace with the needs of the church and the world, Candler offers 17 degrees: seven single degrees and ten dual degrees pairing theology with bioethics, business, international development, law, public health, or social work. One of our newest degrees is a Doctor of Ministry that is 90 percent online, so students can remain in their places of ministry as they study and apply what they learn in real time. We've also partnered with the University of Georgia's School of Social Work to create an MDiv/MSW where students learn to maximize their effectiveness by combining pastoral skills such as spiritual counseling with social work practices such as family therapy and community assessment.

Our student body continues to reflect the diversity and breadth of the Christian faithful. 475 students are enrolled, with 51 percent women, 34 percent people of color (U.S.), and a median age of 30. Students represent 39 denominations, with half coming from the Methodist family. 83 percent of students are seeking a degree to prepare them as ministry professionals.

Candler has a deep commitment to alleviating student debt and employs a multi-pronged approach to tackle this issue. In 2016-2017, we awarded nearly \$5.75 million in Candler scholarships, with 95 percent of MDiv students receiving aid and the average scholarship covering 73 percent of tuition. Plus, our comprehensive “Faith & Finance” program teaches money management skills that serve our students now and will continue to serve them—and the churches they lead—well into the future.

In fall of 2016, Candler welcomed to the faculty Larry Goodpaster as Bishop-in-Residence, and Kendall Soulen as Professor of Systematic Theology. Also this fall, three Candler alumni began their terms as newly elected bishops in the Southeastern Jurisdiction: David Graves 90T in Alabama-West Florida, R. Lawson Bryan 75T 85T in South Georgia and Sue Hauptert-Johnson 95T in North Georgia.

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

Perkins School of Theology

Craig C. Hill, dean and professor of New Testament

Perkins celebrates our vital connections with the Great Plains Annual Conference:

- One student affiliated with the Great Plains Conference is enrolled at Perkins, a Master of Divinity student.
- Eligible 2016–2017 students from the Great Plains Conference each received a Perkins Annual Conference Endowment (PACE) grant up to the amount of \$5,000, with qualifying students receiving an additional \$6,000 each in need-based aid.

Enrollment at Perkins for the 2016-17 academic year totals 342 students, of which more than two-thirds are United Methodist and more than 45 percent are ethnic minority students. Master’s degree programs comprise approximately 51 percent male and 49 percent female students. The D.Min. program includes students from southern Asia taking classes in Singapore and Dallas. Our Ph.D. program has 32 students.

2016 HIGHLIGHTS

- Perkins welcomed the appointment of Dr. Craig C. Hill as dean and professor of New Testament. Dean Hill most recently served as executive director of the Doctor of Ministry and Master of Christian Practice programs at Duke, as well as Research Professor of Theological Pedagogy. Additionally, he served at, among other institutions, Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, D.C., Yale Divinity School, the University of Cambridge, England and at seminaries in Moscow, Russia and Seoul, South Korea.

In looking ahead to its exciting and vibrant future, Perkins instituted the first formal market/marketing study undertaken by school in a decade. Working in conjunction with an external consulting group, the study is an effort to gauge feedback from Perkins alumni, students, faculty, staff and other key constituencies on how best to guide the school during its next phase forward. One essential component of that study was the creation of the Perkins Engagement Team, a group of key staff and faculty who meet every other week to generate ideas, formulate strategy and review progress related to Perkins' admissions, recruiting and marketing functions.

- Renowned biblical scholar N.T. Wright was the featured lecturer as Perkins hosted "Simply Wright: N.T. Wright at Perkins | SMU" on Nov. 15-17, 2016. Wright gave three nightly lectures, which were free to the public and drew more than 3,000 attendees and directed workshops for the 120 conference attendees during the day. To date, videos of the three lectures have garnered more than 35,000 views on the Perkins YouTube channel.
- Dr. Carlos F. Cardoza-Orlandi, professor of World Christianities and Mission Studies at Perkins, was appointed to serve as the director for the Doctor of Ministry Program at Perkins. He joined the Perkins faculty in July 2010, having previously served as professor of World Christianity at Columbia Theological Seminary in Decatur, Georgia, from 1994-2010.
- Bart Patton, who has nearly 20 years of experience in ministry, joined Perkins as its director of youth and young adult ministry education. He provides oversight and strategic planning for Perkins' programs for high school youth and their families, young adults, and practitioners who work with these constituencies. Additionally, Patton will be the point person for connecting Perkins and SMU to church and community organizations that work with youth and their families and with young adults.

Reports

- Perkins, in conjunction with the Houston Methodist Hospital system, began offering seminars and courses to educate hospital staff and personnel on the role of theology and healing.

Perkins thanks our many colleagues, friends and alumni/ae across the connection for generous support in many ways, including referrals of prospective students, as we continue our vital mission of preparing women and men for faithful leadership in Christian ministry.

Saint Paul School of Theology

Neil Blair, president

Saint Paul School of Theology is a seminary of the United Methodist Church committed to the formation of people for innovative, creative ministry. We are one institution with two campuses, in Kansas and Oklahoma.

This past 2015-2016 academic year, Saint Paul enrolled 168 students from 15 annual conferences and 5 countries on both campuses. The Course of Study School at Saint Paul served 194 students in three midwest locations. Course of Study will expand course offerings to Hays, Kansas beginning Fall 2017.

Rev. Neil B. Blair became president of the seminary July 2016. Blair is a 1980 Master of Divinity graduate of Saint Paul and an ordained elder. He most recently served as the executive director for Institutional Advancement for the UM General Board of Higher Education and Ministry.

Saint Paul School of Theology and Oklahoma City University partnered to offer a 3+3 accelerated degree program. Under this arrangement, OCU students will complete 3 years of undergraduate studies in the pre-seminary track and begin their 4th year as an MDiv student at Saint Paul School of Theology. Students prepare for ordination/entry into ministry in six years instead of the usual seven, while earning both B.A. and M.Div. degrees. The accelerated program saves students time and money.

Saint Paul and The Academy for Spiritual Formation have partnered to offer a Doctor of Ministry (DMin) in Prophetic Witness and Service with an emphasis in Spiritual Formation. This is the first time a seminary has worked with The Academy for Spiritual Formation, a ministry of The Upper Room, to co-develop an advanced degree. Saint Paul is also partnering with the Academy to host a 5-Day

spiritual formation retreat with the theme “Draw the Circle Wide.” The summer retreat includes community and individual reflection about how spiritual disciplines help develop our listening and global language of love. Dr. Amy Oden, professor of Early Church History and Spirituality, is a lead organizer.

Rev. Casey Sigmon served as a visiting professor in a year-long professorship as part of the Vanderbilt program in Theology and Practice. Sigmon co-taught a preaching class with Dr. Mike Graves this fall and a course entitled, “Preaching in the Digital Age” based on her dissertation research this spring. Saint Paul now offers a Certificate in Theological Formation. The certificate is 24 credit hours of courses all taught by Saint Paul faculty. Classes may be completed entirely online or through a combination of online and on-campus offerings.

Dr. Angela Sims’ work in oral history preserves the memory of elder African Americans in her recently published book, *Lynched: The Power of Memory in a Culture of Terror*. Collaborative faculty books include *Transforming Community: The Wesleyan Way to Missional Congregations* by Saint Paul professor Dr. Hal Knight and Dr. F. Douglas Powe, Jr. and *Coming Full Circle: Constructing Native Christian Theology* by Saint Paul professor Dr. Elaine Robinson and Rev. Steven Charleston.

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

Southern Methodist University

R. Gerald Turner, president

More than 100 years ago the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, had the foresight to understand what a great institution of higher education could mean for the ambitious young city of Dallas. Southern Methodist University continues to mark exciting developments as students and faculty pursue opportunities that provide a platform for making global impact. Recent highlights include:

In fall 2016 SMU’s total enrollment of 11,739 included 6,521 undergraduates and 5,218 graduate students. Ethnic minority students made up 26 percent of total enrollment. An international enrollment of 1,719 (more than 14 percent of total enrollment) represented 124 foreign countries.

SMU ranks among the nation’s top universities. In the 2017 U.S. News & World Report listings, SMU ranks 56th among 310 of the

“best national universities.” Several individual schools and academic programs also earned national rankings.

SMU received \$26 million in external funding during 2015-16 for research in the U.S. and worldwide. Current research subjects include water quality, natural hazards, cyber security and treatments for cancer and other diseases.

In January, SMU received a \$2 million gift from SMU Trustee emeritus and longtime benefactor Cary M. Maguire to endow the directorship of SMU’s Cary M. Maguire Center for Ethics and Public Responsibility. The Maguire Center supports ethics-related education and activities for students and faculty, as well as outreach to community, private and public institutions. Also in January, SMU received a \$2.5 million gift from AT&T to endow the AT&T Center for Virtualization to fund its research to support the fast, reliable cloud-based telecommunications necessary for global connectivity. Announced in October, a \$1.7 million grant from the Texas Instruments (TI) Foundation will help fund the STEM Teacher Academy at SMU’s Simmons School of Education and Human Development to help Dallas ISD teachers develop methods for engaging students in science.

In July, Craig C. Hill became the new dean at SMU’s Perkins School of Theology, after the former Dean William B. Lawrence retired in May. Hill came to SMU from Duke University, where he had served as executive director of the Doctor of Ministry and Master of Christian Practice programs and as research professor of theological pedagogy. Also in July, Maria Dixon Hall, associate professor of organizational communication and director of corporate communication and public affairs, was named as the provost’s senior advisor for campus cultural intelligence initiatives. Hall leads the initiative to cultivate a campus culture that equips faculty, staff and students to engage with today’s culturally complex world.

Frederick R. Chang, director of SMU’s Darwin Deason Institute for Cyber Security in the Bobby B. Lyle School of Engineering, was elected to the National Academy of Engineering and inducted into the Academy of Medicine, Engineering and Science of Texas.

Sabri Ates, associate professor in SMU’s Clements Department of History in Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences, and Zachary Wallmark, assistant professor and chair of music history at SMU Meadows School of the Arts, received fellowship grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities – the only two recipients in North Texas from the current funding cycle.

In fall, SMU opened its new Dr. Bob Smith Health Center, which provides comprehensive medical care to students. The two-story building houses medical and counseling programs, a full-service pharmacy and SMU's health education program. Students returning to campus also celebrated a transformed Fondren Library, which includes new common spaces, study zones and a Starbucks.

SMU hosted inspirational speakers at its 2016 commencement ceremonies. In May, Richard Templeton, SMU Board of Trustee member, and Texas Instruments CEO, with his wife, Mary Templeton, philanthropist and community volunteer, shared lessons learned from a swimming accident two and a half years ago that left Mrs. Templeton paralyzed. Mr. Templeton touted resiliency as a critical personal characteristic and Mrs. Templeton challenged the graduates to jump into opportunities to make a difference as they begin their next life phase. In December, retired Dallas Police Chief David O. Brown, who gained national attention for his handling of a gunman's July 2016 ambush of five police officers, told the graduates, "you may be the next greatest generation of heroes in this country."

SMU treasures its Methodist heritage, and we ask for your continued prayers and support.

United Theological Seminary

Dr. Kent Millard

president, United Theological Seminary, Dayton, Ohio

Where Dreams Take Flight

United Theological Seminary in Dayton, Ohio, was founded in 1871 by Milton Wright, a Bishop in The Church of the United Brethren in Christ and father of aviation pioneers Wilbur and Orville Wright. The Wright brothers had a passionate dream of developing the first successful "flying machine." They experienced great difficulties, hardships and setbacks in achieving their dream. Through their determination and commitment, however, their dream eventually was fulfilled, and they were the first human beings to achieve sustained flight.

God often plants a vision or dream in someone's heart to become a full-time servant of Jesus Christ. In St. Peter's sermon on Pentecost, Peter quotes the prophet Joel who said, "God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy and your young men shall see visions and your old men shall dream dreams" (Acts 2:17). When God pours out the Spirit on someone and calls them into ministry, United seeks to partner with

Reports

that person in helping them to grow spiritually and intellectually in achieving their God-given call and dream.

In the fall of 2016, 418 students enrolled at United to answer God's call and vision for their lives.¹ Our prayer is that God will use United to prepare these students to become faithful, fruitful and effective pastors and church leaders who make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. According to a recent survey, 86 percent of our graduates are either currently serving in local congregations or are retired from serving in local congregations.² United alumni/ae are making an impact.

On January 1, 2017, United celebrated the beginning of a new partnership in ministry with Methodist Theological School in Ohio (MTSO). United has become an extension site for the Course of Study School of Ohio located at MTSO, providing a convenient hybrid program for part-time pastors pursuing a local pastor's license. Through United's Course of Study, pastors experience a Friday-Saturday weekend on campus and finish coursework online over the weeks that follow. Courses are offered four times per year.

If you feel God calling you to serve in any form of Christian ministry, we encourage you to go online to united.edu to discover the option that fits your ministry and calling. May God bless you as you respond to God's dream for your life to serve in either the ordained, commissioned or lay ministry.

1 Fall 2016 headcount of masters' and doctoral students enrolled in courses.

2 According to the 2014 United alumni/ae survey.

MISCELLANEOUS

United Methodist Health Ministry Fund

Kim Moore, president

Exciting growth in the Healthy Congregations program was a hallmark of 2016. This program expanded from 42 to 65 churches throughout the Conference. Each Healthy Congregation develops a health ministry team with a minimum of three members and a seven hour training program is completed. The fund annually provides each congregation with \$1000 in seed money for health ministry and supports the team with an annual retreat and quarterly webinars on health ministry opportunities. Annual plans are reviewed by the fund with the team, and participating congregations are offered special grant opportunities. This past year, four churches received additional

Reports

funding for Big Garden projects and five churches received grants for summer food programs. Cooperating with the General Board of Discipleship, the fund brought training in the Strengthening Families program to local congregations in early 2017 with additional sessions possible if interest is expressed. With the disbanding of the Health and Wellness Committee of the Conference, the fund will be a point of connection for local church health liaisons.

New grant awards of \$130,000 were made to continue progress in improving breastfeeding duration and initiation rates in Kansas. The High 5 for Mom & Baby program works with birthing facilities to change policies and practices in proven ways to increase breastfeeding. Gwen Whittit, member at Aldersgate UMC, Wichita, serves as the program coordinator for this effort which has reached 60 hospitals and birthing centers and provided support for more than 50 persons to become International Board Certified Lactation Consultants or Certified Lactation Counselors. The fund also encourages hospitals to move beyond High 5 to the ten practices of Baby-Friendly Hospitals. Salina Regional Medical Center joined five other Kansas hospitals (Shawnee Mission, St. Francis-Topeka, St. Catherine-Garden City, University of Kansas and Via Christi-Wichita) already supported by fund grants in implementing the requirements for this World Health Organization certification of Baby Friendly.

In the midst of calamitous change in health care financing at the national level, the fund continued funding for six navigators working to get people insured through the federal insurance marketplace, advocacy for implementation of a Medicaid expansion in Kansas through the Alliance for a Healthy Kansas, and multiple rural health system projects. A \$100,000 award went to Anthony and Harper district hospitals to move forward with a potential merger. Staff worked with members of the Frontier Community Health Improvement Network to use federal and Kansas private funding to build care coordination and mental health integration services in several western Kansas communities.

Preparation for a major new project in the field of young children's social and emotional health occurred in 2016. In May 2017, a project will launch to bring a specific intervention—Attachment and Biobehavioral Catch-up (ABC)—to more Kansas young children and their families. Using existing home visiting programs, this evidence-based intervention offers a ten week in-home program working with parents of young children ages 6-30 months. ABC is shown to facilitate secure attachment and bonding while improving behaviors and decreasing toxic stress for periods extending as long as three years. Sites will be announced for operation in Wyandotte County,

Reports

Northwest Kansas, Southwest Kansas, Reno County and Sedgwick County. Funding of approximately \$2.4 million is committed by Kansas Health Foundation, REACH Healthcare Foundation, Wyandotte Health Foundation, Hutchinson Community Foundation and the fund.

This is my final report to the conference, as I will retire in December 2017 after 30 years in my position as president of the fund. I want to express my appreciation to the conference for allowing me to have a career in such a challenging and rewarding organization—created by the will and vision of the Kansas West conference to continue United Methodist work in health and health care following the sale of Wesley Medical Center.

For more information about the fund, including a complete listing of grant awards made in 2016, please visit our website at www.healthfund.org.

Kansas Area United Methodist Foundation, Inc.

Alan D. Herndon, president & CEO

The mission of the Kansas Area United Methodist Foundation, Inc. is about sustaining the church witness through people, churches and innovated leadership. The mission is the same, the vision is ever changing!

PEOPLE

The Great Plains Association of Retired Clergy and Spouses (GPARCS) used their funds with the Kansas Area United Methodist Foundation to award scholarships for seminary and course of study students. The “Pass the Torch” scholarship has made a difference in the following students’ lives:

Asbury Theological Seminary

Gina Tyler

John Lewis

Saint Paul School of Theology

Marsha Haney

Richard Webster

Alex Rossow

Suzanne Werthmann

Mary Webster

Iliff School of Theology

Marcee Binder

Julie King

United Theological Seminary

Dorothy Ellsworth

Stacy Ellsworth

Wesley Theological Seminary

Mary Courtney

GREAT PLAINS CONFERENCE
Reports

Through the partnership with the United Methodist Higher Education Foundation “Dollars For Scholars” program, the Kansas Area United Methodist Foundation added \$1,000.00 dollar scholarships for these United Methodist students so that they may further their education. The following were the 2016 Quadrupole “Dollars for Scholars” recipients:

Chelsea R. Bearrick, Chanute First UMC; **Morgan K. Beougher**, Stockton UMC; **Bryant C. Belden**, Mulvane UMC; **Chase F. Branstetter**, Woodlawn UMC; **Brookelyn E. Brown**, Arkansas City First UMC; **Krissa D. Dearden**, Scott City First UMC; **Charlene R. Dick**, Zenda UMC; **Frankie S. Farrant**, Meriden UMC; **Kaitlyn G. Holler**, Protection UMC **Shayla A.R. Jordan**, Aldersgate UMC; **Bethany R. Manny**, Hutchinson Trinity UMC; **Brian L. Peck**, Wellington First UMC; **Brian A. Vancuren**, Conway Springs UMC; **Madison R. Wendt**, Chanute First UMC; **Rebecca H. Wendt**, Chanute First UMC.

The Kansas Area United Methodist Foundation will discontinue participation with the Dollars for Scholars program due to budget restraints. If you would like to donate a Dollars for Scholars program so that the foundation may continue with this program, please contact us.

The Rev. Paul Holmes Memorial Scholarship Fund offers Great Plains clergy the opportunity to strengthen their commitment to being life-long learners through continuing education experiences. The following 2016 Rev. Paul Holmes memorial scholarship for continuing education recipients were:

Rev. Ashlee Alley, Rev. Russell Brown, Rev. Nicole Conard, Rev. Amy Lippoldt, Rev. Dr. Connie Wilson, Rev. Dr. Shelly Petz.

These clergy attended continuing education programs such as; Process Communication Training, Appreciative Inquiry Facilitator Training, Advancing Pastoral Leadership, The Upper Rooms Academy for Spiritual Formation or requested funds for spiritual formation renewal.

Finally, the Kansas Area United Methodist Foundation established a number of charitable gift annuities this past year with individuals that love their United Methodist churches and various charitable organizations. Ms. Pile and Rev. Thomas and Mrs. Phyllis Schneider are two shining examples of using Charitable Gift Annuities to increase their income at the same time planning to have their legacy live on through their local United Methodist churches, United

Methodist agencies and various charitable organizations. Not only do people create paths that will impact ministry, our churches have paths that make a difference within our communities.

CHURCHES

Pathways to impact ministry! Through the various services the Kansas Area United Methodist Foundation offers to our United Methodist churches, we have seen how our churches strive to enhance ministry so that they may be more inviting. Lee Sankey, director of Stewardship Services was busy in 2016 with three capital campaigns for Arkansas City First UMC, Hiawatha First UMC and McPherson UMC. Also offering guidance to many churches about annual commitment programs, generosity seminars and year-round stewardship education for clergy and laity. We both have been involved with numerous churches developing the churches three year marketing plan on "How to Promote Legacy Giving" within their congregations. Feel free to contact your Kansas Area United Methodist Foundation to come and provide these services.

Another path that our churches have made a difference within their communities is through their church investments with the foundation. The churches have directly influenced ministries with their funds. This past 2016 the total distributions of \$4,942,469 million dollars made an impact through individual and church scholarships, grants, distributions supporting church mission trips, distributions supporting children, youth and young adult ministries, feeding the hungry, clothing the poor, and ministering to those in their communities so that the United Methodist witness may continue to share God's love.

These various distributions were possible by the Kansas Area United Methodist Foundation's total assets under management for 2016 of \$48,821,137 million dollars. An increase of funds from the previous 2015 total assets under management of \$46,934,708 million dollars. Thank you to innovated leadership of United Methodist individuals and churches that understand the importance of sustaining the churches witness within our Kansas communities.

INNOVATION

Certificate of Participation Program is an innovated investment so that Kansas United Methodist individuals and churches deposit funds that will grow at the same time participate in the Kansas Area United Methodist Foundation's Church Development Loan Fund that provides competitive loans to our churches. "It is a way for United

Reports

Methodists to invest their money in a way that helps other United Methodists fulfill their mission.” – Bruce Schwyhart, chairperson Board of Trustees, Winfield, KS. The Certificate of Participations “Special” monthly rates may be found online or call the foundation office if you or your church would like to invest so that together we expand, renovate or improve our churches. How have you and others made it possible to share God’s love with others through the Certificate of Participation program? The following examples are:

The Foundation offered our “First” Nebraska United Methodist Church Loan to St. James United Methodist Church, Bellevue, Nebraska. St. James UMC received a loan last year to purchase new Audio/Visual equipment for their new church site. I believe no one should complain about not hearing the preaching or music within their new site.

The second example of innovated leadership is the renovation project by First United Methodist Church of El Dorado. The foundation is a partner with First UMC El Dorado through the Church Development Loan Fund that provided funds to update and renovate the church. I was told during annual conference that a life-long church couple said that it has been over 60 years since the sanctuary had been renovated. After viewing the new renovations, the couple shared that they wish the church had renovated the sanctuary 20 years earlier.

The Kansas Area United Methodist Foundation Church Development Loan Fund information may be found online. Please contact your foundation if you have any questions about the loan process. We would be happy to partner with your church!

The Board of Trustees and staff are proud to announce the creation of “Pathways For Discipleship” endowment funds. The goal of creating these four endowment funds is to strengthen the foundation’s mission of supporting the ministries of the Great Plains Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church. These four endowment funds will focus on:

- (1) Leadership Education Fund,
- (2) Children/Youth Program Fund,
- (3) Ministry and Outreach Grant Fund and
- (4) Foundation Sustaining The Witness Fund

These four endowment funds have been created to connect United Methodist with causes that matter. More information about all four of these funds can be found within the 2016 Kansas Area United Methodist Foundation Annual Report and online at www.kaumf.org.

This is not the same Kansas Area United Methodist Foundation! Through the dedicated leadership of the foundation's Board of Trustees and staff; the foundation is committed to be relevant in an ever changing world! The future direction of your Kansas Area United Methodist Foundation will include people, churches and innovated leadership that will invite, influence and impact future generations so that the Kingdom of God is sustained! How are you planning to sustain the United Methodist witness for future generations?

Nebraska United Methodist Foundation

Anita B. Crisp, executive director

Bishop Ruben Saenz, Jr., clergy, delegates, and guests, it is a pleasure to share this report of the Nebraska United Methodist Foundation with you.

This last year, the foundation staff once again had the privilege to work along side local church pastors and members who want to develop resources that will fund new and expanded ministry; to assist members who, regardless of their age or means, have a heartfelt desire to give back to God a portion of that which He has blessed them; and to serve as stewards of the gifts entrusted to the foundation's care.

First of all, I want to take this opportunity to thank the rest of the foundation staff, Jackie Urkoski, director of operations and Marci Logsdon, director of finance, for the wonderful job they do in keeping the foundation operating smoothly.

For 2016, the total assets held by the foundation for the support of ministry in the conference and the foundation grew to over \$39 million. Distributions made by the foundation were over \$2.9 million. Those distributions included support for our churches and ministries in our conference, grants, scholarships, donor support for our mission, life income payments to donors and operations.

I am pleased to report that the number of seminary scholarships awarded by the foundation continues to increase in both number and amount. For the year 2016, the foundation awarded 18 scholarships. In 2016, we had approximately \$35,000 in seminary scholarships that was distributed.

Reports

The foundation is blessed to have some generous donors who have allowed us to provide small ministry grants on an annual basis. In 2016, we had \$60,000 available for these grants assisting 30 churches and ministries. We see a wide diversity in the applications that we receive, but each ministry is a vital part of the church family.

The foundation's purpose is to offer you resources that strengthen the ability of United Methodists to advance Christian ministries. Whether you've deemed it time to create a permanent endowment fund, to initiate a planned gifts program, to provide gift and estate planning opportunities for your members, to explore more diverse investment options for church funds, know that it's our mission to help you however we can. It is our pledge to you, to always provide the best possible stewardship of funds you entrust to the foundation's care.

The expertise, dedication and tenure of our staff and the insightful leadership of our board of directors fortify the Nebraska United Methodist Foundation. Serving you as you minister to others yields enormous benefits for us and enriches our lives as individuals. We continually strive to be aware of the needs facing those who participate in Christ's ministry and do our best to offer ways to guide, support and serve you.

Thank you!