

## 2018 JOURNAL

### Reports

## REPORTS

# ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

## Commission on Archives and History

Lona Dearmont, Chair

Dear Members of the Great Plains Annual Conference:

The “specialty” of the Commission on Archives and History is to tell the story of where we have been as Great Plains United Methodists, with an eye toward where we are going. Christians, to be faithful, must always look back to remember their inheritance, as well as look forward to the glories to come. As the Apostle Paul wrote, “I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ . . . may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power” (Ephesians 1:17–19).

One of the many ways in which the Holy Spirit inspires us—as we seek to be inspired in our everyday prayer, service, and worship—is to hear and read about the saints (“one of the spirits of the departed in heaven”) who have gone before.

Every responsible organization should preserve its records, for practical and for spiritual reasons, to preserve an accurate institutional memory, to honor the legacy of those who have gone before, and to help our successors who will carry on the United Methodist traditions after us.

In calendar year 2017, the archivists of the Kansas United Methodist Archives at Baker University and the Nebraska United Methodist Historical Center/Archives at Nebraska Wesleyan University fielded 105 research inquiries, processed 63 cubic feet of records (1 -foot-3 = 1 banker’s box), acquired an additional 18 cubic feet yet unprocessed, and scanned approximately 113 images.

In addition, over 500 images were scanned under the Kansas Heritage Grant awarded to the Great Plains Conference. This digitization project, “Growth Amidst Turmoil: Methodist and Early Kansas History, 1855–1926,” is viewable online at the Baker University archives website, and an accompanying exhibit was mounted at the university’s Old Castle Museum.

## **GREAT PLAINS CONFERENCE**

### **Reports**

These four churches, founded in 1867, were recognized on the floor of Annual Conference for celebrating 150 years of ministry in 2017:

- First United Methodist Church, Adams, NE (Blue River District)
- Burr United Methodist Church, Burr, NE (Blue River District)
- Seward United Methodist Church, Seward, NE (Blue River District)
- First United Methodist Church, Wamego, KS (Flint Hills District)

In addition, the Commission on Archives and History mailed or delivered certificates to these eleven churches celebrating their 125th anniversary in 2017:

- Newman United Methodist Church, Lincoln, NE (Blue River District)
- Prairie Home United Methodist Church, Prairie Home, NE (Blue River District)
- Brady United Methodist Church, Brady, NE (Gateway District)
- Farnam United Methodist Church, Farnam, NE (Gateway District)
- Rosedale United Methodist Church, Doniphan, NE (Prairie Rivers District)
- Calvary United Methodist Church, Iola, KS (Five Rivers District)
- Beagle United Methodist Church, Osawatomie, KS (Five Rivers District)
- Neutral United Methodist Church, Columbus, KS (Parsons District)
- Angola United Methodist Church, Coffeyville, KS (Parsons District)
- Webber United Methodist Church, Webber, KS (Salina District)
- Bluff City United Methodist Church, Bluff City, KS (Wichita West District)

And to these four churches celebrating their 100th anniversary in 2017:

- Morning Star United Methodist Church, Callaway, NE (Gateway District)
- Trinity United Methodist Church, Lindsborg, KS (Salina District)
- Grand Avenue United Methodist Church, Salina, KS (Salina District)
- Atchison United Methodist Church, Atchison, KS (Topeka District)  
(Celebrated church building's 100th anniversary and congregation's 160th anniversary)

Prayerfully submitted,

Lona Dearmont  
Chairperson, Commission on Archives & History

## 2018 JOURNAL

### Reports

## Personnel Committee

Craig Hauschild, Chair

Personnel Committee

Minimum Compensation Proposal

The Personnel Committee recommends a two percent increase in the Minimum Compensation for clergy over the 2018 salary levels. This corresponds with the national rate of inflation. If approved this would go into effect Jan. 1, 2019.

<b>Status</b>	<b>2019</b>
Full-Time Local Pastor	\$ 36,879
Associate Member	\$ 39,266
Provisional Member	\$ 41,653
Full Member	\$ 44,040

## Board of Pension and Health Benefits

Kelly Williams serves as chair and Janet Claassen, secretary.

The Pension and Health Benefits Team consists of six laity, one retired clergy member and five active clergy members. Ex-officio members include the Conference Treasurer, Scott Brewer, the Sr. Conference Benefits Officer Carol Fusaro and Cabinet Rep, the Rev. Chad Anglemeyer.

For the purpose of providing advice and guidance regarding the investment of discretionary funds, the Team along with CFA has an Investment Committee.

It remains the desire of the Team 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**

In 2017, the annual conference voted to continue the current health allowance system with an annual allowance of \$15,850 for every eligible clergy person serving three-quarter to full-time. The conference also asked the Pension and Health Benefits Team to consider the establishment of a clergy mutual aid fund, where a set percentage of salary

## GREAT PLAINS CONFERENCE

### Reports

from clergy could be used to support their colleagues who are struggling to afford health insurance.

With several tax and regulatory changes, prices for some participants of the healthcare.gov exchanges saw huge increases

i in their premiums. For some clergy families, this meant premiums soared to well over \$30,000. Concerned that this could affect a large group of clergy - particularly in the state of Nebraska – to not be able to afford coverage, the Team created an Emergency Health Insurance Grant which has provided up to \$15,000 in additional support to families who have seen their premiums exceed the annual health grant amount of \$15,850.

We have received grant requests from families who are facing huge premium costs simply for a base-level bronze plan, not at the levels we had expected. In fact, for this year so far we have approved seven grants for a total amount of \$63,916. Please note: these health insurance grants are still available to clergy, including those who might face large increases with mid-year 2018 changes in appointment.

While there are families who struggle to afford health insurance, we are also aware of many families who have come to rely upon their health allowance as a significant part of their compensation and from whom any move back to group health would create a different kind of financial hardship.

In light of all of these factors, the Team has decided to propose continuing the health allowance system in 2019, and to continue to offer the emergency health insurance grants to families struggling to afford their health premiums.

In the event we see coverage health coverage no longer being offered through healthcare.gov in either Kansas or Nebraska, the Pension and Health Benefits Team will request a called special session of the annual conference to address the situation at that time.

The Team has also determined that, at this time, it does not make sense to mandate clergy to donate a portion of their income to support those who struggled to afford coverage. We believe the conference pension and health benefits reserves are adequate

## 2018 JOURNAL

### Reports

to cover these grants without requiring further financial support from pastors or churches.

#### **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 Team set a projected goal of an annual increase of two percent or COLA which is reflected in the Comprehensive Funding Plan.

2018 PSR is \$775. An increase of 2% (\$16) for 2019 would bring the PSR up to \$791.00. 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 100 percent for the former Kansas West conference.

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

**GREAT PLAINS CONFERENCE  
Reports**

Recommendation for the 2018 local church funding is as follows:

	2018	2019
CPP death and disability	3%	3%
CRSP defined contributions	3%	3%
CRSP defined benefit	2%	2%
Total	8%	8%

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

- Funding Percentage

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

- Special Pension Grants
  1. Kathy Kirkus: \$323.98 monthly
  2. John Carey: \$1,100 monthly
- 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-the Clergy person will receive \$300 monthly, along with \$300 monthly for the spouse (three-year term) and \$300 monthly for dependents until the age of 26 (three year term). After the completion of three years, the allowance will be discontinued for the spouse and any eligible dependents.

## 2018 JOURNAL

### Reports

- 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% 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 (half-time or more) clergy or District Superintendent Assignment (DSA) is unable to perform the duties of their appointment due to a documented medical disability when the period of the clergy or DSA'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 interim pastor served in some capacity and amounts paid.

- Retiree Health Insurance

The Conference partners with Via Benefits (formally known as One Exchange) through Wespeth Benefits and Investments for Retiree Health Insurance. Via Benefits is an exchange that will assist each retiree in selecting the private Medicare plan that best meets their medical needs and budget.

## **GREAT PLAINS CONFERENCE**

### **Reports**

Nebraska retirees retiring through 2019 that meet the eligibility requirements will receive a health reimbursement account (HRA) providing they use Via Benefits in securing their coverage. The coverage must continue through Via Benefits to be eligible for the HRA. Securing coverage outside Via Benefits will cancel the HRA and it can't be reinstated.

A Retiree Health Valuation is required by Wespath Benefits and Investments every two years.

- 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.

Written guidelines are available from the benefits department.

- 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

## 2018 JOURNAL

### Reports

Lockton. As our broker, we are provided updates/reporting requirements related to the Affordable Care Act (ACA). Lockton also conducts the bidding processes on all benefits made available to conference members and staff. Lockton provides a variety of training webcasts and meetings at no cost.

- 2018 Comprehensive Funding Plan

The Board is required to submit a comprehensive funding plan each year to Wespeth 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 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

## **GREAT PLAINS CONFERENCE**

### **Reports**

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% 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 Wespeth 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 Wespeth Benefits and Investments and from a commercial annuity company that provides an annuity arising from benefits accrued under a Wespeth 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)

## 2018 JOURNAL

### Reports

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. Health Insurance/Health Insurance Allowance**

The Team recommends continuing the health insurance allowance for 2019 at the 2018 level of \$15,850 annually.

### **3. Clergy Retirement Security Program (CRSP) Funding**

Use the Pre-82 Pension Plan over-funding to fund the 2018 and 2019 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 2018 and 2019 UMPIP contributions needed (two 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 two percent of compensation.

Maximum total contribution for pension and CPP at the local church level will be eight percent for 2019 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 (eight percent) and the full-funding (15.2 percent) is subsidized by the Conference Board of Pension and Health Benefits Team. 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.

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.

### **4. Past Service Rate**

Continue the PSR increases at or near the level

## **GREAT PLAINS CONFERENCE**

### **Reports**

of two percent or COLA. 2019 PSR will be increased to \$791, a two percent increase. Any increases to the PSR is required by Wespath to be funded immediately in the year in which the increase occurs.

#### **5. Funding Level**

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

#### **6. Special Pension Grants**

Continue to provide Special Pension Grants for the following:

Continue to provide Special Pension Grants for the following:

Kathy Kirkus, dependent daughter of Eldo Kirkus, clergyperson of the former Nebraska Conference. The grant is \$323.98 monthly.

John Carey, dependent son of La Donna Carey. The grant is \$1,100.00 monthly.

**7. 2018 Comprehensive Funding Plan** Prepared by Wespath.

## **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.

## **2018 JOURNAL**

### **Reports**

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, 2017 is \$1,588,243,217, while total plan assets are \$1,700,835,563, resulting in a current plan funded ratio of 107%. The Great Plains Conference portion of the liability is 3.3256% with a 2019 contribution of \$3,254,907. The conference anticipates that the amount will be funded by Surplus Redirection from Own Pre82 - representing year over year in how contributions are to be funded. 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%+ under CRSP effective January 1, 2018.

Effective January 1, 2014, the CRSP-DC plan was reduced from a 3% to a 2% of plan compensation non-matching contribution. Clergy have the opportunity to earn up to an additional 1% CRSP-DC contribution by contributing at least 1% of their plan compensation to UMPIP; therefore, if a participant contributes at least 1% of plan compensation to UMPIP, the individual will receive a contribution of 3% to CRSP DC. The 2019 CRSP-DC contribution is anticipated to be \$1,025,834 and will be funded by Direct Billed.

### **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% 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 IRA, or it may be paid out as a lump sum.

## **GREAT PLAINS CONFERENCE**

### **Reports**

Current funding plan information:

The Ministerial Pension Plan (MPP) annuities' total liability as of January 1, 2017 is \$3,532,916,942, while total plan assets are \$3,701,460,997, resulting in a current plan funded ratio of 105% and requires no for 2019. The Great Plains Conference's portion of the total liability is 2.9796%. Future MPP annuitants have a total account balance of \$3,689,292,322 and the Great Plains Conference's portion of that balance is \$92,216,194 or 2.5% of the total.

### **PRE 82 PLAN**

Supplement One to the Clergy Retirement Security Program (CRSP), also known as the Pre-1982 Plan, provides clergy with a pension benefit for their years of ministry with The United Methodist Church prior to 1982. The Pre-1982 Plan was replaced by MPP effective January 1, 1982. If a clergy person 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 (PSR), and the product is the minimum annual benefit payable to those clergy eligible for Pre-1982 Plan benefits. In certain situations, the benefit received from the Pre-1982 plan may vary based on the applicability of what is referred to as Defined Benefit Service Money (DBSM), which is the defined contribution feature of the Pre-1982 Plan. At the time that a participant retires, the DBSM account is converted to a life based benefit and 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 2019 PSR recommended to the Great Plains Conference will be \$791, representing a 2% increase from the 2018 rate. The conference expects future annual increases to be approximately 2%.

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

## 2018 JOURNAL

### Reports

Based on the final actuarial valuations from the Wespath Benefits and Investments as of January 1, 2017 for 2019, the portion of the Pre-1982 liability and assets attributable to the Great Plains Conference and its related funded status are as follows:

Funding Plan Liability	\$(86,730,333)
Assets, including In-Plan and Outside	106,138,362
Funded Status	\$ 19,408,029
Funded Ratio	122%

### ACTIVE HEALTH BENEFIT PROGRAM

#### Program Overview

The Great Plains Conference offers the following active health benefit to its active eligible participants (currently conference staff only): Self Funded-Non HealthFlex.

Current funding plan information:

The total cost of the program for 2019 is anticipated to be \$1,056,036 and will be funded by premiums that are Budgeted - Direct Bill (staff pays portion), apportionments and earnings on benefit reserves. It is anticipated that increases for future years will average 8.0% based on the following rationale: Expected health insurance trend increase - also due to experience ratio.

#### •Claims Incurred But Not Reported

The Great Plains Conference provides a Self Funded-Non HealthFlex to its eligible participants. Cigna is the current health insurance provider. As of 12/31/2019, 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 exceed the reserve, Cigna covers absorbs the cost.

#### •Additional Conference Sponsored 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 \$189,960.

#### Additional Plan Sponsor Funded Coverage

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

## GREAT PLAINS CONFERENCE

### Reports

#### POST RETIREMENT MEDICAL BENEFIT PROGRAM (PRM)

##### Program Overview:

The Great Plains Conference currently offers a Stipend for Post Retirement Medical (PRM) coverage for clergy serving the Nebraska Conference as of 12/31/13 with five years of service.

##### Current funding plan information:

The plan sponsor's intention for 2019 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 actuarial valuation dated 12/31/2017 provided by Wills Towers Watson, the following is the funded position of the post-retirement medical benefits:

1. Valuation report (in-plan) asset \$1,647,168
2. Expected Post Retirement Obligation (EPBO) \$5,925,920
3. Accumulated Post Retirement Obligation (APBO)  
\$5,922,755
4. Service Cost (SC) or net conference cost \$3,276
5. Funded Status \$1,647,168
6. Number of Annual Payments 20
7. Portion of Funded Status Payable \$0
8. PRM Funding Contribution, Informational purposes only  
[4. + 7.] \$3,276

These values are based on a 3.15% long term discount rate, a 6.0% long-term expected rate of return on assets, and a current medical trend rate of 0% with an ultimate medical trend rate of 0% for fiscal year 2017.

The projected annual plan benefit cost for 2019 with members retiring through 2019 is \$543,845.

#### 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.

## 2018 JOURNAL

### Reports

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% 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 2019, 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 2.00% per year. The estimate for 2019 reflects the CPP holiday in the amount of \$1,025,541, 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 staff lay employees working an average of 20 hours per week or more are eligible after 3 months for a plan sponsor funded pension match contribution of 6% of salary. Lay employees are required to contribute 3% through payroll deductions to the UMPIP. The estimated contribution for the Great Plains Conference is anticipated to be \$186,979 and will be funded via CRSP and apportionments.

The Great Plains Conference, as of January 1, 2019, is planning on sponsoring the UMPIP for clergy serving quarter-time and are eligible for a pension contribution of 12% of salary. The estimated contribution for the Conference is anticipated to be \$20,197 and will be funded via Direct Billing.

#### **OTHER CONFERENCE BENEFIT OBLIGATIONS: DEFINED CONTRIBUTION (DC) TYPE**

Plan Overview: The Great Plains Conference currently offers the following DC benefit(s): Death & Disability for conference lay staff.

## **GREAT PLAINS CONFERENCE**

### **Reports**

The funding obligation for 2019 is anticipated to be \$19,826 with the funding sources to be: CRSP and apportionments. The anticipated average increase in future years is expected to be 2.5% per year.

Plan Overview: The Great Plains Conference currently offers the following DC benefit(s): Employee Assistance Program for clergy and conference lay staff working three-quarters time or more. The funding obligation for 2019 is anticipated to be \$13,824 with the funding sources to be Health Insurance Fund. The anticipated average increase in future years is expected to be 0% per year.

Plan Overview: The Great Plains Conference currently offers the following DC benefit(s): Health cost for disabled clergy. The funding obligation for 2019 is anticipated to be \$189,960 with the funding sources to be Health Insurance Fund. The anticipated average increase in future years is expected to be 0% per year.

Plan Overview: The Great Plains Conference currently offers the following DC benefit(s): Lockton Consultant Fee. The funding obligation for 2019 is anticipated to be \$40,000 with the funding sources to be Health Insurance Fund. No change in contract expected.

Plan Overview: The Great Plains Conference currently offers the following DC benefit(s): Moving Expenses. The funding obligation for 2019 is anticipated to be \$450,000 with the funding sources to be from apportionments. The anticipated average increase in future years is expected to be 0% per year due to: The amount did not increase - this is a budgeted line item.

Plan Overview: The Great Plains Conference currently offers the following DC benefit(s): Virgin Pulse Health Miles. The funding obligation for 2019 is anticipated to be \$16,947 with the funding sources to be from Health Insurance Fund. The anticipated average increase in future years is expected to be 2% per year due to: Costs are based on participation.

### **CONCLUSION**

The 2019 Comprehensive Benefit Funding Plan and the above Summary document incorporates, to the best of our understanding, the Great Plains Conference's obligations and funding requirements of the benefits provided to the clergy and laity of the Great Plains Conference.

## 2018 JOURNAL

### Reports

## 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

## **GREAT PLAINS CONFERENCE**

### **Reports**

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

## 2018 JOURNAL

### Reports

#### 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 alls, 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 a 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 per hour for one dependent, \$8 per hour for two dependents, and \$10 per hour for three or more dependents. The total shall not exceed \$50.00 per day

## **GREAT PLAINS CONFERENCE**

### **Reports**

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 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.)

## 2018 JOURNAL

### Reports

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 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

## **GREAT PLAINS CONFERENCE**

### **Reports**

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:

##### **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

## **2018 JOURNAL**

### **Reports**

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 (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

## **GREAT PLAINS CONFERENCE**

### **Reports**

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 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.

## 2018 JOURNAL

### Reports

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

## **GREAT PLAINS CONFERENCE**

### **Reports**

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.

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

## 2018 JOURNAL

### Reports

(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.

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

## **GREAT PLAINS CONFERENCE**

### **Reports**

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.

## 2018 JOURNAL

### Reports

#### **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

## GREAT PLAINS CONFERENCE

### Reports

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

## **2018 JOURNAL**

### **Reports**

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.

## **GREAT PLAINS CONFERENCE**

### **Reports**

#### **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, ¶617) 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

## 2018 JOURNAL

### 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.

## **GREAT PLAINS CONFERENCE**

### **Reports**

#### **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.

## 2018 JOURNAL

### Reports

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.
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 ¶340.2c(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](http://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

## GREAT PLAINS CONFERENCE

### Reports

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):

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.

## 2018 JOURNAL

### Reports

## Board of Trustees

Rev. Loyd Hamrick, chair

The Great Plains Conference Board of Trustees is responsible to evaluate, maintain and protect conference-owned properties over the two-state area of Nebraska and Kansas. At the 2017 Annual Conference in Grand Island, Nebraska, the decision was made to consolidate offices, which was a result of a staffing study conducted earlier in the year. It was also decided to move the Episcopal residence. Since the meeting in Grand Island, there have been several meetings and teleconferences to accomplish the task at hand. Your Board of Trustees has made major progress in the consolidation process.

The following of highlights from July 2017 to the present:

#### CONFERENCE OFFICE:

Early on, the Trustees determined that the best choice was to lease, rather than build or buy, an office. The Trustees felt that leasing gave more opportunity to determine the sort of staffing and operational culture that best suits the conference needs before we establish a more permanent office. Leasing allows the consolidation of offices more quickly by reducing construction and/or remodeling time. Leasing also provides greater flexibility to adapt to any challenges arising out of the 2019 special session of General Conference.

The Trustees selected Newmark Grubb Zimmer of Kansas City to find a suitable office location. The Trustees selected 1207 SW Executive Drive, which is a modern facility consisting of two office buildings joined by a very modern connecting commons area. The facility is owned by an engineering firm, Bartlett & West, which occupies the east building. The Conference now occupies the west building. The arrangement allows the conference much of the desired privacy previously offered by the current three single-use offices. After negotiations with Bartlett and West, a lease was signed in December 2017. Upon the agreed terms, the Conference is getting this lease at nearly 25% below list price, and 33% below market priced for a similar Class A office space along the Wanamaker corridor in Topeka. The space is modern, attractive and offers very close access to I-70 and I-470.

#### EPISCOPAL RESIDENCE:

At the same time as the Trustees were looking for a conference office location, we were working with the Bishop and his wife, Maye, and the Episcopal Residence Committee, to select and purchase a

## GREAT PLAINS CONFERENCE

### Reports

residence for the Bishop. The Trustees chose a Topeka Realtor Team to locate a residence. Going into the search, we were faced with a few challenges in finding a suitable residence – based on guidelines established by the General Council on Finance and Administration. A residence was needed that was accessible and could accommodate entertaining groups of 30-50 people at a time. The somewhat limited housing market in Topeka posed a challenge: there were homes that were suitable for the entertaining requirements, but lacked adequate accessibility, and vice versa. Purchasing an existing home seemed a far more cost-effective investment for the Conference than building a new home.

The house is located in the Lake Sherwood neighborhood at 6400 SW Suffolk Drive. Some may remember that this is the same neighborhood where former Bishop Mutti resided. Bishop Saenz and Maye moved into the residence around Thanksgiving.

The Board of Trustees terminated the apartment rental for the Bishop in Lincoln at the end of September 2017.

Maintaining District Parsonages and Episcopal Residences continues to be a task of the Trustees according to the Book of Discipline.

GREAT WEST DISTRICT: sold through realtor; closed July 28, 2017

HAYS DISTRICT: private sale is in process; contract pending

MISSOURI RIVER DISTRICT: sold by private sale; closed July 21, 2017

PARSONS DISTRICT: sold through realtor; closed February 28, 2018

WICHITA WEST DISTRICT: work is being done on the residence: replacing roof damaged by hail (received insurance claim); repainting interior walls and ceilings; replacing carpets; will be listed with realtor when work is completed.

EPISCOPAL RESIDENCE:

Wichita Residence: property is listed with a realtor

Topeka Residence: purchased through a realtor; closed September 6, 2017

The Trustees has been actively marketing the three conference offices in Wichita, Topeka and Lincoln:

Wichita Conference Office: We have been working with Newmark Grubb Zimmer of Kansas City and Weigand Realtors of Wichita to help us with the marketing of this property. We have entered into Purchase Contract with Juniper Payments, LLC of Wichita to buy this property and the final approval of the purchase will come before the Board of Trustees at our meeting on April 13th 2018. If approved Juniper Payments, LLC will take possession of the property July 1,

## 2018 JOURNAL

### Reports

2018.

Lincoln Conference Office: There has been some interest shown on this property, but we do not have a firm offer or contract,

Topeka Conference Office: There has been some interest shown on this property, but we do not have a firm offer or contract.

The Trustees work on property issues related to discontinued local churches. The following churches or properties have been sold or disposed of since the last Annual Conference: Lyle UMC, rural Norcatur, KS – sold by private sale; Scranton UMC, Scranton, KS – listed for sale with a realtor; Ebenezer UMC, rural Burns, KS – acquired by deed, church sold by private sale, cemetery donated to Clifford Township; Sylvania UMC, Sylvania, KS – acquired deed, sold at auction; Cedar Vale UMC, Cedar Vale, KS – acquired by deed, parsonage sold in May 2017 under 10-year installment sale, payments made by purchaser to a local account, church property sold by Conference Trustees currently in process; Upland UMC, Upland KS – acquired by deed and sold by Conference Trustees, currently in process; Glade UMC, Glade KS – church working through closing process; Delphos UMC, Delphos KS – church working through closing process; may be continued as church is balking at signing over deed(s).

VEHICLES: Reduced Conference pool of vehicles from 29 to 24; vehicles assigned to District Superintendents reduced from 17 to 13. Trustees will begin selling six (6) vehicles and purchasing one vehicle. It is anticipated the pool of vehicles will be further reduced by one with two being sold and one purchase with the announced reduction of one DS this appointive season.

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 re-evaluated on an annual basis by the Episcopacy Committee and the Board of Trustees.

In closing, this has been an unusually busy year for the Conference Trustees. The Board members and staff have effectively performed their responsibilities and duties to the best of our abilities. I want to thank the members of Board of Trustees for all their support and energy this season and I especially want to thank the staff Scott Brewer, Treasurer and Director of Administrative Services Patrick McKaig, Property Manager, and the legal team of David Seely, Patricia Reeder, and Brett Ebert, Conference Chancellors. Without their expertise, time and effort we could not have accomplished the tasks at hand. I believe that we are moving in the right direction to unite the conference and I feel we are building a strong foundation to move forward in the future as Great Plains Conference.

## GREAT PLAINS CONFERENCE

### Reports

#### **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.

We assisted in the purchase of a suitable Episcopal Residence located in Topeka, Kansas. Annual Conference 2017 voted to move to one conference office to be located in Topeka which necessitated the purchase of a new residence for the bishop. The lease on the apartment in Lincoln, Nebraska was not renewed. The residence in Wichita is on the market to be sold. The consolidation of residences and conference offices will provide the ability for conference staff to communicate more effectively and with ease. It also demonstrates forward thinking stewardship of our resources.

The Episcopacy Committee appreciates the leadership of Bishop Saenz as the conference consolidates its offices to one location. While his home and office were relocated in Fall 2017, he remained focused on the needs of our conference initiatives and goals. Missional effectiveness is needed for the building of God's kingdom here on earth, and Bishop Saenz is providing resources for every church leader (laity and clergy) to be equipped to do fulfill our mission. His commitment to the Lord, as well as, his faithfulness to the gospel and its call on every life will bless and strengthen our Great Plains Conference.

We ask for the prayers of every member of the conference to guide and protect Bishop Saenz as he discerns a way forward for us a conference and a denomination beyond 2019 Special General Conference.

## 2018 JOURNAL

### Reports

## Treasurer's Report

Scott Brewer

A reality in the ministry of administration is that if we've done our job right, no one should really know that we've done it at all. Our work in finance, benefits, HR, property management, information technology, safe gatherings, these aren't the ministries people first think of, when they think of the Great Plains Conference, or at least, I hope not.

They are, nevertheless, ministries necessary for the work of the church to happen. We – the accountants, the administrators, the managers, the treasurers -- we are called to the holy task of setting the table so that all God's children can be invited and present at the feast.

That work requires a great team, and boy do I have one. I want to thank the amazing staff who have been so kind and patient with me in this first year of learning and change.

Carol Fusaro, who will retire at the end of this month after 17 years of service to Kansas East and the Great Plains, and who we will celebrate in a few moments during Kelly Williams's report.

And finally, Niki Buesing, who was named assistant treasurer earlier this year, and as everyone in our office knows, is the true brains and brawn behind the operation. Niki started working for the Kansas East Conference eight years ago today.

I want to thank the leadership of our boards and committees, and in particular, our chairpersons. They will tell you more about much of the work that has been accomplished this past year, so I won't steal their thunder. But I do want to say, our boards are filled with highly competent, deeply committed, reliably independent thinkers who provide such excellent support and accountability to the staff and represent you with tremendous care and integrity.

And finally, and most importantly I want to thank all of you, for the trust that you have placed in us to work on your behalf quietly, diligently, but always with a commitment to safeguard the resources that have been entrusted for our collective ministries.

2017 was a wonderful year for the Great Plains. You will note that the budget for 2019 proposes a 0.7% increase, this is driven primarily by an increase in total local church operating income, from which we apportion 10% as our mission share.

## GREAT PLAINS CONFERENCE

### Reports

2017 was, of course, also a great year for Mission Share receipts . I want to thank you for your tremendous generosity. Yes, for the first time in the short history of this conference, and for the first time for any of our predecessor conferences since 2008, we surpassed 90% giving to mission shares.

I want to offer particular congratulations to the 11 districts that got to 90% or above in 2017: Hays - 90.9%; Kansas City - 91.1%; Missouri River\* 92.7%; Salina - 93.7%; Hutchinson - 94.3%; Elkhorn Valley - 95.0%; Flint Hills - 95.4%; Blue River - 96.9%; Prairie Rivers - 97.3%; Great West - 98.0%; Gateway - 98.1%

We have also been honored by the General Board of Global Ministries with this plaque, which celebrates that we were a top 10 conference for giving to the Advance in 2017.

We're making a difference, friends. Our prayers, presence, gifts, service, witness, and flood buckets are changing lives and communities.

As members of the Great Plains Conference, we are inheritors of a great legacy in this conference. You can see it today in the colleges and universities, hospitals and homes, ministries and foundations started by our forebears. They saw visions and dreamed dreams, and they built them. I thank God you continue to support them through your gifts to Mission Agency Support, but, brothers and sisters, we are not simply called to be caretakers of a legacy.

God is still calling us to build anew, and I don't know about you, but I want to build.

So let us build, friends. Let us free ourselves from the shackles of fear and grievance, let us take on the challenges that come in these next 12 months, let us embrace the opportunities of a new day as a people of faith. Let us give thanks for all that God has given us, and let us continue to make it a blessing to the world around us.

And when we come together next year in Topeka, let's celebrate reaching 91%, amen? Amen!

Thank you, and may God continue to bless our shared ministry in the year to come.

# 2018 JOURNAL

## Reports

### Great Plains Budget Summary

	2017		2018		2019		Apprvd vs Propsd	
	Approved Budget	Actual	Approved Budget	Proposed Budget	\$\$\$ Chng from 2018 to 2019	% Chng from 2018 to 2019		
<b>INCOME:</b>								
Mission Shares	\$14,560,893	\$14,478,318	\$14,244,434	\$14,367,202	\$122,768	0.9%		
Less: Allowance for Unpaid Mission Shares	(\$959,167)	(\$1,436,137)	(\$833,248)	(\$858,957)	(\$25,709)	3.1%		
<b>Net Mission Share Income</b>	<b>\$13,601,726</b>	<b>\$13,042,181</b>	<b>\$13,411,186</b>	<b>\$13,508,245</b>	<b>\$97,059</b>	<b>0.7%</b>		
% of Mission Share Asking	93.41%	90.08%	94.15%	94.02%				
<b>Other Income:</b>								
Restricted Reserve-Budget Support (5%)	\$1,873,829	\$1,105,041	\$1,831,306	\$1,843,669	\$12,363	0.7%		
Restr Reserve-Budget Support Special Distribution	\$0	\$0	\$133,983	\$138,350	\$4,367	3.3%		
Use of Missional Opportunity Reserves	\$49,099	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0			
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$15,524,654</b>	<b>\$14,147,222</b>	<b>\$15,376,475</b>	<b>\$15,490,264</b>	<b>\$113,788</b>	<b>0.7%</b>		
<b>EXPENSES:</b>								
<b>Personnel</b>								
Wages and Housing	\$4,104,775	\$3,865,951	\$3,663,897	\$3,604,584	(\$59,314)	-1.6%		
Other benefits & Payroll taxes	\$685,382	\$588,151	\$601,504	\$704,224	\$102,720	17.1%		
<b>Total Personnel</b>	<b>\$4,790,157</b>	<b>\$4,454,102</b>	<b>\$4,265,401</b>	<b>\$4,308,808</b>	<b>\$43,406</b>	<b>1.0%</b>		
<b>Episcopal Office</b>								
General Church Ministries for Episcopacy	\$731,601	\$659,034	\$735,550	\$710,738	(\$24,812)	-3.4%		
Episcopal Office Expenses	\$24,977	\$24,780	\$184,081	\$51,995	(\$132,086)	-71.8%		
Episcopal Residence Maintenance	\$16,850	\$6,798	\$15,000	\$15,000	\$0	0.0%		
District Office Expenses	\$295,500	\$251,195	\$298,840	\$308,445	\$9,605	3.2%		
Cabinet Operations	\$642,300	\$547,337	\$654,000	\$785,700	\$131,700	20.1%		
<b>Total Episcopal Office Budget</b>	<b>\$1,711,228</b>	<b>\$1,489,144</b>	<b>\$1,887,471</b>	<b>\$1,871,878</b>	<b>(\$15,593)</b>	<b>-0.8%</b>		
<b>Clergy Excellence</b>								
General Church Ministries for Clergy Excellence	\$834,404	\$751,634	\$838,907	\$810,609	(\$28,298)	-3.4%		
Board of Ordained Ministry	\$175,500	\$159,464	\$175,500	\$176,000	\$500	0.3%		
Trans Into Ministry Mission Share Request	\$147,182	\$145,988	\$209,068	\$229,270	\$20,202	9.7%		
Clergy Excellence Programming Expense	\$56,000	\$55,395	\$85,000	\$197,000	\$112,000	131.8%		
Clergy Excellence Office expense	\$31,000	\$22,830	\$32,500	\$32,650	\$150	0.5%		
<b>Total Clergy Excellence Budget</b>	<b>\$1,244,086</b>	<b>\$1,135,311</b>	<b>\$1,340,975</b>	<b>\$1,445,529</b>	<b>\$104,554</b>	<b>7.8%</b>		
<b>Congregational Excellence</b>								
<b>Leadership Development:</b>								
General Church Ministries for Leadership Development	\$407,323	\$366,929	\$409,521	\$395,707	(\$13,814)	-3.4%		
SCJ Ministries for Leadership Development	\$121,082	\$87,956	\$97,643	\$97,643	\$0	0.0%		
Congregational Leadership/Training	\$187,000	\$65,414	\$195,500	\$140,800	(\$54,700)	-28.0%		
Campus Ministry Mission Share Request	\$636,285	\$636,285	\$617,968	\$625,000	\$7,032	1.1%		
Camping Mission Share Request	\$685,094	\$685,094	\$712,500	\$712,500	\$0	0.0%		
<b>Total Leadership Development</b>	<b>\$2,036,784</b>	<b>\$1,841,678</b>	<b>\$2,033,132</b>	<b>\$1,971,650</b>	<b>(\$61,482)</b>	<b>-3.0%</b>		
<b>Vital Congregations:</b>								
Resource Center Mission Share Request	\$26,920	\$26,706	\$26,920	\$4,000	(\$22,920)	-85.1%		
Youth Ministry	\$110,900	\$94,988	\$112,400	\$112,400	\$0	0.0%		
Ethnic Mission Share Request	\$500,855	\$404,671	\$442,424	\$468,500	\$26,076	5.9%		
New Church Starts Mission Share Request	\$539,856	\$539,856	\$545,255	\$550,708	\$5,453	1.0%		
<b>Total Vital Congregations Budget</b>	<b>\$1,178,531</b>	<b>\$1,066,221</b>	<b>\$1,126,999</b>	<b>\$1,135,608</b>	<b>\$8,609</b>	<b>0.8%</b>		
Congregational Excellence Office Expense	\$78,403	\$64,102	\$65,700	\$72,100	\$6,400	9.7%		
<b>Total Congregational Excellence Budget</b>	<b>\$3,293,718</b>	<b>\$2,972,001</b>	<b>\$3,225,831</b>	<b>\$3,179,358</b>	<b>(\$46,473)</b>	<b>-1.4%</b>		
<b>Mercy and Justice</b>								
General Church Ministries for Mercy and Justice	\$2,470,452	\$2,225,400	\$2,483,784	\$2,400,000	(\$83,784)	-3.4%		
Disaster Response	\$18,600	\$5,936	\$18,600	\$23,600	\$5,000	26.9%		
Mercy and Justice Ministries	\$150,500	\$149,317	\$158,600	\$169,000	\$10,400	6.6%		
Mercy & Justice Office expense	\$18,200	\$15,770	\$20,200	\$20,195	(\$5)	0.0%		
<b>Total Mercy and Justice Budget</b>	<b>\$2,657,752</b>	<b>\$2,396,423</b>	<b>\$2,681,184</b>	<b>\$2,612,795</b>	<b>(\$68,389)</b>	<b>-2.6%</b>		
<b>Administrative Services</b>								
General and SCJ Ministries for Admin Services	\$404,366	\$377,216	\$420,704	\$408,541	(\$12,163)	-2.9%		
Administrative Committee Expenses	\$89,913	\$85,297	\$91,002	\$94,200	\$3,198	3.5%		
Administrative Services Office Expense	\$144,485	\$133,723	\$167,850	\$155,550	(\$12,300)	-7.3%		
Information Technology	\$174,400	\$163,645	\$174,400	\$174,400	\$0	0.0%		
Annual Conference Expense	\$119,300	\$82,765	\$129,600	\$152,750	\$23,150	17.9%		
Safe Gatherings	\$90,950	\$105,988	\$115,100	\$166,950	\$51,850	45.0%		
Conf Office Building Maintenance expense	\$211,500	\$209,798	\$169,157	\$211,705	\$42,548	25.2%		
Trustees: Insurance, Auto, Dist Office & Parsonage	\$439,800	\$425,716	\$412,450	\$412,450	\$0	0.0%		
Communications Program Expense	\$152,999	\$116,093	\$145,350	\$145,350	\$0	0.0%		
<b>Total Administrative Services budget</b>	<b>\$1,827,713</b>	<b>\$1,700,241</b>	<b>\$1,825,613</b>	<b>\$1,921,896</b>	<b>\$96,283</b>	<b>5.3%</b>		
Missional Opportunity fund request	\$0	\$0	\$150,000	\$150,000	\$0	0.0%		
<b>Total Great Plains Conference Budget</b>	<b>\$15,524,654</b>	<b>\$14,147,222</b>	<b>\$15,376,475</b>	<b>\$15,490,264</b>	<b>\$113,788</b>	<b>0.7%</b>		
<b>Net Income (Loss)</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>			

# GREAT PLAINS CONFERENCE

## Reports

	Approved Budget	Actual	Approved Budget	Proposed Budget	\$\$\$ Chng from 2018 to 2019	% Chng from 2018 to 2019
<b>Mission Agency Support:</b>						
1% of line 67 for Agencies	\$1,456,089	\$1,079,838	\$1,424,443	\$1,436,720	\$12,277	0.9%
<b>Colleges/Universities</b>						
Nebraska Wesleyan Univ - Lincoln, NE	\$60,000	\$41,284	\$115,100	\$103,600	(\$11,500)	-10.0%
Baker University - Baldwin City, KS	\$126,100	\$86,764	\$115,100	\$103,600	(\$11,500)	-10.0%
Saint Paul School of Theology - KS/OK	\$126,100	\$86,765	\$115,100	\$103,600	(\$11,500)	-10.0%
Kansas Wesleyan University - Salina, KS	\$126,100	\$86,764	\$115,100	\$103,600	(\$11,500)	-10.0%
Southwestern College - Winfield, KS	\$126,100	\$86,765	\$115,100	\$103,600	(\$11,500)	-10.0%
<b>Health &amp; Welfare Institutions</b>						
Aldersgate Village (Good Sam. Fnd) - Topeka, KS	\$72,750	\$50,157	\$67,600	\$58,000	(\$9,600)	-14.2%
Asbury Park, (Good Sam. Fnd) - Newton, KS	\$33,950	\$24,685	\$31,500	\$27,000	(\$4,500)	-14.3%
GraceMed Health Clinic - Wichita and Topeka, KS	\$48,500	\$36,403	\$45,100	\$39,000	(\$6,100)	-13.5%
Released & Restored - NE	\$29,100	\$22,272	\$27,000	\$24,000	(\$3,000)	-11.1%
EmberHope (Youthville) - KS	\$33,950	\$52,076	\$31,500	\$31,000	(\$500)	-1.6%
Epworth Village - York, NE	\$33,950	\$29,060	\$31,500	\$29,000	(\$2,500)	-7.9%
Tyree Health and Dental Clinic - Wichita, KS			\$19,100	\$24,000	\$4,900	25.7%
<b>Ministries with the Poor</b>						
United Methodist Ministries - Omaha, NE	\$194,000	\$133,484	\$182,300	\$167,000	(\$15,300)	-8.4%
Immigrant Legal Center(JFON) - NE	\$155,200	\$106,863	\$144,400	\$132,000	(\$12,400)	-8.6%
Friendship House of Hope - Ogdan, KS	\$18,430	\$13,065	\$17,000	\$14,500	(\$2,500)	-14.7%
Wesley House - Pittsburg, KS	\$70,000	\$50,852	\$65,100	\$58,000	(\$7,100)	-10.9%
Fellowship and Faith - Topeka, KS	\$9,700	\$14,539	\$9,000	\$7,500	(\$1,500)	-16.7%
Living Hope-Omaha, NE	\$50,000	\$34,403	\$38,300	\$34,000	(\$4,300)	-11.2%
UM Open Door - Wichita, KS	\$72,500	\$71,640	\$67,400	\$58,000	(\$9,400)	-13.9%
Genesis Family Health (UM Mex-Amer Minist), KS	\$53,000	\$42,838	\$49,300	\$39,000	(\$10,300)	-20.9%
<b>Ecumenical/Interchurch organizations</b>						
Rural Response Hotline, NE	\$13,313	\$9,160	\$23,200	\$19,000	(\$4,200)	-18.1%
<b>Total Mission Agency Support Budget</b>	<b>\$1,452,743</b>	<b>\$1,079,839</b>	<b>\$1,424,800</b>	<b>\$1,279,000</b>	<b>(\$145,800)</b>	<b>-10.2%</b>
<b>Net Mission Agency Support Income</b>	<b>\$3,346</b>	<b>(\$1)</b>	<b>(\$357)</b>	<b>\$157,720</b>	<b>\$158,077</b>	

<b>For Information Only - included in the above budget</b>						
<b>General Church Apportionments</b>						
Episcopal Office	\$731,601	\$659,034	\$735,550	\$710,738	(\$24,812)	-3.4%
Africa University	\$74,487	\$67,102	\$74,889	\$72,363	(\$2,526)	-3.4%
Black College	\$332,836	\$299,827	\$334,632	\$323,344	(\$11,288)	-3.4%
Ministerial Education	\$834,404	\$751,634	\$838,907	\$810,609	(\$28,298)	-3.4%
World Service	\$2,470,452	\$2,225,400	\$2,483,784	\$2,400,000	(\$83,784)	-3.4%
General Administration	\$293,346	\$264,248	\$294,929	\$284,980	(\$9,949)	-3.4%
Interdenominational Cooperation	\$65,256	\$58,781	\$65,609	\$63,395	(\$2,214)	-3.4%
<b>Total General Apportionments</b>	<b>\$4,802,382</b>	<b>\$4,326,026</b>	<b>\$4,828,300</b>	<b>\$4,665,429</b>	<b>(\$162,871)</b>	<b>-3.4%</b>
<b>South Central Jurisdiction Apportionments</b>						
Mt Sequoyah	\$23,368	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	0.0%
Lydia Patterson Institute	\$97,714	\$87,956	\$97,643	\$97,643	\$0	0.0%
SCJ Mission And Administration Fund	\$45,764	\$47,408	\$52,630	\$52,630	\$0	0.0%
<b>Total SCJ Apportionments</b>	<b>\$166,846</b>	<b>\$135,364</b>	<b>\$150,273</b>	<b>\$150,273</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>0.0%</b>

## 2018 JOURNAL

### Reports

#### **Connecting Council**

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

The Connecting Council meets twice each year 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.

Connecting Council conversations and decisions are directed toward growing disciples and developing vital congregations. We celebrated the flood buckets and money raised for UMCOR, the many families that were cared for by our churches during the Christmas season, and the full churches on Easter morning.

Connecting Council has approved the implementation of the Clergy Excellence Leadership Development Plan, the procedure for awarding Urban Ministry Grants, and revisions to the conference structure and the Disaster Response Policy Manual.

At the April meeting, the members were provided an overview of how the first District Networks are working. We heard these stories:

- The presence of the laity is vitally important to the Network. They bring an important perspective to the conversations
- Networks are studying books together and discussing how to make their churches stronger and reach out to their communities
- Networks are working together to host summer VBS programs
- A network in southwest Nebraska worked together to help motorists stranded in a blizzard this past winter
- Network members are finding they have resources they can share with one another, and can learn best practices

## **CLERGY EXCELLENCE**

#### **Clergy Excellence Director Report**

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

Have you ever worked on a job description for the job of a pastor serving a local congregation? Even if it's been as a theoretical exercise, you might see some of the following show up on your page: visiting the hospital, planning funerals, responding to emails, attending meetings, raising money, reading and interpreting financial reports,

## GREAT PLAINS CONFERENCE

### Reports

teaching confirmation class, managing conflict, mentoring a church member exploring ministry, and spending time in the community meeting new people and sharing about Jesus Christ. You probably won't see these things on a job description, but from time to time end up in the schedule: mopping up water when there is a leak after a heavy rain, adjusting the sound system, weeding the flowers, and showing up at all events happening at the church, taking someone to a doctor's appointment.

Needless to say, the role of clergy is demanding, diverse, and yet the best job in the world for those called to it. It's an opportunity to receive the blessing of being obedient to God's call so that others can know or live out more faithfully a life in the healing, reconciling, powerful love of Jesus Christ.

The leadership of our clergy is very important and most of us don't bring the life or educational experiences to our ministry settings that make us top notch leaders. To be honest, it looks like it might be a triple college major—business, communication and religion, with a minor in psychology and a part time job in the Maintenance department! And yet...

\*All clergy are called to effectiveness by virtue of the call—God does not call us to mediocrity

\*Seminary and course of study do not teach us all that we need to learn for ministry in our ever-changing world

\*Leadership is something that can be learned and developed.

The Clergy Excellence staff want to help provide ways for clergy to be spiritually grounded, grow in ministry skills, develop effective leadership skills, care for themselves and to be the leaders needed for 2018 and beyond. To that end, we are putting our efforts and focus in strategic areas that we believe will encourage clergy to grow and be healthy throughout their ministry.

After studying the ways that corporations, educational institutions, and other annual conferences have developed their leadership, the clergy excellence team has developed a "Leadership Development Plan" designed to develop clergy who will lead congregations to be healthy, vital places of worship, ministry, and spiritual growth.

Our vision: Clergy in the Great Plains Conference will lead congregations to be healthy, vital places of worship, mission, and spiritual growth. We know this doesn't happen by accident. Rather, it happens through intentional cultivation, much like planting the seeds of a fruit tree. It must be watered, nourished, and pruned before we can enjoy the benefits of that tree for generations to come.

We have many clergy in our conference who are actively seeking to grow their skills, leading in their churches and communities, and finding a place to live out their call to ministry. Many have developed practices that are sustaining them in ministry. However, some clergy struggle to identify what is needed for them to develop to their fullest potential, to remain passionate about ministry, and to stay grounded in their relationship to God. While all clergy probably feel at some point like they are lacking focus, energy, or skills, we believe that

## 2018 JOURNAL

### Reports

there is an unlimited supply of resources available for AND within our clergy. The Holy Spirit is our primary resource and we believe that our clergy bring spiritual gifts and natural talents to develop even more for the changing dynamics of ministry in our communities.

We want to continue offering quality events, opportunities, and education that will grow the best clergy for leadership in our conference. There are three primary foci of our Leadership Development Plan.

1. Clergy covenant or accountability groups.

Many clergy already have a group of clergy with whom they connect, but we want to provide more support and opportunities for them to increase their accountability and share resources in ways that they've perhaps not done yet.

A strong covenant group provides accountability and a safe place to share concerns and struggles in ministry.

Research continues to show that clergy who are in healthy covenant groups are more able to weather the ups and downs of ministry, stay emotionally and spiritually healthy, and have longer careers in ministry.

Three of our clergy recently shared the ways their covenant groups have helped them to be healthy and effective in. Take a look... (6 minute video)

As a way of supporting Covenant groups, we will offer grants up to \$500/group for resourcing their group for the year or creating a retreat or series of retreats for the group to gather together throughout the year. Application for this is on the clergy excellence webpage.

2. The second area of foci for our Leadership Development Plan is encouraging clergy to create an Individual learning plan

This would be developed through reflection on one's strengths and weaknesses as a written plan for learning and the experiences for the development of new skills or retooling of already developed skills. The objective of this initiative is for clergy to be intentional in determining their life-long learning path for ministry.

Some clergy already do something like this and we want to lift up this practice for all, so that each pastor can grow in effectiveness as a leader. Honest and consistent self-reflection can help identify the areas where retooling, learning, or commitment are most needed.

3. The third aspect to the Leadership Development strategy include some new offerings from the Clergy Excellence office.

We will introduce several new retreats and continuing education opportunities in preaching and sermon planning, worship planning and development, soul care, supervision, visioning, and adaptive leadership. Two are currently in development:

Freed to Lead, which is being developed by a team who cares deeply about the financial health of clergy and will encourage clergy to increase their understanding of personal finances, debt reduction,

## GREAT PLAINS CONFERENCE

### Reports

and budgeting. We believe that freedom from personal financial challenges frees one to lead more effectively

Called to Flourish, being developed in partnership with the BOM and Cabinet, will include opportunities for clergy to withdraw from the daily routines of ministry and spend time in silence and reflection, remember their call, and listen to the call of God today. Jesus spent much time apart and during those times he was renewed, he received clarity about his mission, and gained wisdom and strength for the demands of his ministry. Called to Flourish will provide this opportunity for clergy. The pilot group for Called to Flourish will begin in the next 6-8 months.

We will expand coaching to more clergy. Clergy coaching has been available through the clergy excellence office for several years. Why coaching?

Coaching begins with the belief that the person is creative, resourceful and whole. It can help a person recover joy and delight in ministry.

Coaching focuses on asking questions to tap into a person's self-awareness to solve problems, cast new vision and move beyond the status quo

A coach asks questions that help broaden one's perspectives on a situation so that new possibilities are explored.

Coaching helps clergy and churches break through barriers that prevent them from becoming more vital in today's context of ministry to lead toward new levels of success.

Three foci as we develop healthier, stronger, more fruitful clergy leaders: covenant groups, learning plans, and programming targeted to forming stronger faith leaders. These foci are held together by the daily faithfulness of spiritual practices.

Something was left off of that job description that I started with: it's to be an example of committed prayer with regular spiritual practices. It's fueling our work day in and day out. And it will bear fruit for many generations. As we all step forward in faithfulness, we claim the hope through the power of Jesus Christ that Clergy in the Great Plains Conference will indeed lead congregations to be healthy, vital places of worship, mission, and spiritual growth.

## 2018 JOURNAL

### Reports

## Transition into Ministry Program

Rev. Ashlee Alley-Crawford, Clergy Recruitment and Development Coordinator

The Transition into Ministry (TiM) program, established here in 2011, has as its vision the following:

*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.*

The 2017-2018 year brings the TiM Program to “full maturity,” as four pastors will “graduate” from their fifth and final year of the program. One change in admission criteria was made for newly appointed pastors this year, removing the stipulation of “first full-time appointment” for clergy who were eligible to apply for the program. In July of 2017, we welcomed four new clergy to join 10 others. Three of the four new TiM participants had served for one year post-seminary but were still under the age of 35 years old.

One final program element, a “Pilgrimage,” was incorporated this year for the 8 pastors who are in years 3-5 of the program. The Pilgrimage was a learning and reflection opportunity to experience ministry in Seattle, a post-Christian context (or perhaps somewhere that Christianity has never been the dominant culture). Pastors were led by a guide, worship and reflect together, experience culture and religious life in a context which was very different from their own, and learn together.

Now that the program has reached full maturity, we invited Flourishing Springs, a consulting company headquartered in Eagle, NE, to conduct a full program assessment seeking feedback from all past and present TiM Pastors, Mentor Pastors, and representatives from the congregations served by the TiM Pastors. It was a thorough and extensive survey in which the TiM Board was able to glean helpful feedback about what’s going well, what could be strengthened, and what is essential to the TiM program experience. Overall, the report indicated that the program is meeting its objectives, all those involved are experiencing a positive personal and ministry impact. Opportunities for growth were named, and the program will be incorporating the guidance in forthcoming oversight of the program. Looking ahead to 2018-2019, two pastors will be serving in their fifth and final year of the program and five new TiM pastors will be appointed in the program.

## GREAT PLAINS CONFERENCE

### Reports

# GREAT PLAINS BOARD OF ORDAINED MINISTRY

Rev. Amy Lippoldt, chair

There are a lot of different ways to tell the story of the work of the Board of Ordained Ministry over the last year. One way is to attend the ordination and commissioning service. There you will see men and women who have been guided by our work and are now launching into their vocation as clergy in the UMC. It will be inspiring and full of joy!

Another way is to ask a BOM member about the hope they felt reading through paperwork, conducting interviews, and creating programs over the last year. The signs of hope we have seen are too many to name here. But trust me when I say God is calling talented and resilient people into ministry and they are saying “yes!” despite the troubles of the church. It gives me, and the BOM, great hope to hear their experiences and see their commitment.

Another way to tell our story is by the numbers. Of course, every number below represents a person, which takes us back to the things I mentioned above.

52 attended candidacy summits in 2017-2018 (first steps into vocational ministry)

36 current certified candidates by April 1, 2018

19 attended licensing school this year

15 people to be commissioned at Annual Conference 2018

3 people to be approved as Associate Members

18 people continuing as Provisional Members

8 people to be Ordained

\$104,450 given out in seminary scholarships 2017

\$20,000 given out for Course of Study Scholarships in 2017

I really hope that during this week of Annual Conference you will seek out someone currently in the credentialing process and give them a word of encouragement. If they are just starting the process, ask them what dreams they have for the future. If they are in school, ask them what they are learning that excites them. If they are serving a church, ask them what is challenging them at the moment. Your interest and support will not only be a blessing to them, but it could also be the thing that makes the Great Plains feel like home.

## 2018 JOURNAL

### Reports

Thanks to all the members of the Board of Ordained Ministry, members of the 17 District Committees on Ordained Ministry, and the Clergy Excellence Staff for another year of excellent work.

## CONGREGATIONAL EXCELLENCE

### **Congregational Excellence Director Report**

Rev. Nathan Stanton, director of Congregational Excellence

When the world is different than what we expected, we become disoriented, when the tried and true solutions no longer work we become stuck. – Tod Bolsinger “Canoeing the Mountains”

Bolsinger’s book presents a reality that each of us is facing in the context of the local church.

Because we are all facing a new reality in the local church the Department of Congregational Excellence has spent this past year recalibrating our efforts to provide resources and tools to the local churches, networks and the districts.

You may have noticed throughout this past year that our team is smaller, more nimble and working more broadly as each person has taken on more responsibility in order to resource districts.

While we worked most often a year ago in ten different areas of specialization we now cover those same ten areas as a team with pinpointed areas of responsibility. We are also working more directly and intentionally with the seventeen districts who now have a District Strategy Team led by the District Superintendent and a ministry action plan which will guide the priorities, outcomes and foci of the districts. Our work will most often be with those groups to bring all the churches in the Annual Conference the resources and tools they need to become the vital congregations God has called them to be.

Before this year we as departments worked less arm in arm together to bring resources and tools to the district level. Departments did not share goals with one another nor did they share goals with the districts. So, we provided resources and tools from our goals to the districts who did not have priorities or plans. That has changed as Bishop Saenz has worked to bring us around to working on shared objectives which will increase how we work together.

Our cadence as a team will include receiving priorities from the

## GREAT PLAINS CONFERENCE

### Reports

District level, curating and researching those priorities for the best practices and the most effective ways we might bring resources and tools to the districts. Once resources, tools and efforts have been executed on the ground we will work to learn from their effectiveness and their failures. Key to this process is gleaning the learnings which will be necessary to coming back around to how do we more effectively work on these areas again with the districts. We reflect on the work that has been done. We glean our learnings. We adjust based on those learnings. Then we do those resources again on the ground.

As a former college football player at Kansas Wesleyan University, I loved every aspect of the week. I loved practice, games and the post game process. I struggled with film day where we got together and looked at our collective and individual efforts. This piece of our presentation is our film work.

#### Fast Facts Presentation

Income for Operating Budget

2,960,114

Income from Capital Improvement/Special Projects

1,233,078

Income from within Con. Structure

116,081

Total Income

4,189,105

Grand Total Paid

4,761,304

Amount paid for principle and interest on debt

(73,192)

Amount paid on capital expenditures

4,449,921

Amount Spent on all other causes

384,575

% Paid on Apportionments

0%

One Matters Award – Dr. Doug Ruffle will present the One Matters award on behalf of Discipleship Ministries. The One Matters Award is a partnership with Annual Conferences to present a plaque and a \$1,000.00 award to a church in the conference who has previously had three years three years without a profession of faith and then had at least three years after where they have had at least one profession of faith.

The Great Plains Annual Conference One Matters Award Winners were:

## 2018 JOURNAL

### Reports

Sublette UMC, Sublette, KS  
Douglass UMC, Douglass, KS

Congregational Excellence looks forward to the upcoming year working collectively with Districts, District Strategy teams and the Mission Field Networks.

Grace and Peace,  
Nathan D. Stanton

### **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.

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 2019 priorities:

#### Hispanic Ministries:

1. Developing worshipping and discipling communities for multiple generations of Hispanic/Latinos by assessing needs and providing resources and tools by way of the network system
2. Encouraging and resourcing cross-cultural and bi-vocational appointments by providing resources to the cabinet, networks and local congregations.

#### Lay Ministries:

1. Improve the communication of Lay Servant Ministries -- purpose and practice -- across the conference for both laity

## GREAT PLAINS CONFERENCE

### Reports

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. Equip congregations by assessing needs and providing resources and tools by way of the network system

Vital Congregations:

1. Work in conjunction with the cabinet and district networks by assessing needs and providing resources and tools by way of the network system with best practices and resources.

## General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM)

Beth Neil

GBHEM launched a new mission and vision in August 2017. The updated mission and vision simplify GBHEM's role as the primary leadership development agency for The United Methodist Church.

**Mission:** Build capacity for United Methodist lay and clergy leaders to discover, claim and flourish in Christ's calling in their lives, by creating connections and providing resources to aid in recruitment, education, professional development and spiritual formation. **Vision:** Generations of thriving, diverse and compassionate Christian leaders for The United Methodist Church and the world.

### OUR WORK THROUGHOUT 2017 AND 2018

The **Office of Discernment and Enlistment** at GBHEM hosted **Exploration**, a biennial event for young adults ages 18-26 to hear, discern, and respond to God's call to ordained ministry as a United Methodist deacon or elder. More than 350 attended the event in Portland, Oregon, in November 2017.

The **Young Clergy Initiative (YCI)** funded **34 innovative projects** across the church in 2017 to attract young people to ordained

## 2018 JOURNAL

### Reports

ministry. Since its inception, more than 100 projects have been funded through YCI.

GBHEM works with the **Commission on Central Conference Theological Education (CCTE)** to distribute grants for the theological education of pastoral leaders in the Central Conferences. In 2017, the CCTE awarded **67 grants totaling more than \$1 million** to the seven Central Conferences of The United Methodist Church.

The **Publishing Ministry**, established to engage, nurture, and advocate for the intellectual life of The United Methodist Church, released **13 books in 2017**, reaching more than 10,000 people.

In 2017, GBHEM's Office of **Loans and Scholarships** awarded **2,000+ students with \$4.1 million** in scholarships and **350 students with \$1.4 million in low-interest loans**. More than **\$1.6 million was awarded to 200 recipients of the Excellence in Clergy Leadership Scholarship**, which helps United Methodist clergy avoid excessive educational loan debt, minimize financial stress and build financial acumen.

To aid pastors in their ministry journey, GBHEM's **Candidacy Office** introduced **EM360**. A formation guide to help pastors and congregations meet mission and ministry goals, EM360 is a tool to help clergy leaders **identify and gauge pastoral effectiveness**. In 2017, **1,438 candidates enrolled in UMCARES** to seek certified candidacy for licensed or ordained ministry. A total of **589 candidates were certified**.

**The Black College Fund distributed more than \$9.68 million in 2017** to the Historically Black Colleges and Universities related to The United Methodist Church for faculty development, infrastructure maintenance, academic programs and scholarships.

**Clergy Lifelong Learning** led African-American, United Methodist pastors who lead predominantly white churches in **cross-cultural diversity training** in South Korea in 2017. Continuing education and coaching opportunities are available through the innovative, multilingual platform, UMC Cyber Campus.

In 2017, **Schools, Colleges and Universities** established the **Siri S. Gadbois Fund** in partnership with the National Association of

## GREAT PLAINS CONFERENCE

### Reports

Schools & Colleges of The United Methodist Church (NASCUMC) for mentoring among institution leaders (kickoff in 2018). The **Cutting-Edge Curriculum Award** was created to recognize 10 exceptional faculty members who are building effective and innovative academic courses (winners announced at the end of 2018 spring semester).

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** distributed **667 e-readers in 2017** and nearly **2,500 devices to 22 theological seminaries** since the program inception in 2013.

In 2017, GBHEM and the Association of United Methodist Theological Schools (AUMTS) hosted two **academic theological colloquies**. Initiated in service to the intellectual life of the church, the colloquies are intended to be a resource for the church. The first colloquy (March 2017) focused on **human sexuality and church unity**, the second (November 2017) reflected on the practice of **Missio Dei**. Both events produced a study guide and book.

### **New Church Development, Inc.**

Lorna Geist, 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**

## 2018 JOURNAL

### Reports

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.

#### **2017-2018 Activity:**

- In late 2017, 12 participants pitched their plant plans in the second 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.

#### **2017-2018 Activity:**

- 7 new Core teams participated in Core Crucible
- 10 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.

#### **2017 – 2018 Activity:**

- 3 plant plans accepted in 2017
  - o Neighbors, Lincoln, NE

## GREAT PLAINS CONFERENCE

### Reports

- Olathe Grace Satellite, Olathe, KS
- Connection Point, Lincoln, NE
- 3 plant plans accepted in 2018
  - Word, St. Paul's UMC, Lincoln, NE
  - Hope, Inc., Dellrose UMC, Wichita, KS
  - Weaving Hope, Inc., Jetmore UMC, Jetmore, KS

### THE HARVEST

There are currently five active church plants and one plant 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.

**2017-2018 Church Plants:** 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).

**2018-2019 Fresh Expressions:** The Great Plains New Church Development, Inc., will continue the collective work of planting new faith communities with the Districts by empowering the development of at least 34 new Fresh Expressions. We will be evaluating the work of the Planter Incubator and the Core Crucible.

### 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 eight active church plants and two 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

## 2018 JOURNAL

### Reports

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

I was asked, “Why are you so passionate about the camping ministry?” That is a good question since prior to being involved in GP Camps Inc. and Camp Horizon, I had only attended a camp once when young, which didn’t go well. That begs the question, “why?”

There are six unique United Methodist church camps serving their many communities and churches. All are an oasis, becoming the glue for community, church, school, youth and adults. These camps are making disciples and creating future faith leaders. This time when our society is dealing with iPhones, iPads, video games, drugs, violence, broken relationships, shifting values, less church involvement and less small community appreciation, has caused our church camps to become very important and relevant.

We had 33,000 visitors to our camps in 2017. The camps had 3,800 campers attend with over 700 making a decision about their faith. Over 140 kids felt a calling to go into the ministry. We hired over 60 counselors who shared their faith and witnessed to our listening youth. These counselors are our future faith leaders; actually, they are faith leaders today. Many are currently active youth leaders in their congregations. **How many of our congregations would it take to make this many disciples?**

So what impact do these camps have on their local communities and churches? Here are a few examples. Camp Norwesca is located in northwest Nebraska next to the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. Currently, the camp is pursuing an after school program at the reservation’s local school that incorporates character building. They would also like to share that ministry with their local congregation. The camp also has a Sunday school at the Chadron United Methodist

## **GREAT PLAINS CONFERENCE**

### **Reports**

Church and hosts the youth group once a week. Camp Comeca has set aside three weeks in June to create camps for youth of all ages, including adults, dealing with the many forms of grief. They are also starting a sports program that teaches youth how to play with moral integrity. Camp Fontanelle has decided to reach out to the inner city of Omaha, absorbing the cost of bringing high-risk kids to camp to experience a different world, sharing the love of Jesus, and changing lives. Camp Lakeside has partnered with a local school to create a camp for kids with hearing loss. Camp Lakeside is also pursuing a camp for foster care families in Dodge City. Camp Horizon has developed a program that works with campus ministries and youth pastors to provide a camp for high school young adults focusing on discerning what God has called them to do. Currently, this ministry is reaching nearly 300 junior high and high school youth. Camp Chippewa has partnered with a local recreational commission to facilitate a program to have camp activities for over 500 youth so they can experience camp. Many of these youth return to be a part of the summer camp program. Further, they have partnered with Ottawa Univ. to bring high school youth to a camp which helps the kids decipher their spiritual journey. They are trying to use this model to partner with local churches to help build their congregations through youth involvement at the camp and their local communities. Please know: this is a very small fraction of the ministry that is occurring at these special camps.

So why am I so passionate with the Great Plains Conference camping ministry? I think it's rather obvious. The camps are doing amazing ministry. The camps have a unique opportunity to be leaders in camping ministry and church growth. The Camps are equipped to provide space to grow congregations and develop disciples of Christ. The GP Camps are strategically located geographically so that no matter where you are in our conference you are only at most 3 1/2 hours away from one of the camps.

Lastly, on behalf of the camping ministry, we would like to thank the hundreds, if not thousands, of individuals who have supported and continue to support this vital ministry. To know it touches and changes so many lives, connecting so many people, and bringing so many to the faith, warms my heart.

**2018 JOURNAL**  
**Reports**

## **Campus Ministry**

Rev. April Wegehaupt, chair

Rev. Nicole Conard, Coordinator of Young Adult Leadership

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

## GREAT PLAINS CONFERENCE

### Reports

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, 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. We are hearing of Churches that have started campus Ministry Connections. Korean Love at Wesley Pittsburg is connecting with 15-20 students weekly and Chanute First 20-30 Weekly. This is just to name two.
- Conducted Site Visits in the Fall and Spring Semesters with District Superintendents, UMCM Board Representative, Conference Staff, local board representative, Campus Minister, students

## 2018 JOURNAL

### Reports

- 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. Last August we held our first retreat together which was highly effective in using the time we had together most effectively.

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](http://www.greatplainsumc.org/campusministries)

## GREAT PLAINS CONFERENCE

### Reports

# MERCY AND JUSTICE

## Mercy and Justice Team

Rev. Sarah Marsh, chair

In June 2017, the Great Plains Mercy and Justice Team committed to a five-year plan to help us fulfill our purpose “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.” Three major aims guide our Vision Plan 2017-2021. The first aim, *to increase the percentage of local congregations involved in progress oriented justice ministries by ten percent over a five year period*, has been the primary focus of our work over the last year. In tandem with this goal, we have given priority to education and leadership development, both at home and in our global partnerships.

### **What do we mean by “progress oriented justice ministry”?**

We believe that progress oriented justice ministry: 1) is our response to God’s call to ensure the human rights and dignity of all, especially the most vulnerable, 2) uses community power to solve social problems by transforming systems, and 3) is progress oriented when we hold ourselves accountable for measurable change.

### **What do congregations need to answer God’s call to progress oriented justice ministry?**

We believe churches will need a structured pathway, rich with conference support and resources, to live into a vision where justice ministry is as normative as mercy ministry in the Great Plains. We have named this pathway the “**Waves of Justice**” and we are actively working to develop the tools congregations will need to advance from wave to wave. In the first wave, a church will move from exploration to a commitment to justice ministry. The second wave will entail the development of a vision and plan. In the third wave, a church will take action and measure progress and outcomes. Creating these tools will take some time, but we are committed to moving steadily ahead, urged on by a hunger for justice and great hope in God.

### **Leadership Development and Education**

This summer we are pleased to celebrate the ten year anniversary of our social justice summer internship program for young adults, the Micah Corps. This program has proven itself as a fertile leadership

## 2018 JOURNAL

### Reports

#### Mission Agency Support

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.

#### **Colleges/Universities:**

Nebraska Wesleyan University-Lincoln, NE (700)

Baker University-Baldwin, KS (701)

Saint Paul School of Theology-Leawood, KS and Oklahoma City, OK (702)

Kansas Wesleyan University-Salina KS (703)

Southwestern College-Winfield, KS (704)

#### **Health and 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)

#### **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-Pittsburgh, KS (723)

Faith & Fellowship-Topeka, KS (724)

UM Open Door-Wichita, KS (725)

UM Western KS Mex-Amer Ministries, KS (726)

#### **Ecumenical/Interchurch Organizations:**

Interchurch Ministries of Nebraska (730)

Rural Response Hotline, NE (731)

KS Christians United (732)

#### **Retreat Centers:**

Forest Park Conf & Retreat Center-Topeka, KS (736)

## GREAT PLAINS CONFERENCE

### Reports

#### Conference Advance List

##### Great Plains Mission Partnerships:

- Nigeria Hope for Children in Africa (300)
- Nigeria Scholarship for Students (301)
- Haiti Covenant (302)
- Zimbabwe East Chabadza Covenant (303)

##### 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)
- Pittsburgh State-Pittsburg, KS (320-006)
- Washburn University-Topeka, KS (320-007)
- Wichita State-Wichita, KS (320-008)
- University of Nebraska-Kearney, NE (320-009)

##### 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
  - Centro de Alabanza y Adoracion* (350)
  - Imperial Ebenezer Hispanic* (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 American Students (375)
- Living Hope UMC-Omaha, NE (376)

##### Great Plains Local Missions:

- Seminary Scholarship Endowment (900)
- New Church Development (934)
- Peace With Justice (960)

## 2018 JOURNAL

### Reports

Hunger (967)

Round up for Hunter (968)

Disaster Response Fund (976)

Habitat for Humanity

*Beatrice* (978-020)

*Hastings* (978-021)

*Kearney* (978-022)

*Lincoln* (978-023)

*Omaha* (978-024)

*Grand Island* (978-025)

*Sarpy County* (978-026)

Volunteers in Mission (981)

Common Ground (982)

Elkhorn Valley Church & Comm. Ministry (983)

Crowell Health Services-Blair, NE (990)

Crossroads Center-Hastings, NE (991)

Fairfield Orphanage Student Assoc (FOSA), KS (992)

Wesley Towers-Hutchinson, KS (993)

E.C. Tyree Health & Dental Clinic-Wichita, KS (995)

First UMC Television Ministry-Wichita, KS (996)

New Visions Community UMC-Lincoln, NE (996)

## GREAT PLAINS CONFERENCE

### Reports

training ground over time and it continues to be exciting to watch how the Spirit transforms young lives through the Micah Corps experience.

Last October, our annual education event *For the Transformation of the World* featured the Rev. Jim Wallis, national leader in social justice advocacy and founder of Sojourners magazine. Rev. Wallis spoke about the theological mandate for Christians to work together in the public sphere despite all that threatens to divide us, whether that is partisan politics or racial tension. Oct. 27 this year, we will gather in Lexington, Nebraska, to address gender equality, women's experience, and faith with Bishop Saenz, retired Bishop Sherer-Simpson, staff from the General Board of Church and Society, and faculty from Nebraska Wesleyan University.

We have also made important steps forward in our global partnerships this year. The revised covenant with Nigeria passed at annual conference last summer was ratified in December 2017 by three Nigerian annual conferences. This new covenant reflects our commitment to prioritize education and leadership development (rather than capital development) with our international partners. A January 2018 team to La Gonave, Haiti, led by the Mercy and Justice Coordinator, the Rev. Kalaba Chali, resulted in a resolution that will come before the 2018 Annual Conference to revise our covenant with Haiti in this same spirit. It is thrilling to report that three Nigerian students from the Jalingo Orphanage will begin study at Africa University with our support in August, while three students from La Gonave will travel to Port-au-Prince to begin their university education at the same time.

### Disaster Response

Rev. Hollie Tapley, disaster response coordinator, and Russell Anderson, chair

2018 has gotten off to a great beginning! Our ERTs have served individuals in Kansas, Nebraska, Texas and Oklahoma. Our first ERT retreat in Arkansas City, Kansas, was a success and a fun time, and we look forward to more participating next year. The plan is to move around the retreat location within the conference.

Just a few highlights:

- We began Feb. 1 with new UMCOR procedures. A background check is now a part of the ERT training, with the results going directly to UMCOR. All ERT's must complete this from now on, in addition to maintaining

## 2018 JOURNAL

### Reports

Safe Gatherings, as it follows the conference policy for all overnight trips.

- The weather prediction is for a very active storm season in 2018.
- There are still vacant positions within the Great Plains Disaster Response Team. We hope to fill the open positions of Regional and District Disaster Response Coordinators with qualified individuals who are passionate about serving in the times of disaster and who are available to participate in training events and team responsibilities.
- We continue to offer many different training events throughout the conference. These include Early Response Team (ERT), Basic disaster response, Active Shooter, Spiritual and Emotional Care, and Connecting Neighbors. Check the conference website for a training event near you, or schedule one by calling Rev. Hollie Tapley at the conference office.

2018 brings the opportunity for us to Proclaim Christ as we volunteer and are the “hands and feet” of Christ. There is nothing better than “being” the church and making a difference in someone’s life after they have had their world turned upside down with a disaster. I am excited, that in the midst of chaos, we can share God’s grace through our actions. Let that be our motivation, engagement, and call this year – Proclaim Christ!

I am grateful for each of you. YOU are Great Plains United Methodist Disaster Response – YOU are the ones changing lives and making a difference.

### **General Board of Global Ministries – From Everywhere to Everywhere [www.umcmmission.org](http://www.umcmmission.org)**

Carol Ekdahl-Garwood serves as our Conference Secretary of Global Ministries (CSGM). The South Central Jurisdiction CGSM’s held their 2017 Fall Meeting in Dallas, Texas. The group had the opportunity to meet with several of the staff members from GBGM who explained their roles and the various programs offered through GBGM. The group also had an opportunity to visit Union Coffee in Dallas, which is a United Methodist coffeehouse which takes the typical coffeeshop model and also offers community events, a forum for conversation, and support of local causes. Umba and Gnoy Kalangwa, United Methodist missionaries from Morogoro, Tanzania, also attended our

## GREAT PLAINS CONFERENCE

### Reports

meeting and presented information regarding their work.

The South Central Jurisdiction's Mission Academy was held in Aurora, Nebraska, in September with several informative workshops offered. I was able to attend the event and participated in workshops about the 50/50 Initiative, UMCOR, Serving Refugees through Mission, and the work that missionary Guillermo "Willie" Berman performs for the Mexican Methodist Border Mission in Reynosa, Mexico.

I was asked to share about the role of the CSGM and to provide the message at three church services during the year.

In 2017, \$1,394,301.03 was donated to the projects of the Advance by individuals and groups/churches in our conference. This is more than twice the amount that was donated in 2016.

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 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 GBGM 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.

If you wish to discuss hosting a missionary, need information on how to participate in The Advance, have interest in serving as a missionary, or questions regarding the General Board of Global Ministries, you can reach Carol Ekdahl Garwood, Great Plains CSGM by emailing her at [cgarwood62@gmail.com](mailto:cgarwood62@gmail.com).

*"Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind. This is the first and most important commandment. The second most*

## 2018 JOURNAL

### Reports

*important commandment is like this one. And it is, 'Love others as much as you love yourself.'" (Matthew 22:37-39)*

*"As disciples of Christ, we are called to love our enemies, seek justice, and serve as reconcilers of conflict. We must insist that the first moral duty of all nations is to work together to resolve by peaceful means every dispute that arises between or among them." (United Methodist Social Principles ¶165 C)*

We live in a broken world: wars, genocide, poverty, hunger, disease, degradation of God's good creation, acts of intolerance and hate, human rights abuses, the list can go on and on. And yet, as stated in the 2016 Resolution #6139, "saddened by the state of the world, overwhelmed by the scope of these problems, and anxious about the future, we believe God calls us and equips us to respond. We must renew our call for a social transformation, for the quest to open the doors of opportunity for all, to distribute resources more equitably, and to provide better care for persons in need."

## PEACE WITH JUSTICE MINISTRIES

Andrea Paret, peace with justice coordinator

<http://www.greatplainsumc.org/peacewithjustice>; [facebook.com/peacewithjusticeministriesgp](https://www.facebook.com/peacewithjusticeministriesgp)

*"Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind. This is the first and most important commandment. The second most important commandment is like this one. And it is, 'Love others as much as you love yourself.'" (Matthew 22:37-39)*

*"As disciples of Christ, we are called to love our enemies, seek justice, and serve as reconcilers of conflict. We must insist that the first moral duty of all nations is to work together to resolve by peaceful means every dispute that arises between or among them." (United Methodist Social Principles ¶165 C)*

We live in a broken world: wars, genocide, poverty, hunger, disease, degradation of God's good creation, acts of intolerance and hate, human rights abuses, the list can go on and on. And yet, as stated in the 2016 Resolution #6139, "saddened by the state of the world, overwhelmed by the scope of these problems, and anxious about the future, we believe God calls us and equips us to respond. We must renew our call for a social transformation, for the quest to open the doors of opportunity for all, to distribute resources more equitably,

## GREAT PLAINS CONFERENCE

### Reports

and to provide better care for persons in need.”

Peace with Justice Ministries is a faithful expression of shalom in the Bible. It aims to make shalom visible and active in people’s lives and communities by setting people free from bondage. Peace activists across the Great Plains Conference pray for peace and take courageous actions for a more peaceful world. They participate in prayer vigils and peaceful protests, they contact state and federal legislators advocating for just laws and treatment of everybody with human dignity and respect, and they build relationships and bridges between diverse groups of people. Their prayers and actions focus on local as well as worldwide issues. In 2017, 330 of our churches supported Peace with Justice Sunday through their prayers and offerings of \$31,000. Half of the offering stays in our Conference and half goes to the General Board of Church and Society for projects here and around the world. Thank you Great Plains Conference churches for your support of Peace with Justice Sunday!

Individuals and groups in our conference received financial support through PWJ funds for their important peace and justice work. These included:

- Six representatives from our conference participated in the Ecumenical Advocacy Days in Washington D.C. in April 2017, joining over 800 Christians in worship, learning and advocating on Capitol Hill for legislation that is life-giving. We also participated in a vigil at the Pentagon. Participants returned to their local congregations and shared through articles, bulletin board displays and presentations about what they had experienced and learned.
- PWJ Ministries worked closely with the Holy Land Task Force to continue educating our Conference and advocating for human rights for all who live in the Holy Land.
- PWJ Ministries supported several trainings, including a Non-violence and Giving Witness Seminar and a Bystander Training in the Omaha area.
- Justice Matters in Lawrence, Kansas, an organization with involvement of several of our churches, received financial help to send faith leaders to a justice training.
- The PWJ Coordinator helped promote the Global Migration

## 2018 JOURNAL

### Reports

Sunday that congregations around the world were invited to observe by the Council of Bishops.

- Throughout the year, the PWJ Coordinator gave the message in worship in several churches, shared with church groups, and attended conferences with the PWJ booth.

- The PWJ Coordinator is sharing and promoting the United Methodist Social Principles, available in print form and an accompanying video series with study guide.

According to the Book of Discipline, the suggested date for Peace with Justice Sunday is the Sunday after Pentecost which this year falls on May 27, Memorial Day weekend. Each congregation is free to choose any Sunday that works best for them. Resources are available at: <http://www.umcgiving.org/ministry-articles/peace-with-justice-sunday>. With so much suffering and injustice in our world, the call for peace and justice remains crucial. Please observe Peace with Justice Sunday to help bring about God's kingdom.

## HOLY LAND TASK FORCE/MERCY & JUSTICE TEAM

Carol Ekdahl Garwood, chairperson

The resolution "Christians in the Holy Land," passed at the 2015 Annual Conference, called for the creation of a task force to review and research actions that can be taken to respond to requests by our UMC missionaries and our Palestinian sisters and brothers in Christ and to formulate recommendations for our Great Plains conference delegates to General Conference. The goal is "to reject all acts of aggression and violence, to respect the equality and dignity of all the region's people, and to forge solutions based on the principles of international laws and human rights."

The task force has been offering educational events about the current situation in the Holy Land in the following ways:

- The resolution "Protecting the Right to Peacefully Address Injustice" was presented and approved at the 2017 Annual Conference session. This resolution was particularly timely as in October, a Mennonite teacher from Kansas was denied a teaching position solely due to her support of the BDS movement as it relates to Israel.

## GREAT PLAINS CONFERENCE

### Reports

- In November, the task force hosted events in Lawrence, Kansas, Omaha, Nebraska, and Lincoln, Nebraska, which featured three speakers; Rev. Dr. Alex Awad, Bshara Nassar and Ahmed Hmeedat.

Rev. Dr. Alex Awad was born and raised in Jerusalem and is a retired United Methodist missionary who served in Israel/Palestine with his wife, Brenda. He was the pastor of an international church in East Jerusalem and taught courses at Bethlehem Bible College. Rev. Awad provided information to the groups regarding the history of the region as well as information regarding present day struggles of the Palestinian people amid the Israeli occupation of Palestine.

Bshara Nassar founded the Museum of the Palestinian People, located in Washington, D.C., in 2014. As the fourth generation of the his family, Nassar was deeply involved in his family's educational farm, Tent of Nations, located just outside of Bethlehem. He has played an integral role in educating international visitors about Palestinian rights and livelihoods, and has spoken publicly on these topics in diverse forums. Nassar shared information with the groups about his life as a Palestinian as well as his reasons for establishing the museum.

Ahmed Hmeedat is an artist and activist who was born and grew up in the Dheisheh Refugee Camp, Palestine. During his time in Palestine, he painted many murals in refugee camps commemorating the victims of Israeli violence. He is artist in residence at the Museum of the Palestinian People in Washington D.C. and has exhibited in several places in Washington, D.C., Hmeedat shared his experience of living in a refugee camp as well as his desire to share Palestine's beauty through his art.

- In October, I attended a presentation by Nora Carmi which was sponsored by the Presbyterian Church. Carmi, who was born in Jerusalem before the founding of Israel, shared her hopes for peace between Israelis and Palestinians. She helped to draft the Kairos Palestine document and formerly worked at Sabeel in East Jerusalem.
- A "Holy Land Task Force – Great Plains Conference" Facebook page was created in order to share information via social media.
- The Holy Land Task Force will continue to work on educating church members across our conference on the situation in the Holy Land and advocate for human rights for all involved.

## 2018 JOURNAL

### Reports

“This is what the Lord Almighty said: ‘Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another.’” Zechariah 7:9

## 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. Recognizing that all Christians are called to faith and discipleship, the goal of the Lay Servant Ministries program is to enhance lay persons leadership and discipleship skills to better equip them to live out their call to mission and ministry.

The General Conference of 2016 rewrote the Certified Lay Minister process to bring the CLM clearly under the umbrella of Lay Servant Ministries. In order to integrate these changes into the conference, a Guidebook was published. The Lay Servant Ministry Guidebook includes the role, requirements, certification process and requirements for renewal for all levels of lay servants. The training track for the Certified Lay Minister was enhanced by approving three different avenues for obtaining the necessary elements of certification for the CLM. For the first time, the Great Plains Conference Committee on Lay Servant Ministry provided final approval for five CLMs on Feb. 24, 2018.

A database for providing a permanent and accessible record of lay servants is now complete. This tool allows a permanent and accessible record for tracking lay servant activities, determining training needs, and maintaining up-to-date contact information. There are currently 757 lay servants listed in the LSM database.

The GPCCLSM is committed to integrating laity leadership into the networks across the conference. We believe this will strengthen the clergy/laity partnership and enhance the missional focus of local churches and provide opportunities for lay persons to more fully be involved in discipleship opportunities. We also are partnering with the Conference and District Lay Leaders to explore shared

## **GREAT PLAINS CONFERENCE**

### **Reports**

opportunities to develop and empower leaders with focus on the mission of the conference.

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, as well as laity, on the role of the Lay Servant.

### **Great Plains Conference Lay Leader Report** **Courtney Fowler, Conference Lay Leader**

We are five years into our journey together as the Great Plains Conference, and our mission “to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world” remains as crucial as ever, for in doing so, we ourselves are transformed in the work of Christ. The Great Plains Conference endeavors 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: A Year of Transition**

Since the uniting of our three previous conferences in 2014, Courtney Fowler has served as Conference Lay Leader. Her term will conclude June 30, 2018. Lisa Maupin of Lincoln, Nebraska, will serve in the role of Conference Lay Leader starting on July 1. In addition, Carolyn May and Oliver Green will also step down as Associate Conference Lay Leaders. The new associate conference lay leaders have yet to be named. The entire lay leadership team will be introduced during the 2018 Laity Session in Wichita. In addition, there are currently 17 District lay leaders. Mary Feit, serves as the director of Lay Servant Ministries and we work together to strengthen and support the leadership development among the Great Plains laity.

#### **Changes Underway**

After much discernment regarding the future of our conference, actions were approved at the 2017 Annual conference which have led to changes within the Great Plains Conference infrastructure. The conference office was consolidated from three locations to one and relocated to Topeka. Our laity have consistently worked to

## **2018 JOURNAL**

### **Reports**

support these efforts in both official and unofficial capacities. District meetings with laity, clergy and local churches are being held across the conference as part of the discernment process for the mission of our church and communities they serve. It's an exciting time!

#### **Preparations for the 2019 Special Session**

Courtney Fowler chaired the Great Plains General Conference delegation in 2016. Oliver Green, associate conference lay leader and a GC delegate, will chair the team attending the 2019 Special Session. The Council of Bishops established the Commission on a Way Forward, which is formed of laity and clergy from across the UMC connection, whose purpose is to discern a way to maintain unity amidst division, to recommend a plan of unity for consideration at the 2019 Special Session. As the Great Plains laity, we add our prayers and support to this effort and call on all of our members to hold the commission, their work and the process in prayer. There will be a broad release of the proposed plan once the Council of Bishops conclude their work. Laity and clergy from across the Great Plains will have opportunities to participate in dialogue and discussion regarding the proposals, the Special Session and the future of the UMC.

#### **With Sincere Gratitude**

It has been a blessing and a privilege to serve as the first Conference Lay Leader of the Great Plains Conference. I would like to extend my thanks to the many wonderful laity across Kansas and Nebraska. I am inspired every day by the generous, servant hearts that make up our local churches. We are transforming communities through our prayers, presence, gifts, service and witness. You will continue to be in my prayers and I look forward to continuing to serve with you.

## **Great Plains United Methodist Women**

### **Karen Dunlap, Conference President**

On March 23, 1869, eight women gathered at Tremont Methodist Episcopal Church in Boston, Massachusetts, and organized the Women's Foreign Missionary Society, what would become United Methodist Women. Those women raised money to send a doctor, Clara Swain, and a teacher, Isabella Thoburn, to India as missionaries to serve the women of that

nation. Since then, for nearly 150 years, United Methodist Women has evolved to become the largest women's faith-based service and advocacy organization, underwriting programs that provide life-changing opportunities for women, children and youth.

## **GREAT PLAINS CONFERENCE**

### **Reports**

United Methodist Women announced the Legacy Fund Endowment Campaign goal of \$60 million in June 2017. The Legacy Fund will undergird the capacity of future generations of United Methodist Women members to carry forward our mission of service and advocacy with women, children and youth in the United States and around the world for the next 150 years.

In the Great Plains Conference, Marilyn Zehring, chair of the Great Plains UMW Legacy committee, coordinated with National United Methodist Women to promote our Legacy and to plan for our future. In addition to promoting the Legacy Fund, she coordinated the making of a Great Plains Legacy Quilt. This quilt is one of the ways the Great Plains Conference has chosen to celebrate the dedication and work of the women of our seventeen districts as they live out our PURPOSE through Faith, Hope and Love in Action.

#### **Commission on A Way Forward**

At the beginning of the year, United Methodist Women were invited to join our bishops, The Upper Room, United Methodist Men to hold this work, and the 35 commission members in prayer. Conferences were assigned a specific week to pray for the Commission and its work.

Additionally, Harriett Jane Olson, General Secretary United Methodist Women has requested United Methodist Women in every Conference to schedule “conversations” with at least 50% of their districts to bring our members together to share their wisdom, observations, aspirations and questions as the church prepares for the special session. We will be acknowledging the existence of different viewpoints and asking: How should we treat each other within the church in the face of this conflict? Conversations are currently being scheduled in the Great Plains Conference.

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 160 years during our Founders Day celebration in February. Since 1858, the university has been committed to providing quality education for the next generation in the United Methodist tradition. The values statement of the university includes these words:

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

We are proud of our strong affiliation with the United Methodist Church.

The current academic year has brought much growth and achievement to Baker, and we are looking forward to the future. The College of Arts and Sciences in Baldwin City, Kansas, recently added three new majors—public health, health humanities and recreation—which are growing fields and sought-after areas of

## **GREAT PLAINS CONFERENCE**

### **Reports**

study. We inducted two members to our Faculty Hall of Fame in February: Dr. Bill Neuenswander, who was active in the education of undergraduate and graduate students, and Dr. John English, who championed the role of humanities in undergraduate education. He was also a scholar of the life and times of John Wesley.

Baker students excel in the classroom and on the playing field. In 2017-2018, football and men's and women's soccer qualified for their national tournaments. We have another national champion in wrestling, Lucas Lovvorn, and Brenda McCollum earned All-America status in the 3,000-meter racewalk with her fourth-place finish at NAIA Indoor Track and Field Championships. We also want to wish her well when she heads to Oxford University in England this summer to begin a graduate program in African studies.

The Rev. Kevin Hopkins is completing his fourth year serving as minister to the university. He is the third minister in Baker's long history. Spiritual life thrives at Baker. Osborne Chapel overflows during Thursday Chapel services, which are student-led and spirit-filled. Six Baker students are exploring calls to ministry. The Baker Ambassadors continue to provide a source of spiritual leadership to the university and the surrounding community. Called to Greatness and Fellowship of Christian Athletes also offer spiritual opportunities for our students, and the Chapel Praise Band and BU Concert Choir make weekend visits to area churches.

I am privileged to serve as Baker's 29th president. 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.

### **Boston University School of Theology**

Mary Elizabeth Moore, Dean

Greetings from Boston University School of Theology (BUSTH) as we travel together in this journey of discipleship!

#### **BREAKING NEWS:**

- **Students:** Our entering students were the most diverse in our history, creating remarkable opportunities for in-depth exchange and fruitful collaboration.
- **Faculty:** We welcomed three amazing faculty this year: Rebecca Copeland in Theology (focus on environmental theology);

## 2018 JOURNAL

### Reports

Theodore Hickman-Maynard in Black Church Studies; and Cornell William Brooks as Visiting Professor of Social Ethics, Law and Justice Movements. Thanks to loyal alums, we also endowed the Harrell Beck Professorship in Hebrew Scripture and installed Kathe Darr as the first Beck Professor.

- **Congregations:** The Lilly Endowment awarded the Center for Practical Theology \$1.5 million to create an innovation hub, which will foster creative vocational reflection in congregations, and a sharing of the congregations' wisdom.
- **Doctor of Ministry:** The DMin in Transformational Leadership is soaring with lively student cohorts that are broadly ecumenical, culturally diverse and global. The model includes intensives, online courses, and faculty mentoring.
- **Scholarships:** We continue our offer of free tuition to UMC registered candidates for ordained ministry, and we continue to build student scholarships and housing as a central campaign priority. New scholarships include the Dale Andrews Scholarship in Practical Theology and Race, Korean Student scholarship, and the Bishop John H. Adams and Dr. Dolly D. Adams Scholarship for candidates for ordained ministry in the AME, AMEZ and CME churches.
- **Arts Initiatives:** Recent exhibits and events include "Symbols and Art of China, Korea and Japan" and "Bridging Divided Communities through the Arts"

**PARTNERING FOR MINISTRY AND TRANSFORMATION:** Preparing students for ministry means meaningful partnerships with the local spiritual community.

- **Congregational courses:** Courses in congregations with church leaders and students learning together.
- **Religion and Conflict Transformation Clinic:** Internships and workshops that foster justice and reconciliation.
- **Travel seminars:** Courses engaging local communities on Arizona-Mexican border, Israel and Palestine, India, spiritual life centers, and Serbia and Croatia (with focus on inter-religious dialogue).
- **Ecumenical partnerships:** Continuing close work with UMC, AME and other Wesleyan denominations, while launching robust Communities of Learning with the Episcopal Church and United Church of Christ.
- **Partnership with Hebrew College:** Joint courses and public events, plus co-sponsoring The Journal of Interreligious

## **GREAT PLAINS CONFERENCE**

### **Reports**

Studies. The focus is on enriching theological education with interreligious learning and leadership opportunities.

#### **TAKING ACTION GLOBALLY AND LOCALLY:**

- Campus action: Work to improve accessibility and sustainability. BUSTH is the first certified Green School in BU, and is active in the Green Seminary Initiative. It has also been named as one of the “Seminaries that Change the World.”
- Internships in global service and peacemaking: Student-initiated internships for service with communities across the world, and for just peacemaking projects with international organizations.

**COMMITMENT TO JUSTICE:** Celebrating differences while joining in action.

- Faculty and students have led and participated in service for victims of hurricanes and fires, protests on behalf of Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands, protests of white supremacist movements, protests and services on behalf of immigrants and DACA young people, and ecumenical and interreligious witnesses for justice in the city of Boston.
- The community (often student-led) has had deep conversations on issues that divide (including theological issues). We seek to foster respectful listening that builds community life and communal action.

#### **OTHER NOTABLE NEWS:**

- Celebration of the 40th anniversary of the Anna Howard Shaw Center

As BUSTH looks back on 2017, it celebrates transformational leaders who keep the word of Jesus Christ alive. Their living legacy and perceptive witness gives us hope and courage for the future.

### **Kansas Wesleyan University AND the Great Plains Annual Conference: The Power of And** Matt Thompson, president & CEO

One thing that has always been notable about Kansas Wesleyan University is that out-of-class activities complement students' work in the classroom. We were among the first universities in the

## 2018 JOURNAL

### Reports

nation to embrace intercollegiate athletics and, by the late 1800s, debate, music and theatre had all become integral to the KWU experience. Today, it is what we call “The Power of And.” Now, we host a plethora of student organizations and activities, the largest of which is our Fellowship of Christian Athletes (FCA) program.

KWU’s 2018-21 strategic plan, *The Power of Kansas Wesleyan*, focuses explicitly on the integration of academic study with activity participation, because we know this produces exceptional graduates. Indeed, our own six-month-post-graduation surveys indicate that our newest alumni are becoming employed or entering graduate school at significantly higher-than-national levels. In fact, our last two classes have 100% placement rates, with more than 80% of each class responding to our survey. *Go ‘Yotes!*

The kinds of activities we offer shape a campus environment where women and men grow intellectually, spiritually, personally, and in community. We have deepened our partnership with First United Methodist Church (Salina), enabling Scott Jagodzinske to spend more time on campus serving as campus minister. We continue to invest in the Wesleyan Journey program, through which students serve and learn in places such as Costa Rica, Italy and Florida, typically at no additional cost to them. FCA, Life Groups, and Monday Night ALIVE are flourishing, and our music ensembles just returned from a regional tour, where they spent time performing at a number of partner churches. Finally, we continue to work with Saint Paul School of Theology, making a 3+3 program available to our students.

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, some of this in partnership with one of our local United Methodist congregations. Recently, we were thrilled to learn that KWU was ranked #1 in the new National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA) Champions of Charity service competition.

In January, the University Senate of The United Methodist Church approved Kansas Wesleyan for continued listing, without qualification, as a partner institution for the UMC (this is the

## **GREAT PLAINS CONFERENCE**

### **Reports**

highest ranking given by the University Senate). We continue to believe that attending a United Methodist-related undergraduate institution enables students to develop intellectual skill, a clear vocation, and a strong, adult faith that will sustain them wherever God leads. Recognizing that we enroll hundreds of young people during the most formative time in their lives, we offer ourselves as partners in the mission of the Great Plains Conference. We are growing, and we are open to new ideas to make a difference in our region.

In closing, please visit [www.kwu.edu/about-kwu/statement-of-connection](http://www.kwu.edu/about-kwu/statement-of-connection) for the Statement of Connection adopted by the KWU Board of Trustees in 2015

## **Nebraska Wesleyan University**

Fred Ohles, president

Nebraska Wesleyan University, as a United Methodist-related institution, continues to pursue the educational goals of the United Methodist Church and the Great Plains Conference by being a community dedicated to intellectual and personal growth within the context of a liberal arts education and in an environment of Christian concern, and by building on partnerships valued by the Great Plains Conference.

First, we seek to offer every student opportunities to grow in their faith. We have expanded our programming to reach as many students as possible, offering three Bible studies a week (one in Spanish) plus worship opportunities and fellowship times where students can find support and guidance in their faith journey. We resource five faith-based student organizations, involving more than 200 students every week. We acknowledge the rich diversity of religious experience and are looking for ways to increase interfaith offerings next year.

NWU's academic offerings continue to expand as the student body continues to grow. Duane W. Acklie Hall of Science will near completion in fall 2018. It will be a place where students and faculty will work together in new and groundbreaking ways. We welcomed a new faculty member, Rev. Jonathan Redding, as Visiting Assistant Professor of Religion. Since his arrival, more students have joined

## 2018 JOURNAL

### Reports

the Philosophy and Religion Department, creating excitement in the study of the Bible and religion.

The Mattingly Lecture Series welcomed social justice activist Bryan Stevenson to campus in September. He spoke to more than 1,000 persons from the Lincoln community about race relations and incarceration. Wesleyan Live resumed during Lent, with great help from the Great Plains Conference communications staff, offering churches and individuals continuing education in preparation for Easter.

We continue our commitment to create a culture of call at Nebraska Wesleyan. We took eight students to Portland, Oregon, for Exploration, a General Board of Higher Education and Ministry event. All eight are considering ministry full-time. On campus, we offered the fourth annual "Envision" event where 80 students explored vocation individually and in small groups. Our "Explore" weekend retreat welcomed 20 students to further explore their calling.

NWU continues to partner with Lydia Patterson Institute (LPI). For the 2017-18 academic year we have equipped five students with \$174,868 in tuition, fees and other waivers. These outstanding students provide leadership on campus and beyond. We want to increase the number of students we welcome from LPI. We are seeking partnerships with local churches and individuals that would help make this possible.

NWU is pleased to be one of the sites to welcome more than 100 middle school students and their sponsors to Confirmation Day with the Bishop. Here they learn more about their Christian faith and ways to be involved in the United Methodist Church. We look forward to more opportunities like this. In January and May 2018, we sent teams to L'Ecole Charles Wesley in the community of Anse la Galet, Haiti. NWU is committed to this priority partnership of the Great Plains Conference to improve educational opportunities at the school. We built upon the work we did there in summer 2017 and are committed to this partnership in the future.

In cooperation with UMCOR and the Methodist Church of Puerto Rico, we trained and sent an Emergency Response Team to Puerto Rico over Spring Break. University Minister Eduardo Boussón and 11 students assisted with disaster relief in the township of Jayuya. We took offerings totaling \$7,000 on behalf of Trinity UMC in

## GREAT PLAINS CONFERENCE

### Reports

Lincoln, First UMC in Abilene, and Nebraska Wesleyan faculty and staff. NWU's students were the first student group to be trained in emergency response, thanks to Rev. Hollie Tapley, Disaster Coordinator for the Great Plains Conference. We plan to return to Puerto Rico next year to continue our relationship there.

Our work as a university can only be possible through the support of the churches from the Great Plains Conference. Your support helps provide scholarships to United Methodist students. During 2017-18, 156 United Methodist students received \$2,657,263 in scholarships, grants, and tuition waivers provided by Nebraska Wesleyan University. This includes 71 students who received \$58,000 in need-based Great Plains United Methodist Scholarships and three ministerial dependent students who received \$47,961 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

Brad Andrews, president

Southwestern College is growing and thriving. In August, Southwestern College welcomed 192 freshmen -- the largest freshman class in the school's 132-year history -- and 80 transfer students to the campus. The college was again ranked the top value Kansas school by Washington Monthly and the magazine ranked Southwestern 7th overall in the Midwest region for "best bang for the buck."

This year the college has undergone a zero-based budgeting process. The college board of trustees recently approved a budget similar to that of 2010. Faculty and staff are working diligently to reduce expenditures in order to achieve a balanced operating budget while sustaining enrollment growth and resultant increased revenue. Growing enrollment while reducing expenditures is challenging work, but necessary as the college works to an improved financial position.

Southwestern maintains its strong focus on ministry-related classes, programs, and opportunities.

In Fall 2017, six students attended **Exploration**, and roughly 10 percent of the current student body was enrolled in a (non-required) Intro to Bible class -- a big increase over just a few years ago.

## 2018 JOURNAL

### Reports

**Discipleship**, led by Rev. Molly Just, took an in-state mission trip to Kansas City this year and is gearing up for their international trip. In addition to their classes and covenant groups, Discipleship students also logged over 630 hours of community service this year. [www.facebook.com/DiscipleshipSC](http://www.facebook.com/DiscipleshipSC)

**Worship Outreach**, led by Martin Rude, will be celebrating its 25th year and continues to lead worship music in Southwestern's weekly chapel and at churches around Kansas, including the privilege of providing music at the Salina District Men and Boys Rally. [www.facebook.com/worshipoutreach](http://www.facebook.com/worshipoutreach)

A campus ministry endowment was launched at Homecoming in 2017, with the goal of raising \$50,000. The \$2,500 draw each year would cover costs for retreats, mentoring programs, replacement equipment, and more, which aren't covered by the normal budget. Contact campus minister Ben Hanne about supporting this endowment.

In May 2018, five students graduated from Southwestern's online youth ministry master's program. We believe we're the only United Methodist college in the country to offer such a program. More information at [www.beadisciple.com/masm](http://www.beadisciple.com/masm).

Also in May, 46 people (including four students) traveled to the holy land on a trip hosted by the Richard and Julia Wilke Institute for Discipleship. Ten of the travelers participated in a spring-semester class led by assistant professor of religion Jackson Lashier, which covered scripture and the history of the areas visited.

The college just hosted a confirmation camp for the Wichita East and West districts, as well as Amp It Up worship band camp for high schoolers. [www.sckans.edu/other/amp-it-up/](http://www.sckans.edu/other/amp-it-up/)

In 2017, the Institute for Discipleship hosted the first Summit Youth Academy, led by Wendy Mohler-Seib. Thirty-six high school students gathered for a week on campus to learn more about their Wesleyan heritage, practice spiritual disciplines, worship, engage in

## GREAT PLAINS CONFERENCE

### Reports

innovative mission work around poverty, listen to God, and discern how their gifts could be used in service to their communities. The second Summit will be taking place this summer. Photos and more information at [www.summityouthacademy.org](http://www.summityouthacademy.org).

The Institute continues to develop the **Timothy Circle** program; the online mentor training class launched last fall, and a training course on cultivating a supportive environment for exploring God's call launches this fall. More information at [www.timothycircle.com](http://www.timothycircle.com).

**We're so proud of our alumni**, who are doing amazing work all over the world and in the life of the church. A few highlights: Andrew Singh (Class of 2004) received a Denman Evangelism Award in the Kentucky Annual Conference. Daniel Reffner (Class of 2016) was the only American student selected by the Council of Bishops to receive a scholarship to the prestigious Ecumenical Institute in Switzerland. Isaac Chua, Molly Just and Lucas McConnell (Class of 2012) are being ordained elders in our conference this year, making it at least 12 years running that an SC alum has been commissioned or ordained in our conference. Go Builders!

## HEALTH & WELFARE INSTITUTIONS

### Aldersgate Village

Jerry C. Ney, president & CEO

Aldersgate Village is a faith-based, senior living neighborhood open to people of all denominations and backgrounds, and our goal is to ensure that seniors receive compassionate, person-centered health care in a warm and welcoming community. Established in 1904, our organization has been fulfilling this mission for more than 100 years.

### Major Accomplishments

Located on a scenic 168-acre campus at 7220 SW Asbury Drive in Topeka, Kansas, Aldersgate Village features 412 total living units, including 156 maintenance-free, independent living cottages, garden homes and apartments; 60 licensed assisted living apartments; and a skilled nursing care facility with a 196-bed capacity.

One of our most important achievements during the year was to add to our residential options with a newly constructed neighborhood of 6 homes, which we termed "Age-in-Place Villas." These Villas,

## 2018 JOURNAL

### Reports

which are nearly 2,000 square feet each, were specially designed to facilitate senior independence and enable residents to live in their own homes longer than may have been possible in traditional home environments. And because the homes are located on our campus, residents have access to all the amenities they will need as they age, including emergency monitoring, housekeeping, and home health services. The age-in-place concept homes are the first of their kind in Kansas. They are also a new dimension in senior housing for Aldersgate Village and the Topeka community, which will help us continue to be the best choice in senior living in northeast Kansas.

#### **New Initiatives**

Because Aldersgate remains committed to being the region's foremost leader in senior care, we plan to build a new, state-of-the-art residence called Home Plus, with construction to begin in spring 2018. Home Plus is designed to meet the needs of seniors who require an additional level of care due to limitations in performing their daily activities. This innovative option will feature private bedroom and bath facilities for 12 residents. Common areas, including the living room, kitchen, and outdoor courtyard, will be shared, creating a family environment.

While this level of care has traditionally been offered in assisted living facilities, Home Plus enables individualized clinical care to advance into nursing-home-level care, if necessary—all in a comfortable, home-like setting. In addition, with Aldersgate's on-site rehabilitation and skilled nursing facilities, we are uniquely able to continue serving Home Plus residents as their care needs evolve.

Aldersgate Village is one of the only life plan communities in the state to incorporate the Home Plus concept within a continuing care environment. Therefore, whatever residents' future health and personal needs, they will have the option to stay within the Aldersgate community, where they are comfortable, and their social connections are strong.

An additional benefit is that revenue generated by Home Plus will help offset the costs of unreimbursed care for the many poor and elderly residents who have exhausted their resources and have nowhere else to turn. This is the heart of our charitable, faith-based mission—providing quality, loving health care for seniors in need.

## **GREAT PLAINS CONFERENCE**

### **Reports**

To offset the cost of Home Plus construction, which we estimate will be nearly \$1.3 million, we have launched a major gifts campaign and have sought the assistance of a local fundraising organization. Through this and other fundraising efforts, we hope to complete construction and begin housing residents by late fall 2018.

#### **Improving the Lives of Seniors**

As a faith-based organization, we provide both health and spiritual care for seniors and are blessed to have a chaplain available for on-site pastoral services. Residents enjoy participating in weekly worship services and Bible studies. They're also grateful to receive prayer, counseling and guidance from trusted clergy.

Caring for seniors, including those who have exhausted their resources and are unable to pay, is also part of Aldersgate's Christian mission. In response to this calling, we lovingly accept many needy seniors who rely on Medicaid, despite that these services are not financially profitable. As a result of this service, Aldersgate Village provided \$3.8 million in uncompensated care in 2017 making us, once again, Kansas' largest provider of long-term care services under Medicaid.

In addition, we offer charitable care through our Good Samaritan Fund. Through this fund, which receives some support from the conference, Aldersgate Village provided \$290,000 in direct charitable care to frail and needy seniors in 2017.

#### **Strong Ties with our church family**

Despite all the challenges of fulfilling this difficult mission day after day, we are able to continue fighting the good fight through the prayerful support of our United Methodist Church family. We especially rely on the wisdom and guidance of Rev. Kay Scarbrough, Topeka District superintendent, whose continued service on our Board of Trustees is highly valuable to our organization, as has been the prior clergy who have graciously served.

We have also been blessed to have strong relationships with many local United Methodist church-es, and we look forward to continuing to build relationships throughout the Great Plains Conference. Please hold us up in prayer, so we can continue fulfilling our mission of faithfully enhancing the lives of seniors.

## 2018 JOURNAL

### Reports

## Emberhope

Shelley Duncan, president & CEO

EmberHope Youthville's past year has been one for reconnection as we moved our headquarters back to our campus in Newton, Kansas. We are thrilled to be back where our mission to serve children began in 1927. Through a generous partnership with local Methodist churches we can maintain our presence throughout Kansas. We are grateful to the following churches for their support; New Covenant UMC, Dellrose UMC, Cedar Chapel UMC, Saint Mark UMC (Southeast Campus), Aldersgate UMC Renew Campus, First UMC Wichita, Haysville UMC, Hays UMC, Dodge City UMC and Garden City UMC. Join us for our 90-year celebration, as we reflect on our past, present, and future. The celebration is June 23 at our campus, 900 W. Broadway Newton, KS 67114 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. We will have fun, free, family-friendly games and activities set up, as well as local food trucks on hand.

Child welfare in Kansas has changed dramatically since 1927 with the privatizing of the system and an increased number of children needing services. The record-high number of children in the state's custody, along with a lack of foster homes is burdensome and impacting the ability for child welfare agencies to meet the needs of this highly vulnerable population.

EmberHope Youthville, despite budgetary constraints, has accomplished many great things in 2018.

- We served over 2,000 clients through our foster care, residential, and counseling programs.
- We opened a 12-bed residential home for teen girls in need of shelter services, increasing the number of children served on campus by 30% and the number of foster children placed in a family setting by over 10%.
- We received a Functional Family Therapy grant from the Department of Corrections to serve 52 counties in western Kansas with evidenced-based programming to prevent juvenile offenders from further involvement with criminal behaviors.

Our Healthy Relationships program, teaching youth decision-making skills, has expanded in western Kansas due to the success in the Dodge City area and the growing need for prevention services.

Although this is great progress, the need for services continues to grow. Our agency has focused on achieving our goals of strengthening our financial position, enhance our quality driven climate and create

## **GREAT PLAINS CONFERENCE**

### **Reports**

a trauma-informed environment resulting in overall superior services. We are consistently making strides towards achieving our goals and contributing to the success of the agency.

About 50% of Kansas foster parents choose to stop within their first year. The number one reason is lack of support. Our agency has partnered with UMCs to establish Communities of Hope to attract, engage, and support foster families. This program has contributed to the growth of foster home retention for the first time in years. By engaging and mobilizing a volunteer network who share their time and talents with local foster families, we are creating a support system dedicated to serve children. Moving forward, continuing the successful impact of our Communities of Hope will be our steadfast focus.

To learn how you can join our Community of Hope and support EmberHope Youthville, visit [emberhope.org](http://emberhope.org) or call us at (800) 593-1950. Together, we can foster a community of hope.

### **Epworth Village, Inc.**

Margaret Donovan, CEO

Greetings from Epworth Village! 2017 was a busy year with many rewarding accomplishments in meeting our mission to provide comprehensive family-centered services that bring hope and healing to children, youth and families across Nebraska in a compassionate and caring manner. Mid-year, we shifted our focus and resources toward services that provide long-term impact, that better meet the needs/issues facing today's children and families, and that adapt to changes being made in Nebraska's child welfare policies and practices. These policy changes are geared toward reducing the need to remove children from their homes and when removal becomes necessary, utilizing foster/kinship care. We began concentrating on growing and expanding our In-home Family Services and Foster Care programs which allowed us to serve even more children, youth and families in 2017 totaling 340 parents and children.

By working with the whole family in their homes, our In-home Family Services program is able to provide services and tools to families that increase their level of parenting skills and functioning which lead to long-term positive outcomes for the children and youth. We had very positive feedback about the quality of our services from families and entities that work with these families, such as the state's child protective services, that our services are providing positive outcomes and long-term impact for the families.

## 2018 JOURNAL

### Reports

Because of our highly skilled, dedicated and compassionate staff the program grew quickly this past year with a significant increase in the number of families that received these important services.

While growing our foster care program, we also concentrated on recruitment and training of foster parents willing to foster teenagers, where the need for foster homes is greater yet finding homes willing to foster teenagers is more difficult. We have caring and committed foster homes and are proud that we have increased the number of teenagers we were able to place in Epworth foster homes and now exceeded the state average for placement of teenagers. Our skilled and dedicated foster care staff provide 24/7 support and services to the foster children and their foster homes which ensures success and stability for the foster children and homes.

As part of the state's Bring Up Nebraska initiative, Epworth Village has been working with a variety of partners and organizations in developing early intervention and services to work with at-risk families. The ultimate goal is to reduce risk factors for child abuse and neglect and keep children and families from entering the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. This community response is set to launch in 2018 throughout York County.

2018 will also see the opening of Epworth Village's newest program – Little Jewels Child Care & Enrichment Center. The Epworth Village's Board of Directors vision of giving every child, regardless of family income, the opportunity to get the life-lasting impact of quality early childhood education will come to fruition after beginning the process in 2017 of assessing community needs and building use. Epworth Village was founded in 1889 as a National Mission Institute by the United Methodist Women as an orphanage and was originally named Mother's Jewels Home. In 1959 it transitioned to different types of services for children and families when child welfare policies and practice changed and orphanage care became obsolete and Mother's Jewels Home became known as Epworth Village. The name "Little Jewels" honors our 129 year relationship with the United Methodist Women and United Methodist Church, our original founding and long history of serving children and families.

As a ministry and mission of the United Methodist Church we are rooted in and serve in God's love and compassion. The support of the UMC – including prayers, volunteers, financial and in-kind donations – truly helps bring hope and healing to the troubled families and children we serve. Through the Church and mission we are able to serve with Open Hearts and Open Minds which Open Doors for these families and transform lives.

## GREAT PLAINS CONFERENCE

### Reports

## GraceMed Health Clinic

Dave Sanford, CEO

2017 was a year of growth and change for the health care ministry called GraceMed. First, we served a record number of unduplicated patients, 44,234 to be exact, through 106,301 patient visits. This number represents touching the lives of one out of every ten residents of the greater Wichita, KS area. Services provided included primary medical, preventive and restorative dental, vision, behavioral health and pharmacy services. We existing space to increase capacity, we expect to increase the number of GraceMed patients to over 50,000 in 2018.

In 2016, we took a step of faith and assumed responsibility for two community health center clinics in Topeka KS. And, we are currently remodeling a former Dillons grocery store, a 23,000 sq. ft. facility, to host medical, dental, vision, behavioral health and pharmacy services. We currently only offer medical care in Topeka. Only 5,000 of 50,000 low-income residents in Topeka are accessing care through our current facilities and we believe we will make a significant impact in the community by expanding access to medical care and adding these other services. We expect to open this new facility in the summer of 2018.

Also, GraceMed has now been in the McPherson, Kansas community for a year. Medical and dental services are provided from a prime location on McPherson's Main Street, particularly for residents who are uninsured or underinsured, although we see anyone who walks through our doors.

Why do we 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. We trust the Great Plains Conference recognizes that GraceMed is one of the most effective evangelical ministries 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 prayers and financial

## 2018 JOURNAL

### Reports

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 22 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 UNL 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 the launch of our newest program EMPWR. As with all of our programs, this program was developed by Released and Restored.

## **GREAT PLAINS CONFERENCE**

### **Reports**

EMPWR is specifically designed for incarcerated women to help them move beyond the sexual, emotional and physical violence more than 80% of them have suffered repeatedly throughout their lives. Using techniques of Trauma Informed Care, EMPWR gives women the opportunity to see their innate dignity and worth, and their belovedness as daughters of a holy God.

EMPWR debuted at the Nebraska Correctional Center for Women on January 15, 2018. By the time you read this, the first cohort will have graduated the program.

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 NV 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.

More information is available at our website: [www.releasedandrestored.org](http://www.releasedandrestored.org)

If you'd like to become involved in a truly transformational ministry, please contact us at 402-806-0565 or [info@releasedandrestored.org](mailto: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

"I always thank God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus."

Thousands of lives are touched in some way each year in Ogden, Kansas through the generosity of the Great Plains Conference, churches, UMWs, civic groups and generous individuals. In 2017, we provided services to 2,618 thrift store clients, 3,591 Harvester mobile pantry clients, 523 House of Hope pantry clients, 51 families received emergency aid, 24 kids attended the after school program and over 3,000 meals were served to elderly, children and families in three different feeding programs. Narcotics and Alcoholics Anonymous meet weekly in our space. We partner with and/or support over 30 ministries and social service agencies around the area and around the world. We make it happen with two part-time employees and a budget just under \$100,000. It takes a lot of volunteers to pull it off, and God has always provided all our needs- often before we know

## 2018 JOURNAL

### Reports

we need them or ask for them!

Ogden is a town of just over 2,000 residents where 31% of the residents live below the poverty level. Over 70% of local children receive free and reduced lunch at school. There is little to offer in the community for entertainment, shopping and employment.

In 2017, we extended our operating hours to give our customers a chance to shop after work. Additional volunteers have stepped up to staff the House of Hope for these additional hours.

In 2018, we are happy to announce a new initiative- a retired medical doctor is providing free medical services to our Ogden residents. This is a welcome addition to our community services, as Ogden lacks basic amenities such as a grocery store, bank and medical facilities. Thanks to a Poverty Alleviation grant provided by the conference, we sponsored a Job Fair, which had a serendipitous outcome. Nearly all the attendees were non-English speakers- as a result, our elementary school was able to procure instructors to begin an ESL program, using our grant money to provide childcare for the attendees.

The Christian community in Ogden has been strengthened by the addition of The House Café our next door neighbor and ecumenical mission partner. A Great Plains grant has helped this tea and coffee house get started, with the grand opening occurring in September, 2017. The House Café is a spot for our local teens and young adults to gather for fun and Christian fellowship. On the job training, volunteering, and small business opportunities for teens (babysitting, lawn mowing, snow shoveling) are coordinated through the café. Scholarships and internships for youth are available to prepare our local young people for a more successful life. Many of the youth experience generational poverty and the House is working hard to break the cycle of poverty and bring a decidedly Christian experience into the lives of our youth. We are fortunate to be in ministry alongside them.

We are very grateful for all the support we receive. It is a privilege and a blessing to be doing God's work alongside all our supporters in Ogden.

### **Immigrant Legal Center (formerly Justice For Our Neighbors-Nebraska)**

Emiliano Lerda, J.D., LL.M., executive director    [www.jfon-ne.org](http://www.jfon-ne.org)

Our mission is to welcome immigrants into our communities by providing high-quality legal services, education, and advocacy.

## **GREAT PLAINS CONFERENCE**

### **Reports**

Our organization was started by the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) and continues its strong connection with the National Justice For Our Neighbors network. As Justice For Our Neighbors-Nebraska (JFON-NE) grew in service delivery capacity, stability, and resilience, we partnered with the pastors, trustees, and members of Grace United Methodist Church in Omaha. Not only did this collaboration lift JFON-NE and our clients spiritually, but their generosity and support even provided office space for our attorneys at a very affordable rate for several years.

As demand increased for our services, we committed to a path of responsible growth. Our 2014 – 2016 Strategic Plan culminated in the development of an exciting new business plan to guide us through the next three years. During 2017, preparations were underway to complete a change of name and location to be better able to serve our clients. JFON-NE is now the Immigrant Legal Center (ILC), an affiliate of the Justice For Our Neighbors Network. Our new headquarters is at 4223 Center St. in Omaha.

Termination of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program and Temporary Protective Status (TPS) for immigrants from several different countries threatens the breakup of hundreds of thousands of immigrant families, creating a climate of confusion and fear. We share the heartbreaking results of the current anti-immigrant environment every day. Yet, because of the continued support of The Great Plains Conference and its members, we have been able to hire the additional attorneys that are crucial for reaching more immigrants.

Immigrant Legal Center is honored to participate in 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, ILC 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. In 2018, ILC is hiring more attorneys to build capacity for immigration legal services in additional rural Nebraska communities.

Immigrant Legal Center is Nebraska's only immigration legal services nonprofit that employs full-time licensed attorneys and provides a full range of free immigration legal services for low-income immigrants who have no other option to gain access to the justice system. We help them address the interwoven legal issues that prevent them from fully participating in their communities, as well as barriers that contribute to the root causes of inequality and poverty. Our services help empower the most vulnerable immigrants who have the fewest resources:

## 2018 JOURNAL

### Reports

- those living in extreme poverty,
- victims fleeing domestic abuse and crimes of violence,
- children who have been abused and/or abandoned,
- those who would be persecuted if returned to the countries from which they fled.

In 2017, our increased staff capacity allowed ILC to increase casework and build stronger collaborations:

- Demand for our services has grown steadily over the years, with cases increasing from an estimated 279 in 2010 to over 3,400 cases in 2017. Ten full-time, licensed immigration attorneys serve clients from 44 countries.
- We created new partnerships with Completely Kids, Heartland Worker's Center, Children's Hospital, and One World Health Center to assess the need for low-income legal services as they intersect with our clients' immigration cases. At the same time, we continue to collaborate with over 100 other organizations.
- The Domestic Violence Team engaged in education, advocacy, and relationship-building with law enforcement, judges, and other professionals, with the aim of defending and advancing the rights of immigrant victims of crime. We made Spanish-language videos on U-Visa, T-Visa and VAWA relief and placed them on our website for easy access.
- Our Rural Community Inclusion Project features collaboration with several immigrant-serving nonprofits. Each contributes specific skills to develop local capacity for inclusivity and support for immigration legal services to make our communities in Nebraska more welcoming.

2017 education and advocacy initiatives focused on clients, service providers, law enforcement, and legislators:

- In 2017, staff conducted 143 presentations reaching 6,777 individuals. Many United Methodist Churches and church groups were among those requesting presentations, including a presentation by our Executive Director, Emiliano Lerda, at the Great Plains Annual Conference last June.
- In response to the new administration's 1/25/2017 executive orders, staff held numerous Train the Trainer workshops, presented 59 Know Your Rights sessions to 2,307 participants, and published a 188-page Rights and Planning Guide at <https://www.immigrantlc.org/resource>
- Two days after the termination of the DACA program was announced in September 2017, our staff organized Defending the Dream, offering free, accurate legal information and advocacy,

## GREAT PLAINS CONFERENCE

### Reports

overflowing our venue with more than 400 people, as well as reaching additional participants through a live-stream event on Facebook.

- ILC's 2017 impact litigation work is exemplified by the amicus briefs we filed on behalf of the American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA) before the Board of Immigration Appeals and the Ninth Circuit in two asylum cases poised to set precedent. We are awaiting decisions in both cases.

Together with the compassionate volunteer support of our legal clinics and ongoing consultation with the Mercy and Justice Ministry team, the Immigrant Legal Center will continue to serve the mission it was founded with through UMCOR. 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."

### **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:

- operates 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 215 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 almost 34,000 unduplicated individuals.

In April 2017, Open Door's two food programs began operating out of the new distribution center following the successful completion of a \$2.75 million capital campaign. Open Door is thankful for the Great Plains Conference support in making the Food Distribution Center a reality. The new facility has allowed the agency to more effectively serve not only those in our immediate community but also the other ten counties in south central Kansas that participate in the government food program. The space allows for better flow for guests but also for us to appropriately store bulk deliveries for more efficient distribution.

The establishment of the new Food Distribution Center in 2017 and the Resource and Referral Center (holds our homeless programs,

## **2018 JOURNAL**

### **Reports**

clothing store and administrative offices) in 2012 completes over 10 years of capital campaigns and renovation projects. The agency is in a very good position with solid facilities to hold us for the next 15+ years.

The agency is now in a new strategic planning process as we look toward the future needs and dreams for the agency. Leadership has acknowledged that now is the time to focus on further strengthening operations such as development, staffing and programs after years of capital projects. Please keep the agency in prayer during this vital planning process.

One area of transition for the agency is with volunteers. Many of our long term volunteers are now at an age where they are no longer able to continue serving. We miss them dearly. Each volunteer is key to our having a vibrant work place but also in doing daily ministry with our clients. The agency needs both one-time special project volunteers and those who are willing to give a few hours each week/month. Please pass along this need to anyone who might be willing to be in ministry with us.

Open Door is very thankful for the close connections between our mission 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](http://www.umopendoor.org), email [administration@umopendoor.org](mailto: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. As of 2018 we have planted more than 170 gardens across Nebraska, Kansas and Southwest Iowa.

In July of 2017, The Big Garden paid off the mortgage on our headquarters for our community gardening ministry. At nearly 2 acres, The Big Garden campus includes a large barn, an education building, office space, and two large greenhouses. This campus has allowed us to increase the impact of our ministry dramatically. In 2017 we grew over 15,000 organic seedlings a majority of which were used to plant community gardens in low-income neighborhoods

## **GREAT PLAINS CONFERENCE**

### **Reports**

of Omaha.

We also hosted life changing mission experiences for approximately 140 United Methodist youth from 13 different congregations, 11 of those from the Great Plains conference. We also host free workshops on topics ranging from canning and cheese making to rain barrel construction through our Growing Gardeners Workshop Series.

In 2017, our Grow-Your-Own summer program expanded to teach approximately 850 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 continues to show that a large majority of our participants successfully learn how to plant, nurture and harvest fresh produce. 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 2018 include maximizing our seedling production with a goal of 20,000 seedlings produced by mid May. We will also continue our Grow-Your-Own program with a goal of 900 participants in the summer of 2018. Our goal for our VIM program is to reach at least 150 United Methodist youth this summer. We are excited to partner with The Giving Grove in Kansas City in a program that will incorporate urban fruit and nut orchards into our existing garden network. We plan to develop eight community orchards with a total of 75 trees in 2018.

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

Great things are happening at Wesley House because of the financial support we receive from the annual conference which is paid through area churches' mission shares. Thank you for your faithful support of our agency. Wesley House, founded in 1982, is an outreach mission of Pittsburg First United Methodist Church. 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. Our two largest projects are the emergency food pantry and the daytime homeless drop-in center. Last year, we were able to assist over 11,000 clients with emergency food. We also served over 20 homeless people, moving seven of them to permanent housing. This number seems small, but it is very difficult to get someone with tremendous barriers, housed and

## 2018 JOURNAL

### Reports

to remain housed. I am very proud of my full time homeless case manager's work.

Last year, we really wanted to start making a significant difference in our client's lives. We did this by hiring a Family Stability Case Manager that created the Family Stability Action Program which is fully funded by the Crawford County Health Department and Connections to Success. This program allows us to offer budgeting classes using the Behind on Bills curriculum and soft skill employment training using the Bring You're a Game to Work program. We have had more than ten people complete the budgeting class and over twenty take the employment training with over ten people graduating and receiving the Work Ethic Certificate. We have had great success with this program and we are seeing a decrease of services used with these graduated participants. The goal of the program is to educate twenty people so that they can have self-sustaining lives.

We are also continuing our identification program which is helping people become employed and housed. This program has ballooned into an opportunity to transport qualified individuals to the nearest Social Security office. Eight trips have been funded by the Community Foundation of Southeast Kansas.

Programs and the availability of emergency assistance are dependent on financial contributions, donations, grants and private foundation support. Volunteers, financial support and donations are provided by a wide variety of organizations, civic groups, area churches and individuals. Thank you again for your support and prayers. We are blessed to be able to serve in this capacity.

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: [wesleyhouseumc.org](http://wesleyhouseumc.org) Facebook: [www.facebook.com/pittsburgwesleyhouse](https://www.facebook.com/pittsburgwesleyhouse) Twitter: @wesleyhouseumc

If you are interested in receiving our monthly e-newsletter please email us at [wesleyhousenewsletter@gmail.com](mailto: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

## GREAT PLAINS CONFERENCE

### Reports

# SOUTH CENTRAL JURISDICTION

## Lydia Patterson Institute

Dr. Socorro de Anda, president

Greetings from your ministry on the US-Mexico border! Lydia Patterson Institute (LPI), is the only ministry of the United Methodist Church that sits right between two countries and three states: The countries of Mexico and the United States and the states of Texas, New Mexico and the Mexican state of Chihuahua. It is the only ministry that can claim to have trained over 160 Pastors, 12 District Superintendents, 4 Chaplains, 1 Seminary President, and 1 Bishop. In the secular world, Lydia Patterson has trained doctors, lawyers, educators, engineers, artists, comedians, actors, ambassadors, governors and many other state officials.

For more than 100 years, Lydia Patterson Institute has been committed to serve the church and make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. Every day, lives are being changed for the better and the world becomes a better place because of LPI.

School year 2017-18, serves 400 students that commute daily from Cd. Juarez and the El Paso area, many making a 2-3 hour trip to and from school. We owe the churches and friends of your conference and all the conferences of the South Central Jurisdiction for their apportionments and gifts for scholarships that give these students an opportunity to change their lives. A young boy or girl may be living in a "colonia" with no hope for the future, and through the generous support and the work of LPI, he or she may join the list of professionals mentioned above.

Looking to the future, LPI is preparing to continue to change lives for another 100 years. Through the efforts of a capital campaign, LPI has been converted into one of the best equipped schools in the area with the latest state-of-the-art technology in the classroom. Here, students are being provided with the best tools to meet the needs of a changing world.

Academics is the road to success, but spiritual guidance and strong ethical preparation is the answer to life in a complex world. Lay Ministry Students at LPI are trained to bring the love of Christ

to others through their service and commitment to the church. Students serve in internships and many choose to go to seminary as a result. In the summer of 2017, more than 40 students were placed in internships throughout South Central and beyond. Eighty-seven

## 2018 JOURNAL

### Reports

students graduated and eighty-seven students are in college today. Your investment in our future leaders could not yield a higher rate of return. For this, and for all your resources and prayers that you send our way, we wish to thank you.

In the midst of a very controversial issue of immigration in the country, Lydia Patterson Institute is here to build bridges in place of walls. The United Methodist Church and Lydia Patterson Institute are the link that provide potential human resources to both sides of the border. Please come and visit and experience firsthand the presence of God in the faces of our students, faculty and staff and all those who have dedicated their lives to the welfare of these young boys and girls. “La Lydia” is a beacon of light in the midst of challenges on both sides of the border. Thank you for joining us in this venture to fight crime, drugs and violence through education and spiritual leadership. Thank you for contributing to changing the lives of our students and creating a better world in the name of Jesus.

## UNIVERSITY & SEMINARY REPORTS

### Africa University Report

James H. Salley

Associate Vice Chancellor for Institutional Advancement

Africa University is deeply thankful to the members of the Great Plains Conference for strengthening their support, and investing in the Africa University Fund (AUF) apportionment at 90.09 percent, in 2017. The local churches of the Great Plains Conference are helping Africa University’s impact to grow through their generosity and faithfulness.

Institutional Update:

- Currently, Africa University hosts a stable, focused, and vibrant campus community of 1,417 full-time students and faculty and staff from 31 African nations. In addition, 392 students are pursuing degree programs on a part-time basis.
- Africa University’s annual operating budget of just-under \$10.5 million prioritizes student access and retention, with more than \$2.2 million in scholarships and financial aid awards disbursed in 2017.
- Amidst a transition in the governance of Zimbabwe, lectures, research, and outreach activities at Africa University are unfolding without interruption.
- A new academic structure and the realignment of programs is encouraging innovation and enhancing Africa University’s relevance to The United Methodist Church and to sub-Saharan Africa. The

## GREAT PLAINS CONFERENCE

### Reports

recently-launched Institute of Theology and Religious Studies offers multi-disciplinary training and leadership formation opportunities for both clergy and laity.

- Researchers at Africa University are providing critical data on mosquitos and regional malaria control programs to aid Africa's efforts to eradicate malaria and other insect-borne diseases.
- Through teaching and research, Africa University is making trailblazing, regional contributions in migrant and refugee protection, child rights, and the harnessing of intellectual property for development.
- The first 25 years of AU's ministry have produced more than 8,000 graduates who are leading efforts to make disciples, alleviate poverty, improve global health, and better the quality of life in communities across sub-Saharan Africa.

These ministry accomplishments are made possible by the steadfast support of United Methodist congregations. The Great Plains Conference's engagement with Africa University represents hope and transformation for young women and men who are answering the call to service and meaningful discipleship.

On June 9th, more than 600 students are due to graduate from Africa University. Each of them has been equipped to make a difference in their communities because United Methodists have invested in Africa University as part of their global legacy. These new graduates are returning to their home communities to offer service in fields that include agriculture, health care, social work, peace-building, and pastoral ministry. Your prayers and support have made their education and service possible.

It is the university community's prayer that the members of the Great Plains Conference will continue to work diligently to grow their support and achieve a 100 percent investment to the Africa University Fund.

Thank you, Great Plains Conference, for your foundational role in Africa University's ministry. Please remember the students, faculty, administrators, trustees, and alumni of Africa University in your prayers. Thank you for being a part of an incredible year of blessings. Thank you for affirming the power of faithfully sowing and working together as you journey in ministry with Africa University. May God bless and keep you always in an abundance of grace and mercy.

## 2018 JOURNAL

### Reports

# 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, more than 10,000 students have graduated from Candler, where they have been shaped as thoughtful, principled, and courageous Christian leaders dedicated to transforming the world in the name of Jesus Christ.

One of 13 official seminaries of The United Methodist Church, Candler has been included on a list of “Seminaries that Change the World” for five years running, and was recently named a “Bright Spot in Theological Education” by Auburn Seminary.

Candler is also one of seven graduate professional schools of Emory University, a top-tier research institution offering extensive resources and a demonstrated commitment to service. Our location in Atlanta provides a hands-on learning environment rich with opportunity: The General Board of Global Ministries is headquartered here, as are numerous public health, international development, and social service organizations. Simply put, there is no better place to prepare for ministry that engages 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 16 degrees: six 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 immediately apply to their context what they learn in class. Our Teaching Parish program allows eligible United Methodist students to serve as pastors in local churches while they’re enrolled—they earn a salary as they earn course credit and pastoral experience, plus they are mentored by an experienced United Methodist elder.

Candler’s student body continues to reflect the diversity and breadth of the Christian faithful, with an enrollment of 455, reflecting 49 percent women, 35 percent people of color (U.S.), and a median age of 30. Students represent 39 denominations, with half coming from the Methodist family. 82 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 2017-2018, we awarded \$5.3 million in Candler scholarships, with 97 percent of MDiv students receiving aid and the average scholarship covering 75 percent of tuition. Plus, our comprehensive “Faith & Finance”

## **GREAT PLAINS CONFERENCE**

### **Reports**

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.

Half of Candler's faculty are United Methodist and 58% come from traditions within the larger Methodist family. This year, we welcomed fellow United Methodist Helen Jin Kim to the faculty as Assistant Professor of American Religious History, and we sent best wishes along with our colleague Mary Lou Greenwood Boice as she retired after 25 years of remarkable service to Candler.

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 throughout the world depends upon your support, gifts, and prayers. Thank you for the countless ways you advance this vital ministry in the life of our denomination. Visit us in person in Atlanta or online at [candler.emory.edu](http://candler.emory.edu) to see firsthand how Candler prepares real people to make a real difference in the real world.

## **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 Annual Conference is enrolled at Perkins, studying in the Master of Divinity (M.Div.) program.
- The eligible 2017-18 student from the Great Plains Annual Conference who qualified for the PACE grant endowment was awarded approximately \$3,600.

Enrollment at Perkins for the 2017-18 academic year totals 312 students, including 31 enrolled in the Ph.D. program. Fall 2017 statistics reflect the following: 59% of our entire student population are United Methodist and more than 45 percent are ethnic minority students. Master's degree programs comprise approximately 43 percent male and 57 percent female students. The D.Min. program includes students from southern Asia taking classes in Dallas.

In 2017, Dr. Craig C. Hill completed his first year as Dean and Professor of New Testament at Perkins School of Theology. Under his leadership, a number of new initiatives have been launched, including new forms of outreach to churches and church leaders, deeper and more fruitful relationships with feeder colleges, new curricular and co-curricular initiatives, a staff council, the revamping of the D.Min. and Houston-Galveston Programs, additional staffing in critical areas, increased giving, additional financial aid, new uses of technology, and

## 2018 JOURNAL

### Reports

a program for United Methodists seeking ordination.

#### 2017 HIGHLIGHTS

- Fall 2017 admissions increased by a record 42.8 percent over the previous year with an incoming class of 80 students (excluding new D.Min. and Ph.D. students).
- Two new degree concentrations— Church Management and Social Innovation and Nonprofit Engagement —were launched in fall 2017 in partnership with SMU’s Cox School of Business and Meadows School of the Arts. Available to students pursuing the Master of Divinity (M.Div.) and Master of Arts in Ministry (M.A.M.) degrees, these unique concentrations are designed to strengthen future clergy in the area of church management and to equip those pursuing nontraditional forms of ministry that encourage social innovation.
- Current-use giving to Perkins increased 14% over 2016, making funds available to Dean Hill for immediate needs.
- A new scholarship program geared toward attracting outstanding Master of Divinity students was launched in 2017. The first 10 Perkins Scholars, each of whom received a three-year scholarship commitment, were named for the 2017-18 academic year. A total goal of \$630,000 in funding will provide for an anticipated 10 additional scholarships for fall 2018 and another 10 for the fall 2019. When the program is fully operational there will be 30 Perkins Scholars in the student body. Combined with additional financial aid, this program provides nearly full scholarships for these highly skilled servant leaders.
- A new curriculum was adopted for fall 2018 by the SMU Board of Trustees in December for the Perkins Doctor of Ministry (D.Min.) degree program. The new curriculum, under the direction of program director Dr. Carlos Cardoza-Orlandi, includes a 30-hour graduation requirement; degree completion in three years; intensive peer group interaction and learning; and concentrations in Vocational Director, Organizational Leadership, and Community Building.
- In an effort to deepen relationships between Perkins and undergraduate college and universities, new partnerships in the form of Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) have been launched in 2017-18. These formal agreements establish a preferred pathway for graduates of the institutions interested in pursuing ministerial vocations at the graduate level, granting preferred consideration and early acceptance to Perkins School of Theology for students pursuing ministerial vocations. The United Methodist-related institutions include Centenary College in Shreveport, Louisiana; Southwestern University in Georgetown, Texas; McMurry University in Abilene, Texas; Hendrix College in Conway, Arkansas; and Presbyterian-related Austin College in Sherman, Texas (with more pending at the time of

## GREAT PLAINS CONFERENCE

### Reports

this writing).

Perkins School of Theology is committed to those called to serve so that they might be empowered to lead. We thank our many colleagues, friends and alumni/ae across the connection for generous their support, 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 2017-2018 academic year, Saint Paul enrolled 117 students in the master and doctoral degree programs. The Saint Paul Course of Study School educated 261 students in Kansas City, KS; Hays, KS; Oklahoma City, OK; and Springfield, MO.

Saint Paul School of Theology announced a new FLEX schedule for theological education starting Fall 2018. Seminarians will receive a more Flexible Learning Experience that combines convenience and community opportunities with intentional academic scheduling. Students can take a mixture of online, on-campus, and hybrid (blended online and on-campus) courses to complete the required curriculum.

One FOCUS week will be scheduled each semester for hybrid and on-campus students. They will come together with faculty and skilled practitioners to participate in spiritual formation retreats, practicums that teach ministry skills (i.e. funeral planning, technology in worship, financial reporting), and community activities.

The Board of Trustees and president set into motion a new scholarship initiative. Every entering, full-time, master's degree student at Saint Paul will receive a \$5,000 scholarship for the 2018 seminary year. This broad opportunity is the most recent effort to reduce student indebtedness.

Seminary partner, United Methodist Church of the Resurrection, will offer a three-year, full-ride scholarship beginning 2018-2019 academic year. The Resurrection Fellow will have a hands-on, paid internship with a ministry mentor to learn ministry skills in evangelism, worship, pastoral care, and discipleship.

## 2018 JOURNAL

### Reports

Dr. Amy Oden, Professor of Early Church History and Spirituality, at Saint Paul at Oklahoma City University received the 2017 GBHEM Exemplary Teacher Award. Her book “Right Here, Right Now: The Practice of Christian Mindfulness” examines how Christian mindfulness practices begin with the teachings of Jesus and continue throughout Christian history. Oden includes step-by-step instructions for practicing Christian mindfulness today.

Dr. Mike Graves, William K. McElvaney Professor of Preaching and Worship, published a book in October entitled Table Talk: Rethinking Communion and Community. Table Talk explores communion practices and a new way of doing church that is catching on around the world. Dr. Graves writes about the dinner church movement and ways that it is carried out.

Seminary partner, Oklahoma City University, dedicated a classroom in the W. Angie Smith Chapel building to honor retired Oklahoma UM Bishop Robert Hayes, Jr. A plaque on the classroom door recognizes Hayes for his many years of service to both the seminary and university. He returned to Saint Paul at Oklahoma City University this year to teach, preach, and serve as Bishop-in-Residence.

The 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 2017 SMU’s total enrollment of 11,789 included 6,452 undergraduates and 5,337 graduate students. Ethnic minority students made up 26 percent of total enrollment. An international enrollment of 1,785 represented 88 foreign countries.

SMU ranks among the nation’s best universities. In the 2017 U.S. News & World Report listings, SMU ranks among the top 20 percent of the “best national universities.” Several individual schools and academic programs also earned national rankings.

SMU received \$22 million in external funding during 2016-17 for research in the U.S. and worldwide. Current research subjects include

## **GREAT PLAINS CONFERENCE**

### **Reports**

the search for dark matter, natural hazards, water quality, cyber security, data analytics, learning disabilities, human performance, immigration, treatments for cancer, neurodegenerative diseases, diabetes, anxiety and depression.

In December, SMU received a \$1 million gift from the Moody Foundation, which will support renovation of Meadows School of the Arts facilities and key education research by Annette Caldwell Simmons School of Education and Human Development. Also, a \$15 million gift received from the Nancy Ann Hunt Foundation will ensure the long-term support of SMU's Hunt Leadership Scholars Program, one of the University's signature scholarship programs attracting academically talented student leaders from throughout the United States to SMU.

Last February, Elena D. Hicks began her post as SMU's new dean of undergraduate admission. Hicks came to SMU from Loyola University Maryland where she was dean of admission. In July, Kenechukwu (K.C.) Mmeje began his post as SMU's vice president for student affairs. He had been assistant vice president and dean of students at Loyola University Chicago. In August, Matthew B. Myers became dean of SMU's Cox School of Business. Myers had been dean at the Farmer School of Business at Miami University of Ohio. Also in August, Stephanie L. Knight, a nationally recognized education leader, researcher and professor, began as dean of SMU's Annette Caldwell Simmons School of Education and Human Development. She came to SMU from the College of Education at Pennsylvania State University where she had been associate dean and professor of education.

SMU faculty honored in 2017 include Mark Chancey, professor of religious studies at SMU's Dedman College, and Adam Herring, professor of art history at Meadows School of the Arts, who each received prestigious Guggenheim Fellowships in recognition of their achievement and exceptional promise. Also, anthropology professor Caroline Brettell was inducted into the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

Biochemistry professors Pia Vogel and John Wise in the SMU Department of Biological Sciences, and Corey Clark, deputy director of research at SMU Guildhall, are leading the SMU assault on cancer in partnership with fans of the popular best-selling video game "Minecraft." The professors expect to make progress in their quest to narrow the search for chemical compounds that improve the effectiveness of chemotherapy drugs. Wise and Vogel have tapped the high performance computing power of SMU's ManeFrame, one of the top 20 most powerful academic supercomputers in the nation.

## 2018 JOURNAL

### Reports

With ManeFrame, Wise and Vogel have sorted through millions of compounds that have the potential to work.

In May, Francis S. Collins, M.D., Ph.D., the director of the National Institutes of Health who may be best known for leading the Human Genome Project (HGP), addressed SMU students during the 103rd all-University Commencement ceremony. Dr. Collins' personal research efforts led to the isolation of the genes responsible for cystic fibrosis, neurofibromatosis, Huntington's disease and Hutchinson-Gilford progeria syndrome. As NIH director, he oversees the work of the largest institutional supporter of biomedical research in the world. As an innovative evolutionary geneticist and a devout Christian, Collins has written about the integration of logic and belief including the books *The Language of God: A Scientist Presents Evidence for Belief* (2006) and *The Language of Life: DNA and the Revolution in Personalized Medicine* (2011).

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

“NOW TO HIM WHO BY THE POWER OF GOD AT WORK WITHIN US IS ABLE TO ACCOMPLISH ABUNDANTLY FAR MORE THAN ALL WE CAN ASK OR IMAGINE...”

— Ephesians 3:20

United Theological Seminary in Dayton, Ohio, celebrated a 77% increase in new students for the fall of 2017. While 71 new students enrolled in September 2016, 126 new students enrolled in September 2017. This was made possible by increasing student aid opportunities and empowering faculty members, trustees and administrators to personally recommend candidates for a \$5,000 grant toward tuition. United experienced God's provision, trusting what God said through St. Paul: “[God] is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine” (Ephesians 3:20).

Many of the seminary's new students are current pastors who want to become more effective leaders for the Church through a Doctor of Ministry degree. United's Doctor of Ministry program has 170 students enrolled this year from 29 states, 2 non-US countries and 27 Christian denominations. The average number of doctoral students in all Association of Theological Schools (ATS) is 60 students, making

## GREAT PLAINS CONFERENCE

### Reports

United one of the largest Doctor of Ministry programs among ATS member schools.

The Doctor of Ministry program provides academic rigor, peer group support, spiritual growth and practical application. Pastors identify a need within their community and, with the support of a peer group, mentor and United faculty, they develop a model of ministry that will resolve the challenge in their congregations or communities.

Rev. Rudy Rasmus, pastor of the 9,000-member St. John's United Methodist Church in downtown Houston is a current doctoral student, who says he has been both challenged and supported in the DMin program.

"The program is rigorous," Rev. Rasmus says. "It is contextual, it is intentional and the professors and staff are at the top of the form."

United also has 212 students enrolled in the Master of Divinity degree program who usually seek to serve as pastors in local congregations. 88% of entering students are ordained or seeking ordination to serve a local congregation compared to 56% in other ATS member schools.

United also provides a two-year Master of Arts in Christian Ministries degree, which many persons serving as Directors of Christian Education or other local church positions pursue.

United provides flexible course options: 90% of students take at least one course online, and courses are also available as traditional on-campus courses, week-long on-campus intensive classes and virtual courses that meet simultaneously on campus and in the cloud via webcast.

If you are interested in pursuing further seminary education, contact United's Office of Admissions at [admissions@united.edu](mailto:admissions@united.edu) or call 800-322-5817.

## **Wesley Theological Seminary**

Rev. David McAllister-Wilson, President

Wesley Theological Seminary, located in Washington, D.C., continues to equip the next generation of Christian leadership for the church and the world. As a United Methodist seminary, we form students to lead innovative ministries while remaining grounded in our biblical and theological traditions.

## 2018 JOURNAL

### Reports

Whether you are clergy or laity, an alumnus or a prospective student, looking for master's or doctoral work or continuing education or simply deeper biblical knowledge, Wesley wants to support you in your current and future call to ministry. Here are a few ways Wesley can help you grow in faith, wisdom, and ability.

#### Expand your leadership skills

Wesley's internationally respected Lewis Center for Church Leadership is a key resource for cutting-edge church research and disciple-growing strategies for the local church. Under the directorship of the Rev. Dr. F. Douglas Powe, Jr., the Lewis Center's Leading Ideas e-newsletter, reaching almost 20,000 people in ministry each week, has launched its new podcast – Leading Ideas Talk. Sign up or listen at [www.churchleadership.com](http://www.churchleadership.com).

The Institute for Community Engagement at Wesley continues its innovative online Health Minister Certificate Program from Heal the Sick to prepare congregations for public health work in their parishes. Some scholarships are available for this program. Contact Tom Pruski at [tpruski@wesleyseminary.edu](mailto:tpruski@wesleyseminary.edu) for more information or to register for future certificate classes.

Wesley also offers opportunities for individual study without pursuing a degree. The Certificate in Faith and Public Life explores the foundations of public theology, religious freedom, and civil discourse through graduate courses. For more information, visit [www.wesleyseminary.edu/fpli](http://www.wesleyseminary.edu/fpli).

A Certificate in Wesleyan Studies is available online via the Wesley Theological Seminary Lay Academy. Topics include United Methodist identity, early church history, Christian ethics, interfaith relations, and the intersection of faith and science. The courses can also be taken for personal education and enrichment. More information can be found at [www.beadisciple.com/wesley/](http://www.beadisciple.com/wesley/).

#### Take your ministry to the next level

Wesley continues to be a leader in Doctor of Ministry programs, offering practical and spiritually renewing tracks in theological education. Wesley announces an exciting new 2019 Doctor of Ministry track, in partnership with Wesley House in Cambridge, UK: "Winds of the Spirit and Ministries for a Changing World." Other 2019 tracks will include Church Excellence, Spirituality and Story, a 13th Global Asian Church track and Public Engagement: Healing Communal Brokenness and Despair. Find out more or apply at [www.wesleyseminary.edu/doctorofministry/](http://www.wesleyseminary.edu/doctorofministry/).

#### Discover exciting pathways to seminary studies

Wesley understands the struggle of responsibly accepting your call while being concerned about balancing life, family, ministry and

## GREAT PLAINS CONFERENCE

### Reports

student debt. We are here to help make responding to that call possible. Through our partnership with Shenandoah University and our new 3+3 Fast Track B.A./M. Div. program, students enter ministry with less debt after earning their degree in 6 years. Learn more at [www.wesleyseminary.edu/3+3degrees](http://www.wesleyseminary.edu/3+3degrees).

Wesley's Master of Divinity degree can now be completed via online, weekend, short-term intensive, and weeknight courses in 5 years. This format is designed to be more accessible to those with busy ministry, work, and/or family commitments throughout the region. Check out upcoming flexible course offerings for summer and fall 2018 at <http://www.wesleyseminary.edu/admissions/try-a-class-3/> The new African American Church Studies Master of Divinity specialization gives contextual preparation for the unique opportunities and challenges our future leaders may encounter in African American churches, while the Public Theology specialization allows master's degree students to gain skills for community leadership and advocacy. Wesley continues to offer our 36-hour Master of Arts and a 60-hour Master of Theological Studies to equip those called to ordained deacon ministries or to other ministries beyond the pulpit.

Contact us at (202) 885-8659 or [admissions@wesleyseminary.edu](mailto:admissions@wesleyseminary.edu) about how Wesley's degree programs can equip you for your next step in ministry.

Enrich your congregational outreach and explore new dimensions of ministry

Through the Wesley Innovation Hub, Wesley is working with 20 local congregations to design innovative ministries to enrich the religious lives of young adults. Follow the work and connect with resources at [www.wesleyseminary.edu/wesley-innovation-hub/](http://www.wesleyseminary.edu/wesley-innovation-hub/). The Wesley Innovation Hub is made possible by a generous grant from the Lilly Endowment.

In a time of polarization, the Center for Public Theology, under the leadership of Distinguished Professor of Public Theology Mike McCurry, continues to equip pastors, seminarians, people of faith, and the media to create spaces for civil dialogue at the intersection of religion and politics. The Center also provides events, such as the Wesleyan Political Theology Project, to help faith leaders lead prophetic, open dialogue in their communities. For more information, visit <http://www.wesleyseminary.edu/ice/programs/public-theology/>.

The Luce Center for Arts and Religion remains the only seminary-based program uniting arts and theology. The Luce Center offers regular classes and workshops with visiting artists. For information on

## 2018 JOURNAL

### Reports

past and upcoming opportunities visit [www.luceartsandreligion.org](http://www.luceartsandreligion.org). Stay connected

Ready to join in our mission? Wesley provides more than \$2 million dollars annually in scholarships to our students thanks to the consistent support of graduates, congregations and friends of the seminary. Find out more about how you can be part of the future of Wesley at [www.wesleyseminary.edu/support/](http://www.wesleyseminary.edu/support/).

We invite you to stay in touch through the year and learn more of the latest developments at Wesley by signing up for our monthly electronic newsletter, eCalling, at [www.wesleyseminary.edu/ecalling](http://www.wesleyseminary.edu/ecalling). We look forward to continuing to serve you and your community as we seek to live into God's dream together. Blessings to you for a fruitful and faithful Annual Conference.

## MISCELLANEOUS

### United Methodist Health Ministry Fund

David Jordan, President

The Board and staff of the Health Ministry Fund welcomed David Jordan as President and CEO on February 1st. David grew up in Carver, Massachusetts, and most recently served as Executive Director of The Alliance for a Healthy Kansas in Topeka. This organization's most prominent work has been to urge the KS Legislature and Governor to expand the Kansas Medicaid program, KanCare, to provide health care coverage for 150,000 Kansans. David and his wife Suzanne Wikle are the proud parents of one-year-old Samuel.

Kim Moore, the Health Fund's founding president, retired January 31st after 30 years of leadership. We wish Kim and his wife, Cindy, a most enjoyable retirement!

The 2017 year saw record enrollment of churches (44 in Kansas, 27 in Nebraska) in the Healthy Congregations program which provides training and financial support to health ministry teams. Several churches participated in Big Garden Projects to provide community garden space for local residents and others received additional funding to support children's summer food programs. Sixty lay persons were trained in the Strengthening Families program, an internationally recognized parenting and family strengthening program taught in 10-12 sessions and designed for families with children ages 7 to 17. Annually, the Health Fund sponsors a Healthy Congregations retreat, open to all United Methodist Congregations, usually in late April at Rock Springs Ranch near Junction City. Keynote speakers at the most recent event focused on the health hazards of social isolation and the benefits of intentional neighboring.

The Health Fund supports three other strategic initiatives: the expansion of breastfeeding; young children's mental health, and

## **GREAT PLAINS CONFERENCE**

### **Reports**

sustainable rural health systems.

Within five years of commencing to influence policies and practices in hospitals to promote breastfeeding, almost 90% of Kansas births now occur in hospitals which have participated in High Five for Mom and Baby trainings. This work has contributed to increased breastfeeding indicators as reported on the Centers for Disease Control Annual Breast-feeding Report Card: Kansas mothers are exceeding the Healthy People 2020 Goal for 'ever breastfed' and for 'exclusive breastfeeding at 3 months'.

For some time, our work in early mental health has focused on assessing the social and emotional well-being of young children and the provision of needed services – parenting classes, counseling, and other interventions to promote positive development. In 2017 the Health Fund and other Kansas foundations piloted another initiative – Attachment Bio-Behavior Catch-up (ABC), a home visiting program developed by the University of Delaware. In this program, parents raising children in adverse and poverty-stricken homes are coached to use positive parenting skills (nurturance, delighting in the child, avoiding frightening behaviors) to lessen pediatric levels of toxic stress and enhance normal brain development. The program is being piloted in northwest and southwest Kansas, and Sedgwick, Reno, and Wyandotte Counties. As of this writing (early April), there is interest in the Kansas Legislature to fund the expansion of this program over the next three years.

For more information about the work of the Health Fund or to contact myself or any of the staff, please visit our website: [www.healthfund.org](http://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 for the 2017 academic year. The "Pass the Torch" Scholarship has made a difference in the following students' lives:

## 2018 JOURNAL

### Reports

Asbury Theological Seminary

**Gina Tyler**

**John Lewis**

Saint Paul School of Theology

**Marsha Haney**

**Richard Webster**

**Alex Rossow**

**Suzanne Werthmann**

**Mary Webster**

Illiff School of Theology

**Marcee Binder**

**Julie King**

United Theological Seminary

**Dorothy Ellsworth**

**Stacy Ellsworth**

Wesley Theological Seminary

**Mary Courtney**

The Kansas Area United Methodist Foundation Seminary Scholarship  
“FIRST” Recipients of the 2017 award were:

Asbury Theological Seminary

**Katelyn Hilger**

**William Deeds**

**Mariam Peralta de Garcia**

**Shane Britt**

**Gina Tyler**

Saint Paul School of Theology

**Laura Cherry**

**Dennis Erwin**

**Hyunsook Kim**

**Michael Marcus**

**Alex Rossow**

**Suzanne Werthmann**

Illiff School of Theology

**Julie King**

Seattle Pacific Seminary

**Gregory Reffner**

**Elizabeth Menhusen**

The Kansas Area United Methodist Foundation is proud to partner with the Great Plains Conference Board of Ordained Ministry so that the Foundation is a part of making a difference in the future clergy leadership for our Conference.

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 2017 Rev. Paul Holmes memorial Scholarship for continuing education recipients were:

Rev. Dr. Shelly Petz, to continue her training with The Academy for Spiritual Formation; and Rev. Marta K. Wheeler, supporting her in pursuing the Spiritual Direction Ministry Formation Tutorial Program

Finally, the Kansas Area United Methodist Foundation established a number of charitable gift annuities this past year with individuals

## **GREAT PLAINS CONFERENCE**

### **Reports**

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 the first part of 2017 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 3 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 2017 the total distributions of \$3,155,132.00 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 2017 of \$52,238,781 million dollars. An increase of funds from the previous 2016 total assets under management of \$48,838,137 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

## 2018 JOURNAL

### Reports

that Kansas and Nebraska 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 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, NE. 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 continue to promote the "PATHWAYS FOR DISCIPLESHIP" endowment funds. The goal of these four endowment funds is to strengthen the Foundation's mission of supporting the ministries of the Great Plains Conference of the United Methodist Church. These four endowment funds will focus on:

- (1) LEADERSHIP EDUCATION FUND, (Seminary Scholarships & Clergy Continuing Education)
- (2) CHILDREN/YOUTH PROGRAM FUND,

**GREAT PLAINS CONFERENCE**  
**Reports**

(3) MINISTRY AND OUTREACH GRANT FUND AND

(4) FOUNDATION SUSTAINING THE WITNESS FUND

These four endowment funds are opportunities to connect United Methodist with causes that matter. More information about all four of these funds can be found online at [www.kaumf.org](http://www.kaumf.org).

These four endowment funds are opportunities to connect United Methodist with causes that matter. More information about all four of these funds can be found online at [www.kaumf.org](http://www.kaumf.org).

## **Nebraska Area 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 2017, the total assets held by the Foundation for the support of ministry in the Conference and the Foundation grew to over \$43.6 million. Distributions made by the Foundation were over \$3 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 2017, the Foundation awarded 17 scholarships and distributed \$16,625 to students.

## **2018 JOURNAL**

### **Reports**

The Foundation is blessed to have some generous donors who have allowed us to provide small ministry grants on an annual basis. In 2017, we had \$60,000 available for these grants assisting 35 churches and other Methodist 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!