

The Way of Love:
flowing as one

Arkansas Annual Conference

June 15-17

Hot Springs, AR

Ephesians 5:1-2



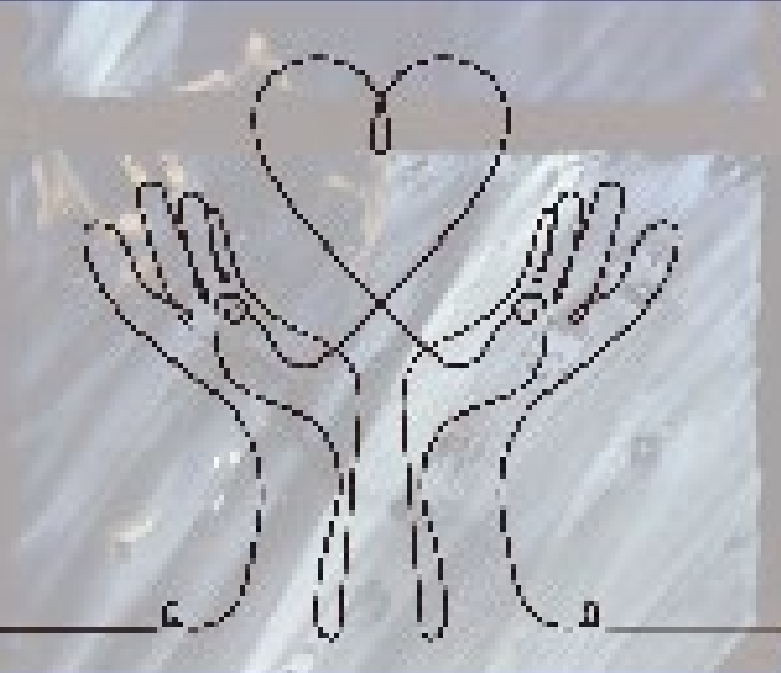
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FOR GOOD.

The Foundation is grateful to be able to re-invest its profits into a Grants Program that in 2025 provided a record high of more than \$2.1 million for mission and ministry. And we're thankful for Bishops' Club members, whose dues also help sustain this effort.

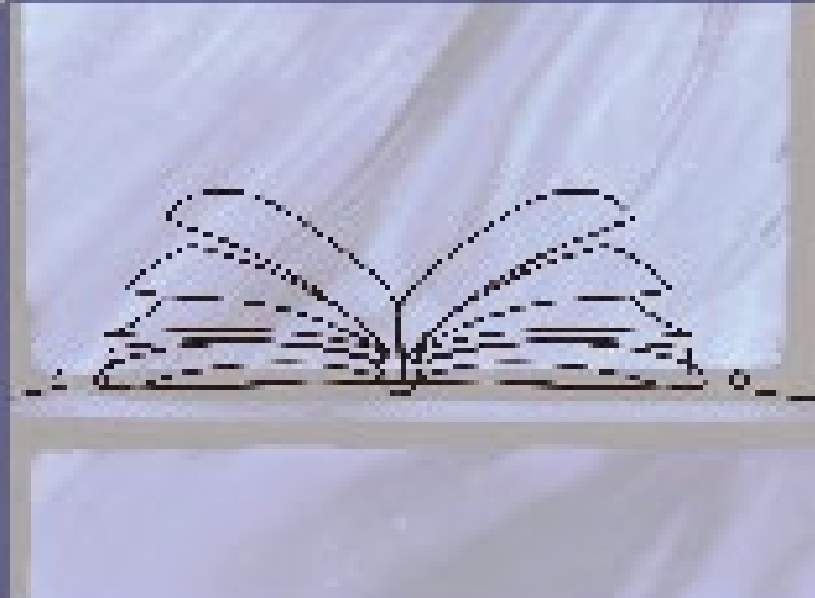


Please visit our display table at Annual Conference to learn more!



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2026 Annual Conference

*June 15 - 17, 2026
Hot Springs, Arkansas*

Pre-Conference Journal

Presiding Bishop
Bishop Laura Merrill



THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
THE ARKANSAS CONFERENCE

LAURA MERRILL
RESIDENT BISHOP

March 24, 2026

Friends in Christ:

We're getting ready for the 2026 Arkansas Annual Conference! Our session will be held Monday-Wednesday, June 15-17 at the Hot Springs Convention Center. Registration tables will be open the day before we begin, Sunday June 14, 4:00-6:00pm. This year, we will again gather in Horner Hall, on the west end of the convention center (near Hot Springs Hotel). Work will begin at 9:00am Monday morning with the Clergy Session in Horner Hall. The Laity Session will also start at 9:00am in Room 209. We are scheduled to adjourn on Wednesday afternoon.

This year's theme, "The Way of Love," will emphasize our common baptism and Wesleyan heritage. We will welcome Wesleyan scholar Dr. Paul Chilcote, who will lead us in two learning sessions followed by breakout sessions led by several of our clergy. We will also take a conference offering in support of the Endowment for Theological Education outside the US.

Monday's session will feature Opening Worship at 10:30am. On Tuesday, we will celebrate the ministry of retiring pastors with the Retiree Recognition at 11:00am. The Service of Ordination and Commissioning will also be held in Horner Hall at 5:30pm., with the gifted Bishop Mande Muyombo of the North Katanga and Tanzania Annual Conferences as our ordination preacher. Worship on Wednesday will include our Service of Remembrance, with Rev. Beth Perdue preaching. Finally, we will conclude our time with prayer and the fixing of pastoral appointments for the coming year.

Please visit the Arkansas Conference website to find a summary schedule, along with a registration link, important forms and information regarding special events and hotel options.

I look forward to our time together and give thanks to God for your faithfulness and your service to the church!

Grace and peace,

Laura Merrill
Bishop

Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. -Ephesians 5:1-2 NIV

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Guest Presenter



We are thrilled to welcome Reverend Dr. Paul Chilcote to this year's Annual Conference! He will be leading us in two learning sessions - Tuesday, June 16 at 1:30pm and Wednesday, June 17 at 9:15am.

The Rev. Dr. Paul W. Chilcote served in retirement as Director of the Centre for Global Wesleyan Theology at Wesley House, Cambridge, where he continues as an Honorary Lifetime Fellow. A Methodist historian and theologian and award-winning author, he completed his BA in Theology & History at Valparaiso University, his MDiv at Duke Divinity School, and his PhD. in historical theology under renowned Wesley scholar, Dr. Frank Baker at Duke University.

He has been involved in theological education on three Continents, having taught at Wesley College (England), St. Paul's United Theological College (Kenya), the Methodist Theological School (Ohio), Duke Divinity School (North Carolina), and having helped launch two new institutions—Africa University (Zimbabwe) and Asbury Theological Seminary (Florida). He also served as Academic Dean and Professor of Historical Theology & Wesleyan Studies at Ashland Theological Seminary in Ohio.

He is the author or editor of nearly forty books, including *Praying in the Wesleyan Spirit*, *Recapturing the Wesleys' Vision*, *The Methodist Defense of Women in Ministry*, *Making Disciples in a World Parish*, and *Early Methodist Spirituality*. He received the prestigious Saddlebag Award for two books related to lyrical theology: *A Faith That Sings* (in 2017) and *Singing the Faith* (in 2021). Recent books related to the future of the United Methodist Church include *Multiplying Love*, *Cultivating Christlikeness*, and *The Fullest Possible Love*. One of his most recent books, *On Love: Twenty Lessons for the Life We Seek*, he co-authored with his wife, Janet.

He is a frequent speaker and workshop leader in applied Wesleyan studies, particularly in the areas of theology, spirituality, and Christian discipleship. He served as the President of The Charles Wesley Society from 2003-2011. He has been a Benedictine oblate of Mt. Angel Abbey for over twenty-five years. He and Janet, a retired United Methodist pastor, have five daughters, Sandy, Rebekah, Anna, Mary, and Ruth, and eight grandchildren, Alyssa, Levi, and Theo Brooks, Collin, Oliver, Elsie, and Elliott Glass, and Isabella Gitonga.

Guest Presenter



We are honored to have Bishop Mande Muyombo joining us for this year's Annual Conference! He will be the preacher for Ordination on Tuesday, June 16 at 5:30pm in Horner Hall.

The Rev. Dr. Mande Muyombo is the bishop of the North Katanga Episcopal Area of The United Methodist Church (UMC). In that role, he oversees the largest episcopal area in the denomination, with three annual conferences and over one million members. He currently serves as the Chair of the UMC's Connectional Table and was previously Secretary of the Council of Bishops (2018-2020).

Bishop Mande takes a holistic approach to his work, seeking to build peace and prosperity through the training and equipping of community leaders and investing in essential infrastructures such as hospitals, schools, clinics, potable water systems, agriculture, and transportation solutions. Mande also actively engages with mining companies in the Democratic Republic of Congo on matters of corporate social responsibility; his Metallurgical Civil Engineering Degree from the University of Lubumbashi (1998) allows him to speak with technical expertise.

Born into a large family in Kambove village in Haut Katanga province in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Bishop Mande was the first of 16 children to graduate college. Mande received two degrees from Africa University, where he was also student director of the Africa University Choir. He is the first graduate from Africa University to be elected bishop in The United Methodist Church. Prior to being elected bishop, Mande served as president of Kamina Methodist University, DR Congo, and then was recruited by the UMC's General Board of Global Ministries, where he served as Executive Secretary for Africa, Assistant General Secretary of Missions and Evangelism, and finally Executive Director of the Global Mission Connections unit in their New York and Atlanta offices.

Mande earned a Bachelor of Divinity (2006) and Master in Peace, Leadership and Governance (2008) from Africa University and an MA in Theological Studies with an Ethics/Church and Society Concentration (2010) and Doctor of Ministry in Children and Poverty in a Globalized Economy (2015) from Saint Paul School of Theology, Kansas City. Bishop Mande has researched extensively on the topic of peacebuilding and the role of the church in electoral processes in Zimbabwe and DR Congo.

Mande is married to Blandine Mujinga, and they have three daughters and a son.

General Information

BEFORE YOU ARRIVE:

Lodging

See page 8 for a complete listing of hotels near the Hot Springs Convention Center.

DURING YOUR STAY:

Convention Center Phone Numbers

Manager on Duty & After Hours Contact: Pauline Howard, 501-520-9811

Evening or Emergency Contacts

- Emergency (Fire, Police or Medical) 911
- National Park Medical Center (501) 321-1000 (closest)
- CHI St. Vincent Hot Springs Hospital (501) 552-3000
- Melissa Sanders, Registrar (501) 993-3503 mobile
- Ulysses Washington, Host DS (479) 719-1588

Called Meeting Space

A meeting room is available for called meetings of Conference Boards and Committees. The room is located off the main hallway in the Convention Center.

Concessions

Concessions will be open during these hours:

- Wednesday: 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.
- Thursday & Friday: 7:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m

Announcement Requests

All announcement requests for June 15-17 should be sent to the following email address:

announcements@arumc.org

We are not able to accept paper or verbal announcements. Please understand that not all announcements can be accommodated due to time constraints. However, we will prioritize sharing imperative information to the best of our ability.

Photocopy Service

While conference staff members are unable to provide copy services, you might be able to make a small number of copies in your hotel's business center.

The Conference Digest

Daily recaps will be provided on the conference website (arumc.org/news). This information may be useful as you prepare your report for your local congregation.

Nursing Mothers' Space

We will have space available for any nursing mothers to have some private time with their babies. There will be signs & a map to guide you.

WHEN YOU RETURN HOME:

Evaluation

If you have provided an email address, you will receive an evaluation form to be completed online. If you do not have email, call (501) 324-8035 and an evaluation form will be mailed to you to complete and return.

Hotel Information

Courtyard by Marriott

200 Marriott Court
Hot Springs, AR 71913
501-651-4366

Complimentary on-site parking, Free High Speed Internet, Fitness Center, Pool, Microwave Oven, Mini Fridge
King or 2 Queen: \$132 + tax

Double Tree by Hilton

4813 Central Avenue
Hot Springs, AR 71913
501-525-1391

Mini Refrigerator, Microwave, Iron & Ironing Board, Hair Dryer, Safe, Free Parking, Free WiFi

Tuesday - Thursday
King Standard: \$159.00 + tax
Double Queen Standard \$139.00 + tax
Friday
King Standard: \$279.00 + tax
Double Queen Standard: \$259.00 + tax

Embassy Suites Hotel & Spa

400 Convention Blvd.
Hot Springs, AR 71901
501-624-9200

Amenities: Suites, Complimentary Breakfast, Manager's Reception, Spa, Indoor Pool, Fitness Center, Free Parking

Code: UMC
Single: \$161 + tax
Double: \$171 + tax
Triple: \$181 + tax
Quad: \$191 + tax

Hotel Hot Springs

305 Malvern Ave.
Hot Springs, AR 71907
877-623-6697

Amenities: Renovated and Remodeled Guest Rooms, Refrigerator & Microwave in all Rooms, Complimentary Breakfast available 6:30 am to 9:30 am, The Inside Track and Lounge, Shuttle Service to Popular attractions within City Limits, Complimentary Wi-Fi.

Single Occupancy: \$129 + tax
Double Occupancy: \$139 + tax
Triple Occupancy: \$149 + tax
Quad Occupancy: \$159 + tax

LaQuinta Inn & Suites

4253 Central Avenue
Hot Springs, AR 71913
(501) 624-5551

Complimentary Breakfast, Parking & WiFi, Fitness Center, Indoor Pool, Business Center, Sundries, Laundry Facilities

Single: \$99 + tax
Double: \$99 + tax

TownePlace Suites by Marriott

120 Desai Patel Ct.
Hot Springs, AR 71913

Complimentary WiFi & Parking Hot Breakfast Buffet, Refrigerator/freezer, Stove top, Microwave, Utensils & Dishes Included

King Suite: \$139 + tax
Double Queen: \$149 + tax

Voting Rights

Who Can Vote When

Your name tag indicates your voting status at Plenary Sessions. Please wear your name tag in a visible location during these sessions. All lay and clergy members of Annual Conference have the right to speak on all matters before the conference.

Voting Privileges are as follows:

	Recommendations & Conference Business	Election for Clergy Delegates to the General and Jurisdictional Conference	Elections for Lay Delegates to the Jurisdictional and General Conferences	Constitutional Amendments	Matters of Ordination, Character and Conference Relations of Clergy
Clergy Members in full connection (§602.1a)	●	●		●	●
Provisional Clergy Members who have completed all educational requirements (§602.1b)	●	●			
Associate Clergy Members (§602.1 c errata)	●	●			*
Affiliate Clergy Members (§602.1 c errata)	●				
Full and Part-time Local Pastors under appointment to a pastoral charge who have not completed Course of Study or an M.Div. degree (§602.1 d)*	●				*
Local Pastors who have complete Course of Study or an M.Div. degree and have served a minimum of two consecutive years under appointment before the election (§602.1 d errata)	●	●			*
Lay Members: Elected Members representing congregations, Members by Virtue of Office, At-large Members as elected by districts (§32), Youth Members (§602.4)	●		●	●	»
Alternate Lay Members: When seated in place of Lay Member (§602.7)**	●		●	●	
Ordained Clergy or Provisional Members from other Annual Conference and other Methodist Denominations (§346.1)***	○				
Elders or Ordained Clergy from Other Denominations serving under appointment within the Annual Conference (§346.2)	○				
Retired Local Pastors (§320.5)	○				
Missionaries regularly assigned by the GBGM in nations other than the US & Certified Lay Missionaries from nations other than the US serving within the bounds of the Annual Conference (§602.9)	○				
Conference Chancellor if not otherwise a voting member (§602.10)	○				
Visitors , with majority approval of Annual Conference Members	○				

● Voting Privilege

○ Voice without vote

*If also a member of the Conference Board of Ordained Ministry, they may vote at Clergy Session

»If also a lay member of the Conference Board of Ordained Ministry and/or Committee on Investigation (§602.6)

*No local pastor shall be eligible as a lay member or alternate (§251.2)

**Please remember that only alternate members elected by their charge conference may be seated at annual conference (§251.2)

***They may be accorded the right to vote if certified by the BOM that their credentials are at least equal to United Methodists elders (§346.2)



Revised May 2024

Parliamentary Procedure for Annual Conference

The following motions are listed in order of their rank. You may introduce a motion listed ABOVE the motion being considered. To be recognized, stand at a microphone and say, "Bishop, please."

TO DO THIS	YOU SAY THIS	Interrupt Speaker?	Second Needed?	Motion Debatable?	Can Amend?	Vote Needed?
Recess	"I move we recess until"	No	Yes	No	No	Majority
Complain – noise, etc.	"Point of privilege"	Yes	No	No	No	Chair rules

Subsidiary Motions Modify or Dispose of Main Motion

Suspend debate without calling for vote	"I move we table"	No	Yes	No	No	Majority
End debate	"I move the previous question"	No	Yes	No	No	2/3 Majority
Limit debate	"I move the debate be limited to"	No	Yes	No	Yes	2/3 Majority
Ask for vote by actual count	"I call for division of the house"	No	No	No	No	None
Postpone to specific time	"I move we postpone this matter until"	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
Have a matter studied further	"I move we refer this matter to committee"	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
Amend a motion	"I move to amend by adding" or "I move to strike ___ and add"	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
Substitute a motion	"I move to substitute"	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority

Incidental Motions Grow Out of Business the Group Is Considering

Correct error in parliamentary procedure	"Point of order"	Yes	No	No	No	Chair rules
Object to ruling of chair	"I appeal the chair's decision"	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
Obtain advice on parliamentary procedure	"I raise a parliamentary inquiry"	Yes	No	No	No	Chair rules
Request information	"Point of information"	Yes	No	No	No	None
Withdraw motion	"I withdraw the motion"	No	No	No	No	Majority

Main Motions are Tools Used to Introduce New Business

Introduce business	"I move that"	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
Take up matter previously tabled	"I move that we take from the table"	No	Yes	No	No	Majority
Reconsider matter previously voted	"I move we reconsider"	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Majority
Strike motion previously passed	"I move we rescind the motion calling for"	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority

Annual Conference Agenda

June 15-17, 2026

Sunday, June 14, 2026

- 4:00 Registration Opens
- 5:00 Ordination Rehearsal in
Horner Hall

Monday, June 15, 2026

- 7:30 Registration Opens
- 9:00 Laity Session in
Rooms 207-209
- 9:00 Clergy Session in Horner Hall
- 10:15 Break
- 10:30 Opening Worship
- 12:00 Lunch Break
- 1:30 Business Session
- 3:00 Break
Clergy Coffee in Rms. 207-209
- 3:15 Episcopal Address
- 3:45 Break
- 4:00 Business Session

Tuesday, June 16, 2026

- 8:15 Worship
- 8:30 Laity and Youth Addresses
- 8:50 Business Session
- 10:00 Break
- 10:15 BOM Report
- 10:45 Break - Retirees Honored in Lobby
- 11:00 Retiree Recognition
- 12:00 Lunch Break
- 1:30 Learning Session with Rev. Paul
Chilcote
- 2:15 Breakout Sessions
- 3:00 Break
- 3:15 Business Session
- 4:15 Break
- 5:30 Ordination Worship Service

Wednesday, June 17, 2026

- 8:15 Worship
- 8:30 Business Session
- 9:15 Learning Session with Rev. Paul
Chilcote
- 10:00 Breakout Sessions
- 10:45 Break
- 11:00 Service of Remembrance
- 12:00 Lunch Break
- 1:30 Business Session
- 2:00 Break
- 2:15 Setting of Appointments, Sending
Forth and Closing Worship

*Agenda is subject to change.

2026 Annual Conference Special Events

Sunday, June 14

- 5:00 p.m. First Timers Gathering Free
Rooms 102 – 103, Hot Springs Convention Center
- 6:00-8:00 p.m. Hendrix College Alumni and Friends Reception Free
501 Prime, 215 E. Grand Avenue, Hot Springs
Contact: J.J. Whitney @ 501-450-1358

Monday, June 15

- Noon United Women in Faith \$25.00
First UMC, 1100 Central Ave., Hot Springs, AR
Contact: Betty Cook (870) 942-6461, jbcCook@windstream.net
Transportation from the Convention Center will be provided
- 6:00 p.m. AR Black Methodists for Church Renewal Dr. Negail Riley Dinner \$50.00
The Hotel Hot Springs Grand Ballroom, 305 Malvern Ave, Hot Springs
Contact: Maxine Allen, mallen@arumc.org

Tuesday, June 16

- Noon Retiree Luncheon RC/SS free
Rooms 207-209, Hot Springs Convention Center \$20 for others
Contact: Wendy Brunson Daniels (501) 324-8029
- Noon Arkansas Conference Clergy Women's Luncheon \$25.00
Grand Avenue UMC, 841 Quapaw Avenue, Hot Springs
Contact: Susan Ledbetter, sledbetter@arumc.org
- Noon Phillips Theological Seminary Alumni & Friends Luncheon Self-pay
Café 1217, 1217 Malvern Ave #B, Hot Springs
Contact: Kurt Gwartney kurt.gwartney@ptstulsa.edu
- 7:30 p.m. Saint Paul School of Theology Alumni Dinner Self-pay
Blue Ember Smokehouse, 801 Higdon Ferry Road, Hot Springs
- 7:30 p.m. SMU Perkins School of Theology Alumni, Students & Friends Self-pay
Location: TBA

Wednesday, June 17

- 7:00 a.m. Creation Care Breakfast \$15.00
Grand Avenue UMC, 841 Quapaw Avenue, Hot Springs
Contact: Kelly Giese, kellygiese29@gmail.com

2026 Proposed Arkansas Annual Conference Session Rules

Opening Motions

The following will be adopted at the opening Business Session of the 2026 Annual Conference by majority vote of members present and voting:

1. Arkansas Annual Conference Session Rules
2. The Bar of the Conference
3. The Annual Conference Session Agenda
4. The Consent Calendar, as printed in the pre-conference journal

Participation of Annual Conference Members in the 2026 Annual Conference

1. Members of the Annual Conference, with the right to vote, will include all:
 - a. clergy members in full connection;
 - b. provisional, associate and affiliate clergy members;
 - c. full and part-time local pastors under appointment;
 - d. elders or ordained clergy from other denominations serving under appointment within the Arkansas Conference;
 - e. laity who are members of Annual Conference by charge conference vote, by virtue of Discipline or Conference Standing Rules, youth members, and those elected at District Conferences to serve as lay-clergy equalization at-large members;
 - f. alternate lay members by charge conference vote when seated in place of the lay member.
2. The bar of the 2026 Annual Conference shall be set by the conference secretary.

Consideration of Conference Matters

1. *Roberts Rules of Order 12th Edition* shall be the procedural authority for the business sessions of the Annual Conference when not in conflict with Arkansas Conference Session Rules or *The 2020-2024 Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church*.
2. Rules of Order for Motions, Legislation and Reports
 - a. Debate shall be limited to four two-minute speeches for the motion, legislation or report and four two-minute speeches against. This excludes persons inquiring about points of order or asking questions of clarification. A timer shall be used to measure debate at the discretion of the Chair.
 - b. The presenter of the motion, legislation, or report may offer a one minute concluding remark at the end of debate, before the matter is put to a vote.
 - c. The presentation of the motion, legislation or report by a Conference Agency shall not be considered a speech in favor.
3. Rules of Order for Petitions and Resolutions
 - a. Debate on each resolution or petition shall be limited to four two-minute speeches for the motion or resolution and four two-minute speeches against. This excludes persons inquiring about points of order or asking questions of clarification. A timer shall be used to measure debate at the discretion of the Chair.
 - b. The presentation of the petition or resolution may last four minutes and shall be considered a speech in favor.
 - c. The presenter of the petition or resolution may offer a one minute concluding remark at the end of debate, before the matter is put to a vote.
 - d. Amendments and substitutions to petitions and resolutions will not be considered by the Annual Conference.
 - e. During debate of petitions and resolutions, other incidental and subsidiary motions will not be considered, with the exceptions of motions to suspend the rules, inquiries about points of order, and questions for clarification.

- 1 4. All motions made on the floor of Annual Conference shall be legibly written on forms supplied by
2 the Conference Secretary and shall be in the hands of the Conference Secretary and Presiding
3 Officer before any action or vote can be taken by the Conference.
4 5. Points of Order may be raised by any member of the annual conference, who must first cite the
5 Standing or Session Rule involved and then state the point as briefly and concisely as possible.
6

7 **Motions Involving Expenditures**

8 Any proposal submitted to the Annual Conference which involves the expenditure of funds not
9 included in the Council on Finance and Administration (CF&A) report shall be referred for advice
10 and recommendation to the Council on Finance and Administration. The CF&A will study the
11 proposal and report back to the Annual Conference regarding the source of funding, the impact
12 on the Conference budget, and CF&A's concurrence or non-concurrence. No new request for
13 unbudgeted expenditures shall be considered on the last day of the conference.
14

15 **Voting**

16 Votes will be taken in the manner prescribed by the presiding bishop and shall be valid only if
17 cast in the prescribed manner designated by the presiding bishop.
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19 **Tellers**

20 Tellers shall be selected in a manner to be determined by the Conference Secretary.
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Action Reports and Budgets

Council on Finance and Administration

Tithe Revenues

The Arkansas Annual Conference prepares its spending plan based on projected revenues of a 10% tithe of the aggregate income of our local congregations as reported on lines 52 and 54 of Table III. This enables local churches to use 90% of their collections for their local church ministries.

52. Total Income for annual spending plan (as of 12/31/2025)	\$71,467,014.00
54. <u>Total Income from connectional/institutional sources outside the local church</u>	<u>\$888,930.00</u>
Total Revenue	\$72,355,944.00
10.0% Spending Plan Maximum	\$7,235,594.00

Spending Plan Overview

The budget, or spending plan, cap for the fiscal year 2026-2027 is **\$7,235,594** based on 2025 revenue figures. The Arkansas Annual Conference's total spending plan for the 2026-2027 year is **\$5,789,203** which is 80.01% of the maximum spending plan.

The following priorities have guided the Cabinet and Council on Finance and Administration (CFA) in making strategic stewardship decisions in order to shape the 2026-2027 Arkansas Conference Spending Plan:

1. We will continue to ensure the financial stability of the Arkansas Conference by strictly adhering to the principles and promises of the Arkansas Tithe Initiative.
2. We will craft a conference spending plan that can be adapted to a rapidly changing landscape.
3. We will support districts, district superintendents, district administrators and district strategy teams as the primary means for connection and missional strategy development and implementation.
4. We will empower local congregations through resources, training, and programs that enable new and existing congregations to become more vital in making disciples of Jesus Christ who are equipped and sent to transform lives, communities, and the world (e.g., Transition Seminar; cohorts; consultation; workshops; etc.).
5. We will offer ministries that connect congregations to transform lives, communities and the world (e.g., 200,000 Reasons; disaster response; campus ministry; children and youth, etc.).
6. We will provide services and carry out tasks for which the annual conference is uniquely responsible (e.g., district superintendents and district offices; communication; Board of Ordained Ministry, Board of Trustees; Board of Pensions; administrative services; Annual Conference Session, etc.).
7. We will make building healthy relationships a priority.

1 I. Spending Plan

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A. In Accordance with ¶1615.4 of the 2016 Book of Discipline

General Apportionment	Amount	Percentage of Total
World Service	\$ 810,100.00	45.64%
Ministerial Education	\$ 210,158.00	11.84%
Ministerial Scholarships	\$ 70,053.00	3.95%
Black College	\$ 111,774.00	6.30%
Africa University Fund	\$ 25,014.00	1.41%
Episcopal Fund	\$ 399,311.00	22.50%
General Administration	\$ 136,912.00	7.71%
Interdenominational Cooperation	\$ 11,596.00	0.65%
Subtotal General Apportionments	1,774,918.00	100.00%

General apportionments are paid as a percentage of the tithes received by the Arkansas Annual Conference. Funds received in excess of the anticipated collection rate will be distributed to GCFA on the existing pro rata basis.

B. Approved Solicitations –

1. Board of Trustees of Mount Eagle Christian Center
2. Board of Trustees of Camp Tanako, Inc.
3. Camp Aldersgate, Inc.
4. The Methodist Foundation for Arkansas
5. The Wesley Foundations to raise additional funds through the “Friends of Wesley” program (under the guidelines already approved by the Conference Board of Higher Education)
6. Methodist Family Health – Additionally, the second and third Sundays in December be designated for the receiving of the Methodist Family Health Annual Christmas Offering
7. Hendrix College
8. Philander Smith College
9. U.M. Historical Society
10. Volunteers in Mission
11. Shoal Creek and Bear Creek camps be allowed to raise funds in any district in which the district has given its permission
12. Methodist Village Nursing Home of Arkansas
13. Lydia Patterson Institute
14. 200,000 Reasons
15. Project Transformation Arkansas

C. Advance Specials - We recommend General and Conference Advance Specials to local churches for firsthand relationships with mission projects and involvement in mission.

D. Special Days (with offerings)

1. Peace with Justice – Second Sunday after Pentecost
2. Native American Ministries Sunday – Second Sunday after Easter
3. Human Relations Day – During Epiphany on the Sunday before the observance of Martin Luther King Jr.’s birthday
4. UMCOR Sunday – Fourth Sunday in Lent

- 5. World Communion Sunday – First Sunday in October 1
- 6. United Methodist Student Day – Sunday after Thanksgiving 2

II. Conference and District Tithe 3
4

All churches shall report the following information to the Center for Administrative Services by the 10th of the month for the prior month either online or by mail. 5
6

- A. Total gross income for previous month including designated giving \$_____ 7
- B. Less income for capital campaigns 8
- C. Less income for memorials and endowments 9
- D. Less income from sale of church-owned real estate 10
- E. Less income from tuition-based services 11
- F. Less direct costs of fund-raising 12
- G. Less income designated for pass-through/outreach ministries 13
- H. Less Paycheck Protection Program loans 14
- I. Adjusted gross income = Line A minus B,C,D,E,F,G,H 15
- J. Conference Monthly ministry tithe = Line I X 10% = \$_____ 16

III. Tithe Instructions 17
18

Line A—Total gross income for previous month (including designated giving and all other funds) 19
Enter the total amount of ALL revenue for the previous month. Total income includes ALL income 20
received by the church (offerings, pledged giving, unpledged giving, donations, building use fees, 21
income from fundraisers, designated giving, interest from investments, capital campaign income, 22
preschool income, bequests, memorials, etc.) 23

Line B—Exclude income for capital campaigns (this does not include income for lines of credit 24
(LOC) or mortgage payments) 25
Capital campaign income is money received from campaigns that are defined as significant, 26
short-term fundraising efforts for a stated project, such as a building, debt retirement, or special 27
project. The campaign usually lasts for a short time, generally less than a year; however, the 28
donations to the campaign may span several years. Stated capital campaigns should not be 29
confused with trustee account donations, building maintenance donations or other donations or 30
capital needs. Income for regular monthly LOC or mortgage payment is not capital campaign 31
income. 32

Line C—Exclude income for memorials and endowments 33
Gifts received to fund memorials and endowments should be excluded here. Income from 34
endowment earnings should not be excluded. 35

Line D—Exclude income from sale of church-owned real estate (not used for operating expenses) 36
Income from the sale of church owned property (such as a parsonage) to be used for future capital 37
expenses should be excluded here. 38

Line E—Exclude income from tuition-based services (preschool, daycare, etc.) 39
Tuition-based services income is any payment made to the church for services provided at the 40
church such as preschool, childcare, elder care, or other similar services. Normally such services 41
are budgeted separately, often by a non-profit organization affiliated with the church. 42

Line F—Exclude direct costs of fund-raising 43
Direct costs of fund-raising are those costs paid to raise funds for the church, but not the income 44
raised. Typical examples include: 1) the discounted purchase price of gift cards for future resale, 2) 45
the cost of food and supplies for a fund-raising dinner and 3) a consulting fee to direct a 46
fund-raising activity. 47

Line G—Exclude income for pass-through/outreach ministries 48
Pass-through funds are monies received for projects or events outside the local church. From time 49
to time churches will act as a collection agent for special events, such as disaster relief, community 50

1 homeless shelters, food pantries, soup kitchens or mission trips. Monies are sometimes given for
2 field missionary support or mission focused activities including materials and supplies for mission
3 trips and mission outposts. Any donations given for outreach ministries or causes should be
4 excluded.

5 **Line H**—Exclude funds received from the Paycheck Protection Program loan
6

7 IV. District Superintendents

8 A. Salary will be no more than \$120,276 (annually).

9 B. This figure shall include salary, utilities and appurtenances, and other professional
10 reimbursable expenses.

11 1. We recommend that business travel by the District Superintendents (DS) shall be
12 reimbursed at the maximum IRS allowable rate. This will be funded by the DS vouchered
13 travel expense fund of \$60,000 for room, board, and travel expense.
14

15 V. Pastor's Moving Expense - Pastor's Moving Expense (intended to pay for housing relocation) -
16 conditions of eligibility are as follows:

17 A. The following persons shall be eligible

18 1. Full Time Pastors

19 2. Student local pastors after first appointment

20 3. District Superintendents

21 4. Persons in Conference connectional positions

22 5. Retiring pastors

23 6. Persons on disability leave

24 7. Seminarian from place of residence to parsonage at first appointment

25 8. Any other person recommended by the Board of Ordained Ministry or Appointive
26 Cabinet

27 9. Only one moving expense paid per pastor per year

28 B. The following amounts shall be paid:

29 **1. Up to \$4,000.00 of actual expense reimbursed (maximum 2 stops)**

30 **2. Clergy couples living in the same residence are eligible for an additional \$2,000 and**
31 **1 additional stop.**

32 **3. Monies shall be paid by the Conference Treasurer upon presentation of a voucher**
33 **signed by the sending DS.**

34 4. The sending DS shall not submit a voucher for moving expenses unless the
35 parsonage is left clean and meets the approval of the Pastor-Parish Relations Committee
36 Chairperson. Should the DS and the chairperson of the S/PRC determine that the par-
37 sonage will require cleaning and/or repair due to abuse and/or negligence on the part of
38 the departing pastoral family the DS may direct that the pastor's moving reimbursement
39 be reduced by the amount required for such cleaning/repair and that this amount be
40 paid to the church. In no case shall the amount paid to the church be greater than the
41 total to which the pastor would otherwise be entitled for moving expense reimburse-
42 ment.

43 5. On recommendation from the Cabinet, the CFA may disburse funds for pastors
44 transitioning out of the ministry.

45 **6. Special circumstances may be considered by the CFA Executive Committee upon**
46 **recommendation by the Appointive Cabinet.**
47

48 VI. Other Recommendations

49 A. No honorariums for the Annual Conference will be paid to persons living within the bounds
50 of the Arkansas Annual Conference.

B. Travel expenses will be reimbursed based on the Arkansas Annual Conference reimbursement policy.	1 2
C. When any Conference staff personnel travels at the request of a Conference agency for other than normal representative or liaising purposes, the expenses of such travel shall be borne by the requesting agency.	3 4 5
D. Reimbursement for Conference Travel shall be:	6
1. 100% of the IRS Standard Mileage Rate for all volunteers	7
2. 100% of the IRS Standard Mileage Rate for all Conference employees	8
E. Retired and disabled ministers may be paid \$80 per diem for days they attend Annual Conference with a maximum of \$240.00 per household.	9 10
F. The Conference may direct the Conference Treasurer to withhold dispersal of funds to any agency, institution, or organization until the CFA has received the most recent audit of a Public Accountant or Certified Public Accountant from the agency or institution or organization and that audit has been found satisfactory by the Audit Committee of the CFA.	11 12 13 14
G. The undesignated net assets are not a budgeted item. This is used to maintain operating cash flow for the conference.	15 16
H. If the undesignated net assets exceed 10% of the Arkansas Annual Conference Spending Plan excluding Pension & Benefits, then the CFA's Executive Committee shall have the authority to disburse those funds with first priority given to paying the Conference's General and Jurisdictional Apportionments.	17 18 19 20
I. All interest earnings on Conference monies shall be credited to the undesignated net assets.	21 22
J. The Conference acknowledges the need for maintaining monies to be used as needed for the stabilization of the accounts of New Church Development Fund, General & Jurisdictional Conference Delegate Expense Fund, DS Funds, and the Equitable Compensation Support Fund.	23 24 25 26
K. Balances remaining at the end of the budget year shall be transferred to the undesignated net assets.	27 28
L. The Conference provides fidelity bonding insurance in compliance with ¶ 618 of the 2016 <i>Book of Discipline</i> .	29 30
M. The following is to be adopted as the guide for the care and investment of all Conference Funds: (¶1613.5 the 2016 <i>Book of Discipline</i>).	31 32
1. The Conference Treasurer is charged with the responsibility for managing all Conference Funds. It is the purpose of this investment policy to establish parameters within which the monies of the Conference will be managed.	33 34 35
2. The objective of the investment of Conference monies is to provide:	36
a. Preservation of capital.	37
b. Liquidity – to meet anticipated and unanticipated future needs.	38
c. Maximization of income – while simultaneously ensuring preservation of capital and liquidity.	39 40
d. Compliance with the Social Principles and the Discipline of the UMC.	41
3. To accomplish this objective:	42
a. Funds should be deposited in AR institutions in good standing.	43
b. Securities:	44
1. Direct obligation of United States Government Treasury Bills and Notes	45
2. FDIC insured Certificate of Deposits, Time Deposits, interest-bearing accounts	46
4. Funds should be deposited on a short-term basis, up to one-year when all objectives can be satisfied.	47 48
5. This policy is intended to be flexible in its application in order to meet changing economic conditions. Investments made for longer than 90 days may be made after	49 50

1 the approval of the Executive Committee of the CFA. While income desirable, the pri-
2 mary emphasis is to be on the maintenance of adequate funds and the avoidance of
3 speculative investments

4 6. This policy may be amended to meet changing conditions and to fulfill the needs of the
5 Arkansas Annual Conference

6 N. The Conference gives the CFA the authority to fund extraordinary needs relating to the
7 life and ministry of the Arkansas Conference. These needs shall be funded from available
8 unrestricted funds. This authority shall not be used to replace or circumvent normal funding
9 procedures of the Arkansas Conference.

10 O. When the Arkansas Annual Conference adopts a program or ministry that is not within
11 the existing Conference structure, the Conference shall specify lines of amenability and
12 accountability so as to provide for budgeting, evaluation, and audit.

13
14 VII. Administrative Concerns:

15 A. All funding requests shall be presented to the appropriate board or agency of the
16 Conference for recommendation before presentation to the CFA. All persons authorized to
17 vouch for funds shall be identified by agencies and approved by the Cabinet prior to the
18 dispensing of funds.

19 B. The final time for receiving Conference tithe shall be the close of business on June 30th.

20 C. Each charge shall declare all ministerial support. The report shall include remuneration
21 for compensation for travel, utility expense, insurance, Social Security, and all additional
22 compensation paid to the pastor or on behalf of the pastor.

23 D. When any committee's total budgeted funds have been expended; no further expenditures
24 will be authorized without CFA approval.

25 E. All benevolent, connectional, and pension funds shall be sent to the Center for Administra-
26 tive Services, P.O. Box 2456, Batesville, AR 72503, except for the following, which shall be
27 sent as designated:

- 28 1. UM Children's Home Christmas offering and special gifts to the UM Children's Home,
29 P.O. Box 56050, Little Rock, AR 72215.

30
31 Rev. Ken Pearson – President
32 Dr. Sandy Smith – Vice-President
33 Mr. David Hunt– Secretary
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Supplemental Budget Reports

	Actuals as of 4/30/2026	2025-2026 Budget	2026-2027 Budget	Pass Thru	% Change
A2B/Conference Ministries Office					
Salaries and benefits					
Assistant to the Bishop	\$ 66,897.00	\$ 120,276.00	\$ 120,276.00		0.00%
A2B Housing	\$ 50,000.00	\$ 20,000.00	\$ 20,000.00		0.00%
Director of Emerging Ministries and Connections	-	\$ 38,000.00	\$ 60,000.00		57.89%
Director of Connectional Ministries	\$ 100,230.00	\$ 120,276.00			-100.00%
Age Level Coordinator	\$ 21,250.00	\$ 30,000.00	\$ 30,000.00		0.00%
ACCYM Coordinator	\$ 5,833.00	\$ 7,000.00	\$ 7,000.00		0.00%
Director of Age Level Ministries	\$ 4,917.00				
Office Assistant	\$ 2,500.00				
200K More Reasons Project Coordinator	\$ 12,875.00	\$ 25,750.00			-100.00%
Publications Editor	\$ 3,750.00		\$ 15,000.00		
Employer Taxes	\$ 15,438.00	\$ 14,002.00	\$ 6,273.00		-55.20%
Employer 403b	\$ 13,904.00	\$ 11,417.00	\$ 13,828.00		21.12%
Contract Work		\$ 6,948.00	\$ 5,000.00		-28.04%
Travel	\$ 14,702.00	\$ 20,000.00	\$ 20,000.00		0.00%
Mass Media	\$ 22,601.00	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 5,000.00		0.00%
Office administrative expense	\$ 42,827.00	\$ 20,000.00	\$ 20,000.00		0.00%
Continuing education and dues	\$ 2,423.00	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 5,000.00		0.00%
Furniture and equipment	\$ 1,790.00	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 5,000.00		0.00%
Total Administrative	\$ 381,937.00	\$ 448,669.00	\$ 332,377.00		-25.92%
Advertising	\$ 218.00	\$ 15,000.00	\$ -		-100.00%
Digital AUM and other communications	\$ -	\$ 1,000.00	\$ -		-100.00%
CouRSe, net of funds from Foundation		\$ -	\$ -		
Total Programming	\$ 218.00	\$ 16,000.00	\$ -		-100.00%
Conference Ministries/A2B*	\$ 382,155.00	\$ 464,669.00	\$ 332,377.00	N	-28.47%

	Actuals as of 4/30/2026	2025-2026 Budget	2026-2027 Budget	Pass Thru	% Change
Administrative Committees and Boards					
Annual Conference	\$ 45,071.00	\$ 50,000.00	\$ 30,000.00		-40.00%
Conference Legal Resource Fund	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -		
Conference Secretary	\$ -	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 1,250.00		25.00%
Conference Trustees	\$ 13,330.00	\$ 15,000.00	\$ 15,000.00		0.00%
Council Finance & Administration	\$ 85.00	\$ 1,500.00	\$ 1,000.00		-33.33%
Financial Audit	\$ 20,400.00	\$ 25,000.00	\$ 25,000.00		0.00%
Property and Liability Insurance	\$ 59,153.00	\$ 60,000.00	\$ 60,000.00		0.00%
Safe Gatherings Background Screening	\$ 40,742.00	\$ 30,000.00	\$ 47,500.00		58.33%
Administrative Committees and Boards*	\$ 178,781.00	\$ 182,500.00	\$ 179,750.00	N	-1.51%

	Actuals as of 4/30/2026	2025-2026 Budget	2026-2027 Budget	Pass Thru	% Change
Board of Ordained Ministry Administration					
Ministry Assessment Co Pay	\$ (750.00)		\$ (1,500.00)		
Salaries, payroll taxes and benefits	\$ 48,496.00		\$ 69,594.00		
BOM Secretary	\$ 34,307.00		\$ 50,995.00		
Course of Studies Directors	\$ 6,365.00		\$ 7,638.00		
Residence in Ministry Directors	\$ 3,333.00		\$ 4,000.00		
Employer Payroll Taxes	\$ 2,627.00		\$ 3,901.00		
Employer 403b Costs	\$ 1,864.00		\$ 3,060.00		
Travel	\$ 26,183.00		\$ 22,000.00		
Non-Employee Benefits	\$ 2,913.00		\$ 3,000.00		
Office administrative expense	\$ 3,003.00		\$ 3,500.00		
Communications	\$ 1,366.00		\$ 500.00		
Boards and Committees	\$ 9,556.00		\$ 12,500.00		
Continuing Education	\$ 660.00				
Testing - Evaluation	\$ 22,359.00		\$ 16,500.00		
Equipment/Furnishings	\$ 2,162.00		\$ 1,000.00		
RIM			\$ -		
Order of Elders			\$ -		
Order of Deacons			\$ -		
FAMLP	\$ 461.00		\$ 600.00		
Ark COS expenses	\$ 3,316.00		\$ 5,000.00		
OTM expenses			\$ -		
Board of Ordained Ministry Administration*	\$ 119,725.00	\$ 95,000.00	\$ 132,694.00	N	39.68%

	4/30/2026	Budget	Budget	Thru	Change
Episcopal Office					
Salaries, payroll taxes and benefits					
Special Assistant for Ethnic Concerns	\$ 34,337.00	\$ 40,000.00	\$ 40,000.00		0.00%
Executive Assistant to the Bishop	\$ 60,000.00	\$ 72,000.00	\$ 72,000.00		0.00%
Employer Taxes	\$ 4,594.00	\$ 5,508.00	\$ 5,508.00		0.00%
Employer Benefits Costs	\$ 18,539.00	\$ 4,320.00	\$ 4,320.00		0.00%
Travel	\$ 19,129.00	\$ 10,000.00	\$ 15,000.00		50.00%
Office administrative expense	\$ 13,012.00	\$ 8,000.00	\$ 10,000.00		25.00%
Continuing education	\$ 1,722.00	\$ 6,500.00	\$ 1,000.00		-84.62%
Equipment/Furnishings	\$ 40.00	\$ 2,000.00	\$ 500.00		-75.00%
<i>GCEFA Episcopal Office Stipend</i>	\$ (65,000.00)	\$ (65,000.00)	\$ (65,000.00)		
Episcopal Office	\$ 86,373.00	\$ 108,328.00	\$ 83,328.00	N	-23.08%

	Actuals as of 4/30/2026	2025-2026 Budget	2026-2027 Budget	Pass Thru	% Change
Connectional Ministries					
Administrative					
Travel	\$ 1,804.00	\$ 2,500.00	\$ 2,500.00		0.00%
Administrative expenses		\$ 750.00	\$ 750.00		0.00%
Total Administrative	\$ 1,804.00	\$ 3,250.00	\$ 3,250.00		0.00%
Programming					
Committees	\$ 4,344.00	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 5,000.00		0.00%
Disaster Preparedness & Response	\$ 4,999.00	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 5,000.00		0.00%
Volunteers in Mission	\$ 2,222.00	\$ 3,000.00	\$ 3,000.00		0.00%
200,000 More Reasons (Delta Project)	\$ 58,310.00	\$ 50,000.00	\$ 73,872.50		47.75%
Culture of Call		-	-		
Commission on Archives and History					
Archives	\$ 14,237.00	\$ 15,000.00	\$ 16,632.00		10.88%
Historical Society	-	\$ 1,000.00			-100.00%
Commission on Archives and History		\$ 1,000.00			-100.00%
Total Commission on Archives and History	\$ 14,237.00	\$ 17,000.00	\$ 16,632.00		-2.16%
Age Level Ministries					
Council on children's ministries	\$ 2,583.00	\$ 14,000.00	\$ 14,000.00		0.00%
Council on youth ministries	\$ 7,091.00	\$ 45,000.00	\$ 45,000.00		0.00%
Council on young adult ministries	\$ 1,353.00	\$ 3,200.00	\$ 3,000.00		-6.25%
Youth worker network	\$ 11,450.00	\$ 10,000.00	\$ 12,000.00		20.00%
Age Level Discipleship	\$ 4,035.00	\$ 32,000.00	\$ 32,000.00		0.00%
Total Age Level Ministries	\$ 26,512.00	\$ 104,200.00	\$ 106,000.00		1.73%
Ethnic Ministries					
Ethnic and Language Concerns Committee	\$ 11,691.00	\$ 40,000.00	\$ 40,000.00		0.00%
Cultural Outreach	\$ 9,890.00	\$ 49,235.00	\$ 50,000.00		1.55%
COC Admin Assistant	\$ 8,974.00	\$ 10,765.00	\$ 10,000.00		-7.11%
Ethnic Initiatives		\$ -	\$ -		
District Parish YA Ministry	\$ 9,213.00	\$ 9,213.00	\$ 9,213.00		0.00%
Total Ethnic Ministries	\$ 39,768.00	\$ 109,213.00	\$ 109,213.00		0.00%
Global Ministries					
Delta Coordinator - 200,000 More Reasons	\$ -	\$ 15,000.00			-100.00%
YA Coordinator	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 15,000.00	\$ 15,000.00		0.00%
Covenant Relationship		\$ -	\$ -		
Canvas Community ministry	\$ 12,500.00	\$ 15,000.00	\$ 15,000.00		0.00%
Committee on volunteers in mission		\$ -	\$ -		
Mission U	\$ 15,600.00	\$ 15,600.00	\$ 15,600.00		0.00%
Mission Personnel Initiative & Itineration	\$ -	\$ 7,000.00	\$ -		-100.00%
General	\$ 1,007.00	\$ 900.00	\$ 1,000.00		11.11%
Total Global Ministries	\$ 34,107.00	\$ 68,500.00	\$ 46,600.00		-31.97%
Higher Education & Campus Ministries					
Campus ministry - Philander Smith University	\$ 63,067.00	\$ 68,800.00	\$ 68,800.00		0.00%
Campus ministry - Hendrix College	\$ 63,067.00	\$ 68,800.00	\$ 68,800.00		0.00%

	Actuals as of 4/30/2026	2025-2026 Budget	2026-2027 Budget	Pass Thru	% Change
Center for Administrative Services					
Conference Benefits Income	\$ (117,500.00)	\$ (240,000.00)	\$ (250,000.00)		
Salaries, payroll taxes and benefits	\$ 484,689.00	\$ 602,351.00	\$ 614,664.00		2.04%
Director of Administrative Services	\$ 100,230.00	\$ 120,276.00	\$ 120,276.00		0.00%
Assistant Treasurer	\$ 70,727.00	\$ 84,872.00	\$ 84,872.00		0.00%
Financial Controller	\$ 70,727.00	\$ 84,872.00	\$ 84,872.00		0.00%
Benefits Officer	\$ 70,727.00	\$ 84,872.00	\$ 84,872.00		0.00%
Communications Director	\$ 42,180.00	\$ 70,000.00	\$ 70,000.00		0.00%
Administrative Assistant	\$ 51,500.00	\$ 61,800.00	\$ 61,800.00		0.00%
VIM & Disaster Response	\$ 29,998.00	\$ 36,050.00	\$ 36,050.00		0.00%
Employer Payroll Taxes	\$ 27,737.00	\$ 33,407.00	\$ 41,520.00		24.29%
Employer 403b Costs	\$ 20,863.00	\$ 26,202.00	\$ 30,402.00		16.03%
Travel	\$ 10,713.00	\$ 10,000.00	\$ 10,000.00		0.00%
Office administrative expense	\$ 79,651.00	\$ 50,000.00	\$ 70,000.00		40.00%
Computer software and hardware	\$ 8,568.00	\$ 35,000.00	\$ 20,000.00		-42.86%
Conference website and Social Media	\$ 9,751.00	\$ 10,000.00	\$ 15,000.00		50.00%
Continuing education	\$ 500.00	\$ 2,000.00	\$ 2,000.00		0.00%
Mission Connect	\$ 24,212.00	\$ 23,000.00	\$ 24,000.00		4.35%
Rent	\$ 70,125.00	\$ 78,819.00	\$ 79,608.00		1.00%
Total Expenses	\$ 688,209.00	\$ 811,170.00	\$ 835,272.00		2.97%
Center for Administrative Services Net Total	\$ 570,709.00	\$ 571,170.00	\$ 585,272.00	N	2.47%

	Actuals as of 4/30/2026	2025-2026 Budget	2026-2027 Budget	Pass Thru	% Change
Fund #1 Clergy and Retiree Benefits (Pension and Health Benefits Committee)					
Pension & Benefits					
Administration	\$ 9,892.00	\$ 30,000.00	\$ 10,000.00	N	-66.67%
Conference Staff Pension (move to centers)				N	
Disability Health Care	\$ 44,518.00	\$ 35,000.00	\$ 50,000.00	N	42.86%
Methodist Health EAP	\$ 16,281.00	\$ 25,000.00	\$ 25,000.00	N	0.00%
Retiree Health Care	\$ 514,679.00	\$ 750,000.00	\$ 750,000.00	N	0.00%
Virgin Pulse	\$ 109,799.00	\$ 175,000.00	\$ 175,000.00	N	0.00%
<i>Funding From Reserves</i>	<i>\$ (640,759.00)</i>	<i>\$ (950,000.00)</i>	<i>\$ (950,000.00)</i>		
Subtotal Clergy and Retiree Benefits	\$ 54,410.00	\$ 65,000.00	\$ 60,000.00		-7.69%
Fund #2 General Apportionments (Determined by General Conference)					
World Service	\$ 373,774.00	\$ 810,100.00	\$ 810,100.00	Y	0.00%
Ministerial Education	\$ 77,355.00	\$ 210,158.00	\$ 210,158.00	Y	0.00%
Ministerial Scholarships	\$ 64,697.00	\$ 70,053.00	\$ 70,053.00	Y	0.00%
Black College	\$ 45,119.00	\$ 111,774.00	\$ 111,774.00	Y	0.00%
Africa University Fund	\$ 10,097.00	\$ 25,014.00	\$ 25,014.00	Y	0.00%
Episcopal Fund	\$ 161,188.00	\$ 399,311.00	\$ 399,311.00	Y	0.00%
General Administration	\$ 50,394.00	\$ 136,912.00	\$ 136,912.00	Y	0.00%
Interdenominational Cooperation	\$ 4,268.00	\$ 11,596.00	\$ 11,596.00	Y	0.00%
Disaffiliation reduction					
Subtotal General Apportionments	\$ 786,892.00	\$ 1,774,918.00	\$ 1,774,918.00		0.00%
Fund #3 Jurisdictional Apportionments (Determined by Jurisdictional Conference)					
Jurisdictional Administration	\$ 18,389.00	\$ 32,094.00	\$ 32,094.00	Y	0.00%
Lydia Patterson Institute	\$ 26,469.00	\$ 46,656.00	\$ 46,656.00	Y	0.00%
Reserves	\$ -			Y	
Disaffiliation reduction					
Subtotal Jurisdictional Apportionments	\$ 44,858.00	\$ 78,750.00	\$ 78,750.00		0.00%
Fund #4 Districts (CFA)					
District Superintendents	\$ 386,569.00	\$ 481,104.00	\$ 481,104.00	N	0.00%
DS Travel	\$ 56,566.00	\$ 60,000.00	\$ 55,000.00	N	-8.33%
DS Pension	\$ 63,263.00	\$ 81,374.00	\$ 70,000.00	N	-13.98%
Cabinet Expenses	\$ 15,865.00		\$ 15,000.00	N	
Onboarding Expenses	\$ 14,200.00		\$ 10,000.00	N	
New Places for New People	\$ 17,250.00	\$ 100,000.00	\$ 75,000.00	N	-25.00%
District Offices	\$ 447,117.00	\$ 548,852.00	\$ 500,442.70	N	-8.82%
Subtotal District Apportionments	\$ 1,000,830.00	\$ 1,271,330.00	\$ 1,206,546.70		-5.10%
Fund #5 Conference Administration (CFA)					
Administrative Committees and Boards*	\$ 178,781.00	\$ 182,500.00	\$ 179,750.00	N	-1.51%
Board of Ordained Ministry Administration*	\$ 119,725.00	\$ 95,000.00	\$ 132,694.00	N	39.68%
Center for Administrative Services Net Total	\$ 570,709.00	\$ 571,170.00	\$ 585,272.00	N	2.47%
Episcopal Discretionary	\$ 833.00	\$ 10,000.00	\$ 10,000.00	N	0.00%
Episcopal Housing	\$ 22,709.00	\$ 20,000.00	\$ 20,000.00	N	0.00%
Episcopal Office	\$ 86,373.00	\$ 108,328.00	\$ 83,328.00	N	-23.08%
Pastors Moving Expense	\$ 77,221.00	\$ 80,000.00	\$ 80,000.00	N	0.00%
Banking Interest & Transaction Fees	\$ (109,817.00)	\$ 50,000.00	\$ 25,000.00	N	-50.00%
Subtotal Conference Administration	\$ 946,534.00	\$ 1,091,998.00	\$ 1,116,044.00		2.20%
Fund #6 Resourcing Local Congregations (Cabinet)					
Conference Ministries/A2B*	\$ 382,155.00	\$ 464,669.00	\$ 332,377.00	N	-28.47%
Connectional Ministries*	\$ 882,549.00	\$ 1,109,163.00	\$ 1,125,067.50	N	1.43%
Equitable Compensation	\$ 8,971.00	\$ 50,000.00	\$ 50,000.00	N	0.00%
General & Juris. Conference Delegate Exp	\$ -	\$ 10,000.00	\$ 7,500.00	N	-25.00%
Stabilization	\$ -	\$ 50,000.00	\$ 40,000.00	N	-20.00%
Subtotal Resourcing Local Congregations	\$ 1,273,675.00	\$ 1,683,832.00	\$ 1,554,944.50		-7.65%
Total Conference Budget	\$ 4,107,199.00	\$ 5,965,828.00	\$ 5,791,203.20		-0.58%

1 **BOARD OF ORDAINED MINISTRY**
2 **2025 ARKANSAS CONFERENCE POLICY STATEMENT**
3 **7/1/2025**

4
5 **SECTION I: BOARD OPERATION**

- 6 A. The Arkansas Conference Board of Ordained Ministry hereafter referred to as the Board or
7 the BOM, is governed by the current Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church ¶
8 635.
- 9 B. All communication to the BOM should be sent to BOM Office, 800 Daisy Bates Drive, Little
10 Rock, AR 72202 or bom@arumc.org
- 11 C. The Board will be organized in three classes with the assumption each person will serve 1
12 quadrennium but no more than 3 consecutive terms.
- 13 D. Board officers are Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, and Executive Registrar. The Executive
14 Committee consists of the Board Officers and Chair of the Order of Elders, Chair of the
15 Order of Deacons, Chair of the Fellowship of Associate Members and Local Pastors, Chair
16 of the Conference Relations Committee, Chair of Ministerial Assessment, Chair of
17 Vocation and Discernment, and a Cabinet representative. The Chairperson shall appoint
18 other officers and sub-committees as needed.
- 19 E. The Board shall meet at least once in the fall and twice in the spring, and as convened by
20 the Chairperson.
- 21 F. The district committees on ordained ministry (dCOM) are amenable to the annual
22 conference through the BOM and follow ¶ 666. District administrative staff may serve as
23 administrators of the dCOM and may attend meetings of the dCOM in an administrative
24 capacity. The files of the dCOM shall be stored in the district office, separate from the
25 supervisory files. District administrative staff, as custodians of records, shall not serve as
26 members of dCOM or BOM.
- 27 G. The Board has the right to ask for a new Ministerial Assessment package at any time and
28 shall ask for a new assessment if more than six years has passed and the candidate
29 continues.
- 30 H. The BOM shall have guidelines for plagiarism and the use of artificial intelligence in BOM/
31 dCOM assignments
- 32 I. The Board shall review its policy statement annually, revising it as needed and presenting it
33 to the Annual Conference for approval.

34
35 **SECTION II: CANDIDACY, ¶ 310**

- 36 A. The Inquiring Candidate first contacts the pastor of the local church or other authorized
37 ministry setting, to share the ministry call.
- 38 B. Candidates shall utilize the Candidacy Checklist which outlines the complete candidacy
39 process found at <https://arumc.org/our-resources/forms-and-documents/>
- 40 C. Candidates must attend Orientation to Ministry ¶ 312
- 41 D. Candidates are encouraged to pursue undergraduate education and to pursue seminary
42 education in one of the United Methodist seminaries.

43
44 **SECTION III. THE DECLARED CANDIDATE, ¶ 310.2**

- 45 A. When approved by the Charge conference, the candidate shall send \$50 for the Ministerial
46 assessment packet to the District Superintendent's Office or pay online.
- 47 B. If the dCOM approves by three-fourths majority written ballot, the dCOM registrar submits
48 Form AR020 to the Board of Ordained Ministry Office and a copy to the candidate.
- 49 C. Persons appointed as local pastors are clergy members of the Annual Conference (¶ 315).
50 They are no longer listed in the Business of the Annual Conference as certified candidates

(¶ 602.1), except the first year they are certified. See further the Local Pastor ¶ 315-320 and below.

SECTION IV: THE LOCAL PASTOR ¶ 315-320

- A. Upon completion of the candidacy process, and receiving dCOM approval as a certified candidate, the District Superintendent shall recommend the candidate for Local Pastor License School (LPLS). Candidates shall register, attend, and successfully complete LPLS or one-third of their work for a Master of Divinity degree at a University Senate-approved theological school in order to be eligible for an appointment (¶315.2a).
- B. Once appointed, the Bishop shall issue a license. The local pastor shall register the license at the county courthouse where appointed for the purpose of performing marriage ceremonies in the State of Arkansas, and the pastor shall submit the county book and page number to the district office.
- C. Local Pastors not attending a University Senate-approved seminary shall enroll in the Basic Five-Year Course of Study (COS) and successfully complete per ¶ 319. Course of Study may be completed 100% online.
- D. A Local Pastor who has made satisfactory progress in the COS may be recognized as a retired Local Pastor. ¶ 320.5.b
- E. Appointed Retired Local Pastors shall follow all the guidelines of a non-retired appointed Local Pastor, such as continuing COS, meeting annually with the dCOM, completing UM History, Polity, and Doctrine, and be assigned a mentor as per ¶320.
- F. Course of Study registrations shall be approved and signed by the Conference Local Pastor Registrar and must be postmarked no less than 14 days prior to the registration deadline printed on the registration form.
- G. The local pastor may enroll as a student in a University Senate-approved seminary program to meet educational requirements. The local pastor will be expected to complete their seminary education within the timeframes defined in ¶ 318. When enrolled in seminary, the local pastor is eligible to apply for financial aid from MEF funds. See Financial Aid Section.
- H. **Local pastors will be assigned a clergy mentor by the district committee on ordained ministry. Local Pastor Mentors shall be recommended by the cabinet, selected, trained and held accountable by the Board of Ordained Ministry**~~All Local Pastors who have not completed their educational requirements will be assigned to a mentoring group led by clergy mentors selected by the BOM. Groups are not organized by district but by affinity cohorts.~~ First-year local pastors who have completed LPLS and are appointed shall meet as a cohort **for their first two years**. These clergy mentors will submit annual reports (AR080) for those local pastors who have not completed COS.
- I. Local Pastor Mentoring group work and the dCOM interview is based on the 4-Year Local Pastor and the Other Faith Interview program, which cycles each year through a focus on Word, Sacrament, Order, and Service.
- J. Local pastors shall meet annually with the dCOM to evaluate educational progress and ministerial performance, and action is taken on renewal of the License for Pastoral Ministry. The local pastor shall submit annually a school transcript (from college, seminary, or COS), filed with the dCOM Registrar prior to the local pastor's annual dCOM interview.
- K. Upon completing the Five-Year Basic Course of Study, and completing courses in UM History, Polity, and Doctrine, the local pastor may be eligible to apply for Associate Membership. See ¶322.
- L. United Methodist History, Polity, and Doctrine may be taken at any time during the educational process, but must be completed within 2 years of COS completion. Courses must be taken at an Advanced Course of Study School, University Senate-approved seminary, or online at GBHEM. Taking UM Doctrine, Polity, and History, through a University

- 1 Senate-approved seminary or GBHEM-approved program can be applied as credit for COS
2 224 and 422
- 3 M. Local pastors shall have completed courses in UM History, Polity, and Doctrine within two
4 years of COS completion. Local pastors not continuing to Advanced COS or seminary shall
5 submit a plan for continuing education to the District Superintendent and dCOM annually.
- 6 N. Local Pastor Transfers from another Conference to Arkansas Conference: Local Pastors
7 in good standing do not transfer from Conference to Conference but surrender the license
8 in their Conference and apply to the Arkansas Conference to have their candidacy status
9 or studies accepted by a dCOM in the Arkansas Conference (§ 312.4). Prior to interviewing
10 with the dCOM for licensing, the pastor shall complete the Arkansas Cabinet Vetting
11 Process and requirements for dCOM interview. The Local Pastor shall continue Course of
12 Study per § 318 and shall have completed UM History, Polity, and Doctrine within two years
13 of COS completion.
- 14 O. Only Local Pastors who have completed COS or made progress in completing COS shall be
15 designated Retired Local Pastors. § 320.5

16
17 **SECTION V: ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP, § 321-322**

- 18 A. Applicants shall meet the requirements outlined in § 322.
- 19 B. The applicant for associate membership shall consult the District Superintendent, complete
20 and submit, Form AR105, Application for Clergy Relationship to the Annual Conference
21 <https://arumc.wufoo.com/forms/r13729he00iy22q/> to the District Superintendent and the
22 BOM Office by July 15.
- 23 C. The dCOM shall interview the applicant as a candidate for associate membership,
24 considering educational and documentary requirements, pastoral experience and
25 effectiveness, and form a recommendation to the Conference Board. The dCOM shall send
26 to the BOM Office by November 1, the applicant's Form AR105, the District Superintendent's
27 letter of recommendation, and the Action Report. These documents are also filed with the
28 District Registrar.
- 29 D. The Conference Registrar shall inform the applicant by December 1 about the written as
30 signments to be prepared in advance of the BOM interview, the deadline for those assign
31 ments, and the date and time for appearing before the BOM (normally a BOM Meeting in
32 late February or early March).
- 33 E. The BOM shall interview the applicant. If favorably approved, the recommendation is
34 presented to the Clergy Session of the Annual Conference.
- 35 F. Associate members desiring to change relationship to an ordination track as a provisional
36 elder or deacon must first obtain approval from the BOM before taking other steps in the
37 application process.

38
39 **SECTION VI: PROVISIONAL MEMBERSHIP § 324**

- 40 A. Applicants must complete all educational requirements prior to election to provisional
41 membership.
- 42 B. All seminary courses required by the Discipline and conference rules require a "C" or better
43 grade.
- 44 C. Candidates who begin their seminary studies after July 1, 2025 are required to complete a
45 course in preaching as part of their theological education (§ 324.4).
- 46 D. Associate members and local pastors using the advanced course of study alternate pathway
47 may apply for provisional membership as elders (§ 324.4.A.2).
- 48 E. Applications for provisional membership require the completion of Form 105, Application for
49 Clergy Relationship, and the preliminary answers to Questions § 324.7a-p by the candidate
50 sent to the dCOM registrar by July 15.

- F. Following an interview with the dCOM, their recommendation, reported on Form AR020, District Committee Action Report Form, is sent to the BOM Office. The original Action Report and the District Superintendent's (DS) letter of recommendation are placed in the candidate's file. The completed dCOM file is delivered by the District office to the BOM Office by November 1.
- G. The Conference Registrar corresponds with the candidate by December 1, regarding required written work, reference letters and assignments to be prepared and submitted by January 31 to the BOM Office.
- H. The BOM interviews the candidate. Out-of-state seminary students may receive up to 50% of actual cost of transportation when attending Board interviews. If approved, the BOM recommendation for provisional membership is presented to the Clergy Session of the Annual Conference.
- I. Provisional members shall demonstrate effective ministry for a minimum of two consecutive conference years in the same appointment. All provisional residents shall participate in the conference Residency in Ministry (RIM) program. Their service will be evaluated by the BOM and the DS. Arrangements for supervision and residency will be made for provisional members serving outside the Arkansas conference. During the second year of the RIM program, the provisional member may apply for ordination and membership in full connection.
- J. To make an application for Full Connection, the Provisional member shall complete and submit Form AR105, Application for Clergy Relationship, <https://arumc.wufoo.com/forms/r13729he00iy22q/> to the BOM Office by October 1. The Cabinet shall provide a recommendation letter concerning a provisional member's application for Full Connection to the BOM Office by November 1.

SECTION VII: APPOINTMENTS FROM OUTSIDE THE ARKANSAS CONFERENCE AND TRANSFERS ¶ 346-347

- A. All ministers requesting Conference to Conference transfer (¶ 347.1) shall complete the Arkansas Conference Cabinet Vetting Process. Ordained clergy, associate members, or provisional members from other annual conferences of the UMC, or other Methodist denominations, seeking to serve in the ARUMC while retaining their home conference membership should contact a district superintendent, complete the Arkansas Conference Cabinet Vetting Process, and obtain the consent of the bishops involved (¶ 346.1.) If the ordained clergy, associate members, or provisional members from other annual conferences of the UMC, or other Methodist denominations, seek to transfer their clergy membership into the ARUMC, they shall first serve under appointment in the Arkansas Conference for a minimum of two years before applying for a transfer of conference membership into the ARUMC. A recommendation by the executive committee of the Board of Ordained Ministry and approval by the clergy session shall take place prior to the transfer of the member to the ARUMC (¶ 347.1)
- B. All ministers requesting to serve while retaining other faith credentials (¶ 346.2 and 347.3) or requesting to serve a UM church and start the process of transferring as a UM pastor (¶ 347.3.b and ¶347.2) shall complete the Arkansas Conference Cabinet Vetting Process and the dCOM interview requirements.
- C. All ministers approved with other faith credentials shall complete the Arkansas Licensing School before being appointed. Exceptions may be granted for other Methodist denominations with a written request to the Executive BOM from the DS.
- D. Those appointed while retaining other faith credentials are required to complete/continue the Basic Course of Study unless they have already completed an MDiv from an accredited Theological Seminary with coursework equivalent to COS. Following a BOM

1 assessment of their academic record, UMC educational requirements may be deemed
2 fulfilled in part or in whole those appointed while retaining other faith credentials are
3 required to take UM History, Polity, and Doctrine within 2 years of the conference year of
4 appointment unless those classes were completed through their MDiv from an Accredited
5 Theological Seminary.

- 6 E. Those appointed while retaining other faith credentials are required to take UM History,
7 Polity and Doctrine through ACOS or a University Senate-approved seminary within 2 years
8 of the conference year of appointment unless those classes were completed through their
9 MDiv from an University Senate-approved Theological Seminary.
- 10 F. Those appointed while retaining other faith credentials are required to meet annually with
11 the dCOM to evaluate educational progress and ministerial performance.
- 12 G. Those appointed while retaining other faith credentials are required to supply a letter of
13 current good standing in their denomination by January 31 of each year.
- 14 H. Ministers seeking transfer into United Methodist ministry from another denomination must
15 retain a status of good standing in their home denomination until the transfer is complete
16 and, therefore, shall not join a local United Methodist church (§ 347.2). Ordained clergy
17 seeking admission or restoration into the ARUMC on credentials from another denomination
18 who have previously withdrawn from UMC conference membership shall follow the process
19 in § 347.4-5.
- 20 I. Ordained or licensed clergy from other non-Methodist denominations whose credentials
21 have been approved shall serve under appointment for a minimum of two years before
22 applying for transfer into provisional membership, if eligible. (§ 347.3b)
- 23 J. Those appointed who still retain credentials with other Christian denominations shall
24 declare to the dCOM their intentions to transfer credentials to the United Methodist Church
25 within two years of appointment. Failure to start the transfer process after 2 years could
26 result in not being reappointed. This does not apply to those who hold credentials in the
27 ELCA, African Methodist Episcopal Church, the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church,
28 the African Union Methodist Protestant Church, the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church
29 and the Union American Methodist Episcopal Church, with which the UMC shares full
30 communion rights.
- 31 K. Ordained clergy from other Christian denominations shall apply to the dCOM using
32 SECTION VI: PROVISIONAL MEMBERSHIP § 324, shall serve as provisional members for at
33 least two years, participating in the Residency in Ministry program, and complete all the
34 requirements of §335, including United Methodist history, doctrine, and polity, along with the
35 other BOD-required courses, before being admitted into full conference membership.

36 37 **SECTION VIII: FINANCIAL AID**

- 38 A. Local Pastor Licensing School: The cost to Arkansas students attending the Arkansas Local
39 Pastor License School (LPLS) is \$750. Some funds may be available for students attending
40 other schools outside of our conference boundaries. Approval for these funds must come
41 from the Dean of the Arkansas Conference Local Pastor License School prior to class
42 participation.
- 43 B. Course of Study: Financial Assistance, based on need and the availability of funds, will be
44 50% of tuition, normal fees, room and board for full- or part-time students in the basic
45 Course of Study; 100% reimbursement of tuition for courses taken in the Arkansas Extension
46 Course of Study School available for part-time local pastors and 50% reimbursement of
47 tuition for those who successfully complete correspondence courses (not to exceed 4
48 courses). The Board does not pay for repeated courses.
- 49 C. Seminary Financial Aid: All certified candidates attending University Senate-approved
50 seminaries are eligible for MEF funds. Loans will not exceed 50% of tuition per semester

- unless there is a surplus in the budget year. The seminarian registrar shall have the discretion to disburse any surplus funds at an equal percentage for all semester applicants not to exceed loan limits. Students attending United Methodist seminaries can receive a maximum of \$10,000 per budget year in loans. Students at other University Senate-approved seminaries can receive a maximum of \$7,000 per budget year in loans. 1
- D. Students will not receive funds to repeat a failed, dropped, or incomplete course. 2
- E. Applicants will sign a promissory note. Loans will be forgiven for service at the rate of one year of full-time service for two semesters of aid. In other words, a student who borrows from the fund for six semesters would complete the service obligation by three years of full-time service under Episcopal appointment. Loans to candidates discontinued by dCOM-initiated action shall be forgiven. 3
- F. The application is at <https://arumc.wufoo.com/forms/x13mnp6818kiscx/> 4
- G. Applications and all supporting documentation must be received by August 10 for the fall semester, January 10 for the spring/winter (including January term) semester and June 10 for the summer semester. Applications are not complete without an official transcript from the student's seminary. Incomplete applications will not be processed. The Secretary of the BOM will process all applications. 5
- H. Reimbursement for UM History, Polity, and Doctrine courses will be paid at 50% of the tuition cost in the year the course was taken. 6
- I. Persons who have completed the basic course of study may wish to become provisional members by the alternate route (see ¶ 324.4.A.2 or ¶ 324.4.B.3). They must complete the BOD-specified basic graduate theological studies (¶ 324.4). Up to 50% of tuition will be provided per seminary financial aid. 7
- J. Deacon candidates on the professional certification route toward ordination (see ¶ 324.4.B) will also receive up to 50% of tuition per seminary financial aid. 8

SECTION IX: CONTINUING EDUCATION ¶ 351 9

- A. All clergy under full-time appointment must complete at least one (1) continuing education unit (ten hours of instruction) per year. These CEUs may be fulfilled by CEUs, CMEs, CCEs, or other approved programs. Persons in resident provisional status or those enrolled in Course of Study are exempt from this requirement. 10
- B. Clergy shall annually report CEUs to their District Superintendent and to the BOM through the BOM Office. 11
- C. All clergy under full-time appointment with charge conference compensation, on the Pastor's Compensation form, of less than \$58,920 may receive reimbursement from the BOM of up to \$200 annually as funds are available. This amount shall include only projected expenses for tuition, books, fees, room, and board. Travel cannot be included as a projected expense. 12
- D. Financial aid is not available for Minister's Week at any seminary. 13
- E. The General Board of Higher Education and Ministry Guidelines for granting Continuing Education Units (CEUs) from The Society for the Advancement of Continuing Education for Ministry (SACEM) shall be used by groups seeking to have events certified by the Conference Continuing Education Chairperson. (See GBHEM's website, <https://www.gbhem.org/clergy/clergy-lifelong-learning/guidelines-for-continuing-education/>) 14
- F. Professional Certification Studies: Applications may be made for up to \$200/year as funds are available to help pay for specialized certification courses. This amount shall include only projected expenses for tuition, books, fees, room, and board. Travel cannot be included as a projected expense. 15
- G. Applications for granting continuing education credit for an event or reimbursement for continuing education shall be sent to the Chair of Continuing Education, BOM Office. 16

1 H. Sabbatical Leave: All Issues concerning Sabbatical leave will follow the guidelines of ¶ 351,
2 with the addition of those requesting Sabbatical will include their plan with start and end
3 dates.

4
5 **SECTION X: CHANGES OF CONFERENCE RELATIONSHIP ¶ 353-362**

- 6 A. The Conference Relations Committee (CRC) shall consist of at least 3 persons to hear
7 requests as listed in 635.1 (d)
- 8 B. Voluntary Leave (Personal/Family) Requests follow ¶354. Request for change of relationship
9 to Voluntary Leave of Absence must be made at least ninety (90) days prior to Annual
10 Conference by completing Form AR030 documenting specific reasons for the request. A
11 copy of the Form shall be placed in the person's file.
- 12 C. Maternity/Paternity leave requests follow ¶ 356.
- 13 D. All clergy on Leave of Absence for a total of five or more years are required to meet with
14 the CRC annually to review the circumstances that requires remaining on Leave of Absence.
- 15 E. While on Voluntary Leave of Absence - Personal/Family, the person shall report annually
16 her/his progress toward resolution/alleviation of the stated reasons for requesting Leave of
17 Absence-Personal/Family. When an end to Leave of Absence- Personal/Family is requested,
18 it shall be by written request at least six (6) months prior to Annual Conference. The CRC
19 shall review the circumstances surrounding the granting of Leave of Absence – Personal/
20 Family for the purpose of determining whether those circumstances have been alleviated or
21 resolved.
- 22 F. Request for change of relationship to Medical Leave (¶ 357)
- 23 1. The Conference Benefits Officer will provide the person requesting a change in
24 Conference relationship to Medical Leave with the appropriate application packet.
- 25 2. The Conference Benefits Officer will notify the Joint Committee on Clergy Medical
26 leave for a reasonable and appropriate investigation and recommendation to the
27 Cabinet, the Conference Board of Pension and Health Benefits and the BOM.
- 28 G. Withdrawal (¶361)
- 29 1) Withdrawal to unite with another denomination follows ¶361.1 and ¶ 361.4
- 30 2) Withdrawal from the ordained ministerial office or associate membership follows ¶
31 361.2 and ¶ 361.4.
- 32 3) Withdrawal under Complaints or Charges follows ¶361.3 and ¶361.4.
- 33 H. Readmission to Conference Relationship (¶ 365, 366, 367, 368, 369)
- 34 1) All requests for readmission to Conference Membership with the Arkansas Annual
35 Conference shall be made in writing and presented to the BOM at least one hundred
36 twenty (120) days prior to the beginning of the session of the Annual Conference
37 unless stated otherwise by the *Book of Discipline*.
- 38 2) The BOM shall review all files and statements kept by the BOM Office and Registrars.
- 39 3) All persons requesting readmission to Conference Membership are required to
40 complete the "Ministry Assessment Packet" (MAS) in Section III A. The full cost of the
41 MAS shall be borne by the person seeking readmission.
- 42 4) All persons requesting readmission to Conference Membership are required to meet
43 the requirements as outlined in the *Book of Discipline* appropriate to the reason for
44 the person's original withdrawal, location, leaving or discontinuance.
- 45 5) Associate Members or clergy members in full connection requesting readmission
46 to Conference Membership (¶ 366-368) shall serve under appointment as a Local
47 Pastor – demonstrating effective ministry for a minimum of two consecutive
48 Conference years in the same appointment.
- 49 6) Former Deacons requesting readmission to Conference Membership shall serve
50 under appointment in an appropriate ministry setting - demonstrating effective

- ministry for a minimum of two consecutive Conference years in the same appointment.
- 7) During the second year of demonstrating effective ministry in the same appointment, if the applicant has met all Disciplinary and Conference requirements, the former Conference member may apply for Conference Membership and/or credentials previously held.

SECTION XI: CLERGY COVENANT FUND

- A. The Clergy Covenant Fund provides financial assistance to clergy persons and their families. Financial assistance of \$2500 is available to the deceased clergy's family. Up to \$1250 is available to clergy family for financial needs which arise from personal or family crises. The District Superintendent shall make a request for these funds to the Chair of the BOM; the BOM Executive Committee shall consider all requests for approval.
- B. Funds will be provided by means of an offering received during the Clergy Session of the Annual Conference. Clergy will also be given an opportunity each November to make a special Thanksgiving contribution to the Fund. Memorials and special gifts may be made to the Fund at any time. Gifts may be sent any time to: United Methodist Foundation for Arkansas, Clergy Covenant Fund, 601 Wellington Village Rd, Little Rock, AR 72211.

Respectfully Submitted,
Mark Norman, Chair
Nancy Meredith, Secretary

Policy Against Misconduct of a Sexual Nature The Arkansas Conference of the United Methodist Church

Section I - Introductory Statements of General Application

The Arkansas Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church, Inc. (referenced herein as "this Conference") affirms section 3351 of *The Book of Resolutions of the United Methodist Church, 2020/2024* (referenced herein as *The Book of Resolutions*, which states that:

Sexual misconduct in church and ministry settings impedes the mission of Jesus Christ. Ministerial leaders have the responsibility not only to avoid actions and words that hurt others, but also to protect the vulnerable against actions or words that cause harm... In the safety and sanctity of the church's settings, we as church leaders, both clergy and lay, paid and volunteer, must be held to the highest standard of conduct as we lead, provide guidance and support, and work with children, youth, and adults in ministry settings. Sexual misconduct in any form is a violation of the membership and ordination vows we take as laity and clergy in The United Methodist Church.

This Conference affirms that all human beings are created in the image of God, and thus have been made equal in Christ. As the promise of Galatians 3:26-29 states, *all are one in Christ*. Therefore, this Conference supports equity among all persons, regardless of ethnicity, socioeconomic status, or gender. We affirm the statement in *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church, 2020/2024* (referenced herein as *The Book of Discipline*) paragraph 162.M, which states, "Recognizing the inherent worth and dignity of all people, we condemn sexual harassment, abuse, and assault and consider them grave violations of the established behavioral norms within the church as well as our larger society."

1 **Theological Foundation**

2 All persons are created by God in God’s image (Genesis 1:26-27) and are of equal value in Christ.
3 Jesus was sent into the world so that all persons may experience reconciliation and whole
4 relationships with God and each other (2 Corinthians 5:18-19). We are called to live in a right
5 relationship with God, with one another, and with ourselves. This calling to live in the fullness of our
6 God-created humanity requires that we sustain a vital relationship with God, which should overflow
7 into protecting one another and treating each other with dignity and respect. *The Book of*
8 *Discipline* states: “We affirm human sexuality as a sacred gift and acknowledge that sexual
9 intimacy contributes to fostering the emotional, spiritual, and physical well-being of individuals and
10 to nurturing healthy sexual relationships that are grounded in love, care, and respect.”

11
12 **Definitions¹**

13 *Sexual harassment* includes unwelcome and inappropriate sexual remarks, gender-based remarks,
14 or physical advances made in workplaces, professional settings, or social situations.

15
16 *Sexual abuse or molestation* entails unwanted sexual activity perpetrated through the use of force
17 or threats, or by taking advantage of those who are unable to give consent or those in vulnerable
18 situations with unequal power.

19
20 *Sexual assault* includes all threats and forms of forcible sexual contact or bodily harm, including
21 rape.

22
23 *Sexual misconduct* is a form of misconduct of a sexual nature that uses sexualized verbal
24 comments or visuals, unwelcome touching and advances, use of sexualized materials including
25 pornography, stalking, or misuse of the pastoral or ministerial position using sexualized conduct to
26 take advantage of the vulnerability of another.

27
28 Sexual misconduct, sexual harassment, and sexual abuse are listed as chargeable offenses within
29 the meaning of ¶ 2702 of *The Book of Discipline*.

30
31 **Section II - Policy Related to Misconduct by Clergy or Laity Serving in a Ministerial Role of**
32 **Leadership**

33
34 **Statement of Purpose**

35 This Conference’s clergy members and persons serving in a ministerial role of
36 leadership (pastor, educator, counselor, youth leader or other position of leadership²) are in a
37 position of sacred trust, responsibility, and power that affords opportunities for unique
38 relationships of grace, care, and discipleship. Sexual abuse, sexual harassment, or sexual
39 misconduct by any person serving in a ministerial role of leadership violates this trust and
40 constitutes an abuse of the clergy’s or ministry leader’s power and position. This Conference
41 prohibits any sexual abuse, sexual harassment, and sexual misconduct which is repugnant for
42 ministers of the gospel. This section of the policy provides a method for reporting any sexual
43 abuse, sexual harassment, or sexual misconduct alleged to have been committed by a clergy
44 member or ministry leader of this Conference, in alignment with *The Book of Discipline’s*
45 procedures for investigating, handling, and resolving complaints of sexual abuse, sexual
46 harassment, and sexual misconduct against or involving a clergy member.

47
48 _____
49 ¹*The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church, 2020/2024*, ¶162.M; Do No More Harm, The General Commission on the
50 Status and Role of Women of the United Methodist Church (Link to "Do No More Harm" publication).

We particularly deplore the sexual exploitation of children, youth, and vulnerable adults and recognize that any sexual abuse is especially heinous and damaging when it occurs in the context of the church. We urge clergy, congregations, and local church boards of trustees to adopt clear policies and practices to prevent and address instances of sexual harassment. These policies and practices should include reference to required training for all clergy, church staff and persons serving in a role of ministerial leadership (e.g., Safe Gatherings or another Conference-approved program), printed guidelines on what constitutes sexual harassment, a safe and confidential reporting method, and a clear process for resolving grievance complaints. Even unsubstantiated reports of assault or abuse must be investigated immediately. Furthermore, we urge pastors and congregations to comply fully with all applicable legal statutes governing such matters and to be aware of their legal obligations as mandated reporters.

Policy Statement

Sexual harassment, gender harassment, sexual abuse, and sexual misconduct within the life of the Church interfere with its moral mission. This Conference prohibits and will not tolerate behaviors that are sinful, demeaning, abusive, or wrong. This Conference commits itself to the fair and expedient investigation of any complaint of sexual harassment, gender harassment, sexual abuse, or sexual misconduct by persons having a position within the Conference to include, but which is not limited to, elders, deacons, licensed local pastors, lay supply, certified lay ministers, and Conference, District, and local church leadership and staff, and will act in accordance with *The Book of Discipline* and applicable law. In addition, it is this Conference’s intent to create an atmosphere of hospitality for all persons that is free from this type of sinful conduct and encourages respect, equality, and kinship in Christ.

Procedure for Reporting Complaints

To create this atmosphere of hospitality for all persons, this Conference adopts the following procedure for the reporting of sexual misconduct.

This Conference shall comply with applicable law regarding mandatory reporting of any purported sexual harassment, sexual abuse, or sexual misconduct by any clergy.

In addition, any conduct violating the policy statement listed above must be reported immediately to the Presiding Bishop or any District Superintendent of this Conference. A District Superintendent who receives a report of sexual harassment, gender harassment, sexual abuse, or sexual misconduct shall immediately provide a copy of that report to the Presiding Bishop.

All staff, leaders, and volunteers are required to immediately report their awareness or knowledge of any sexual harassment, gender harassment, sexual abuse, or sexual misconduct to the Presiding Bishop or any District Superintendent of this Conference.

Section III - Sexual and Gender Harassment of Clergy by Laypersons

This policy is in response to the mandate found in paragraph 605.9 of *The Book of Discipline*, which states, “The annual conference shall adopt a comprehensive policy for handling sexual and gender harassment of clergy when laypersons are the perpetrators.”

²See *The United Methodist Book of Resolutions*, 2020/2024, page 364-65.

1 The Conference affirms its commitment to providing a safe and respectful environment for all
2 clergy and laypersons within the life of the church. This policy seeks to address instances of sexual
3 and gender harassment, as well as other forms of misconduct, when the perpetrators are
4 laypersons. It establishes clear procedures for handling reports, providing support for the accuser,
5 the accused, and the community, and ensuring proper investigation and resolution.
6

7 **Statement of Purpose**

8 The purpose of this section of the policy is to prevent and address sexual and gender harassment
9 of clergy by laypersons. The policy outlines procedures for reporting such incidents, provides
10 guidelines for supporting those affected, ensures proper investigation, and aims for reconciliation
11 and healing in accordance with Christian principles.
12

13 **Policy Statement**

14 The Conference condemns all forms of sexual and gender harassment, abuse, and misconduct.
15 Such behaviors are incompatible with the values of the church and constitute a betrayal of the trust
16 placed in laypersons and clergy.
17

18 We commit to providing a comprehensive approach for handling such allegations; ensuring
19 fairness and justice for both the clergy and layperson; offering care and support for both the clergy
20 and the layperson, as well as the congregation; and following appropriate procedures in
21 accordance with local law and *The Book of Discipline*.
22

23 **Procedure for Reporting Complaints**

24 Any clergy member who experiences sexual or gender harassment, abuse, or misconduct by a
25 layperson should immediately report the incident to the appropriate local law enforcement (in the
26 case of alleged criminal acts), local church authority (e.g., Church Council Chair, Staff-Parish
27 Relations Chair, and/or Senior Pastor, when applicable), and to the District Superintendent.
28

29 Once a report is made, the Staff-Parish Relations Chair and District Superintendent will ensure
30 immediate safety and protection for the clergy member and any other persons affected. The
31 District Superintendent or appropriate leadership will begin the investigation in accordance with
32 the procedures outlined below.
33

34 **Support for the Individuals Involved**

35 The local church and the conference shall offer pastoral care and counseling
36 services for the clergy member who has been affected by the harassment.
37 Emotional, psychological, and spiritual care will be made available to ensure the well-being of the
38 clergy member. *The Book of Discipline* provides for additional means of support during the
39 complaint process.
40

41 The conference is also committed to offering pastoral care to the layperson accused of
42 misconduct, recognizing their inherent dignity while ensuring accountability. Counseling and
43 mediation services will be offered as needed. *The Book of Discipline* provides for additional
44 means of support during the complaint process.
45

46 The congregation may experience distress or division following such an incident. This Conference
47 will make pastoral care available for the congregation, working toward unity and support for all
48 members.
49
50

Investigation and Resolution

The District Superintendent will initiate an investigation promptly after receiving a report. The investigation will be thorough, fair, and impartial, adhering to the principles outlined in *The Book of Discipline* paragraphs 2701, 2702, and any other applicable paragraphs. The investigation may make use of the *Do No More Harm* resource, developed by the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women of the UMC, as appropriate. Both the clergy person and layperson will have the opportunity to present their accounts of the incident in an environment that maintains the dignity of both parties.

The outcome of the investigation may include: reconciliation efforts, where safe and appropriate, which involve the clergyperson, the layperson, and the church leadership; discipline of the layperson in accordance with church policies and civil law, if necessary; recommendations for further actions, such as counseling, mediation, or legal measures.

Section IV - Concluding Statements of General Application

Non-Retaliation for Reporting

This Conference shall not retaliate against any person who reports any sexual harassment, gender harassment, sexual abuse, or sexual misconduct.

General Policies Regarding Investigations

All investigations and remedial measures shall be conducted in accordance with the pertinent provisions of *The Book of Discipline*. Nothing contained in this policy shall be construed to in any way alter any requirement of *The Book of Discipline*. All complaints or reports of conduct that violate this policy shall be promptly and thoroughly investigated in accordance with local law and *The Book of Discipline*. The *Do No More Harm* resource, developed by the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women of the UMC, is recommended as a guideline and source of information regarding the process. All investigations shall be consistent with fair process as set forth in ¶ 2701 of *The Book of Discipline* and the Decisions of The Judicial Council of the United Methodist Church.

Confidentiality

While this Conference cannot guarantee confidentiality, it will make every effort to maintain confidentiality by disclosing information concerning the complaint or the investigation only on a “need to know” basis and as necessary to promote God’s call for justice, reconciliation, and healing.

Mediation and Reconciliation

Where appropriate, this Conference may utilize mediation agencies and appropriate support teams as resources to facilitate reconciliation and healing. Where appropriate, the conference encourages reconciliation through mediation. However, if the severity of the misconduct warrants it, mediation may not be appropriate, and the church leadership will take appropriate corrective action.

Follow-Up and Accountability

Once the investigation is concluded and resolutions are made, follow-up will be conducted to ensure the continued safety of all parties and the healing of the affected individuals. Accountability mechanisms will also be in place to prevent such misconduct from recurring.

1 **Conclusion**

2 The Arkansas Conference is committed to fostering an environment of mutual respect, care, and
3 healing for both clergy and laity. By addressing sexual and gender harassment, sexual abuse, and
4 sexual misconduct with thoroughness, compassion, and justice, we aim to honor the dignity of all
5 persons and reflect the love of Christ in our actions.
6

7 Approved by: Board of Ordained Ministry
8

9 Date: February 23, 2026
10
11
12

13 **Board of Pension and Health Benefits**
14

15 **The Board:**

16 ¶1638 The Conference Board of Pensions “the board” is charged with the interest and work of
17 providing for and contributing to the support, relief, assistance, and pensioning of clergy, and their
18 families, other church workers, and lay employees of the Conference Center, institutions,
19 organizations, and agencies within the Annual Conference except otherwise provided by
20 Wespeth. The conference board also provides financial assistance to retired clergy, their spouses
21 and surviving spouses who are now responsible for their own healthcare. The board works closely
22 with Wespeth Benefits and Investments, administrator of the largest denominational pension fund
23 in the world. Wespeth reflects the Wesleyan heritage, and the notion of being on the right path
24 in all three areas of operation for participants, institutional investors, and for the UMC. The board
25 is made up of no less than 12 members and in accordance with ¶1605.3 elected to a term of eight
26 years. The board elects its chairperson.
27

28 **Conference Sponsored Well-Care Benefits:**

29 The board approved using \$175,000 in healthcare reserves to fund the Personify Health Fitness
30 Program for the 2026-2027 year. Participation will be reviewed annually. Conference Full-Time
31 staff, active clergy appointed to a Full-Time church or conference responsible appointment and
32 their spouses are eligible to participate. Beginning January 1, 2021, clergy retired from a full-time
33 appointment and remaining in full connection with the Arkansas Annual Conference may be
34 eligible to participate in the Personify Health Plan. You can still join the Personify Health program
35 where getting active & fit means getting great stuff! And ours isn’t your typical stuff. Ours is
36 motivation, feedback, gadgets, tracking, challenges, prizes, more energy, feeling better, looking
37 great... and rewards.
38

39 **HERE’S HOW IT WORKS**
40

- 41 • The Buzz tracker is free to newly enrolled participants. If a participant already has a preferred
42 fitness tracking device, the program will sync with many available brands and models, including
43 Fitbit and Apple Watch.
- 44 • In addition to the benefits of healthier living, participants can earn up to \$275 per calendar
45 quarter, with increasing dollar amounts given as each of four levels of point accrual is
46 completed.
- 47 • Points toward reward levels can be earned through activity, and also by reporting healthy
48 habits on the mobile app or website.
49 We’ll keep you motivated all year long with challenges, contests, team competitions with your
50 fellow conference members & more!

- So what do you say, ready to join? 1
- Download the phone app or use this URL – enroll.personifyhealth.com 2
- Participants will have to select a plan sponsor. In this case, select Arkansas, for the phone App select Wespeth. 3
- Questions should be directed to the Conference Center Benefits Office. 4
- * *You must be 18 years of age. 5

Employee Assistance Program: 6

The Conference Board of Pension and Health Benefits partnered with The Board of Ordained Ministry to bring clergy families the Methodist Healthcare Employee Assistance Program. Since January 1, 2012, this program has provided free, confidential short-term counseling to all active and retired clergy, and clergy households. The Board of Pension and Health Benefits recommends continuing the program with 10 visits for 2026-2027 fiscal year. The benefit is not guaranteed and will be reviewed annually. The costs for the program will be paid with Insurance Reserves for 2026-2027. We are pleased to offer this service to our clergy and their households. EAP can help with many of life’s challenges such as family issues, marital concerns, alcohol and drug abuse, anxiety, depression, major life events, grief, work concerns, and managing the stress of everyday life. The program offers 10 counseling sessions to you and members of your household, free of charge. In most cases, short-term counseling is all the help you’ll need. However, if a referral outside the EAP is necessary, the EAP counselor will seek the best resources for your situation. Counseling outside the EAP will require use of insurance or self-pay. Use of the EAP and issues discussed in all sessions are held in strict confidence. Rest assured that your private health information remains confidential and can only be released outside the EAP with your written consent or when required by law such as in life threatening situations or child/elder abuse. All Arkansas Conference staff members and clergy families; whether full time, part time, retired or disabled as well as members of your household are eligible to participate. Surviving spouses are also eligible for this benefit. For more information about the Methodist Healthcare EAP, please visit their website at www.methodisteapcanhelp.org. To access the program, simply call their toll-free number 1-800-880-5658 to schedule an appointment. 7

Clergy Retirement Plan: 8

Compass is the new retirement plan available to bishops and full-time clergy. This plan is designed to increase plan sustainability, balance affordability with income adequacy, promote equity across different compensation levels, and provide flexibility. 9

The plan creates an account for eligible clergy that allows clergy and churches to make contributions to the plan. A church is allowed to make contributions of (a) a \$150 monthly flat dollar amount (to increase by 2% or \$5.00 yearly), (b) 3% of clergy’s pensionable pay, and (c) a dollar-for-dollar match on up to 4% of pensionable pay. Clergy are encouraged to contribute at least 4% of pensionable pay to receive the full matching contribution from the church. Pensionable pay is base pay plus either the housing allowance or the deemed value of a parsonage equal to 35% of base pay. After retirement clergy who have a Compass account will receive “LifeStage Retirement Income Payments.” 10

There are several key components to the Compass Plan. One feature is that the \$150 (\$155 beginning 1/1/27) flat dollar church contribution provides a base level of retirement savings to more fairly distribute benefits which differs from a solely pay-based plan. Another key component is that Compass provides matching contributions on qualified student loan payments made by 11

1 clergy. The student loan payments are essentially treated as clergy contributions to the plan for
2 which the match still applies. (This repayment feature only applies to student loans of the clergy
3 and not family members.) Note, also that the parsonage value is 35% of base pay. Finally,
4 Compass will feature automatic enrollment and automatic contribution increases as may be set by
5 the annual conference. While these features are automated, they are designed to make the plan
6 simple to use.

7
8 Once an eligible clergy person retires, they will receive “LifeStage Retirement Income Payments.”
9 This is a required feature to manage the account balance the church has contributed to Compass.
10 It is designed to optimize monthly payments to help the account last throughout the clergy’s
11 lifetime (and spouse, if applicable). There is an online tool with various income scenarios to
12 demonstrate how this works. Two optional features are a “Social Security Bridge” which allows
13 deferring social security benefits until the clergy’s full retirement age or later and “Longevity
14 Income Protection” that allows purchase of a deferred annuity that guarantees payment for life
15 beginning at age 80.

16
17 **2026-2027 Retiree Healthcare Premium Stipend Allocation:**

18
19 The Arkansas Conference provides a monthly healthcare reimbursement benefit to eligible retired
20 clergy members of the Conference and disabled clergy who are Medicare eligible. The benefit is
21 not guaranteed and is reviewed annually. In order to be eligible for a conference healthcare
22 premium reimbursement Provisional Elders, Associate Members, Elders in Full Connection and
23 Full-time Local Pastors who remain members of the Arkansas Conference must have served
24 full-time in the denomination for a minimum of 10 years. Only full-time appointment years are
25 eligible and must have been served under Episcopal Appointment in the Arkansas Conference.
26 Retirees not currently receiving a conference healthcare premium stipend are not eligible to
27 receive the stipend. The stipend is a fixed dollar amount based on eligible years of active service
28 and the maximum healthcare premium stipend. Additional years of service above 40 have no
29 effect on the healthcare premium stipend. (See Table pg. 41)

30
31 Conference responsible appointment years of active service are defined as service in which the
32 Arkansas Conference or local church is responsible for contributions to clergy pension plans;
33 Pre-1982, MPP or CRSP. The minimum healthcare stipend benefit is \$51.77 per month. Clergy who
34 are married at the time of retirement will receive a supplemental spousal gift. The spouse at
35 retirement who outlives the clergy person will receive a stipend as a surviving spouse. If a retired
36 clergy couple divorces, the clergy will receive the clergy benefit and that spouse will receive the
37 spouse portion. Should the clergy remarry, the new spouse is not eligible for a stipend. A surviving
38 spouse who remarries will continue to receive a healthcare stipend benefit. When a clergy dies
39 while under an active conference responsible appointment leaving behind a spouse (who is not
40 eligible for Medicare) the conference will provide a healthcare premium stipend for \$1035.30 per
41 month for the first 5 years. After the earlier of year 5, or Medicare eligibility, the healthcare
42 premium stipend will be based on clergy years of eligible service.

43
44 Clergy on Medical Leave receiving CPP Disability Benefits: Approved Medical Leave is an active
45 Conference responsible appointment. Clergy appointed to Medical Leave who are not yet eligible
46 for Medicare will receive a taxable Healthcare Premium Stipend in the amount of \$1035.30 per
47 month. Those who are eligible for Medicare must enroll in Medicare B, purchase a Medicare
48 Supplement and a Drug Plan. Having met these guidelines, you would be eligible to receive a
49 Healthcare Premium Stipend using the years of service guidelines above through a non-taxable
50 HRA.

- The maximum monthly healthcare stipend is:

Years	% Earned	2026	2027	2028	2029	% Earned	2026	2027	2028	2029
10	20.00%	\$41.42	\$31.06	\$20.71	\$10.36	20.00%	\$31.06	\$23.30	\$15.54	\$7.77
11	23.50%	\$48.66	\$36.50	\$24.33	\$12.17	23.50%	\$36.50	\$27.38	\$18.26	\$9.13
12	27.00%	\$55.91	\$41.94	\$27.96	\$13.98	27.00%	\$41.94	\$31.46	\$20.97	\$10.49
13	30.50%	\$63.16	\$47.37	\$31.58	\$15.79	30.50%	\$47.37	\$35.53	\$23.69	\$11.85
14	34.00%	\$70.41	\$52.81	\$35.21	\$17.61	34.00%	\$52.81	\$39.61	\$26.41	\$13.21
15	37.50%	\$77.65	\$58.24	\$38.83	\$19.42	37.50%	\$58.24	\$43.69	\$29.13	\$14.57
16	41.00%	\$84.90	\$63.68	\$42.45	\$21.23	41.00%	\$63.68	\$47.77	\$31.85	\$15.93
17	44.50%	\$92.15	\$69.11	\$46.08	\$23.04	44.50%	\$69.11	\$51.84	\$34.56	\$17.28
18	48.00%	\$99.39	\$74.55	\$49.70	\$24.85	48.00%	\$74.55	\$55.92	\$37.28	\$18.64
19	51.50%	\$106.64	\$79.98	\$53.32	\$26.67	51.50%	\$79.98	\$60.00	\$40.00	\$20.00
20	55.00%	\$113.89	\$85.42	\$56.95	\$28.48	55.00%	\$85.42	\$64.07	\$42.72	\$21.36
21	58.50%	\$121.14	\$90.86	\$60.57	\$30.29	58.50%	\$90.86	\$68.15	\$45.44	\$22.72
22	62.00%	\$128.38	\$96.29	\$64.19	\$32.10	62.00%	\$96.29	\$72.23	\$48.15	\$24.08
23	65.50%	\$135.63	\$101.73	\$67.82	\$33.91	65.50%	\$101.73	\$76.31	\$50.87	\$25.44
24	69.00%	\$142.88	\$107.16	\$71.44	\$35.73	69.00%	\$107.16	\$80.38	\$53.59	\$26.80
25	72.50%	\$150.12	\$112.60	\$75.06	\$37.54	72.50%	\$112.60	\$84.46	\$56.31	\$28.16
26	76.00%	\$157.37	\$118.03	\$78.69	\$39.35	76.00%	\$118.03	\$88.54	\$59.03	\$29.52
27	79.50%	\$164.62	\$123.47	\$82.31	\$41.16	79.50%	\$123.47	\$92.61	\$61.74	\$30.87
28	83.00%	\$171.86	\$128.90	\$85.93	\$42.97	83.00%	\$128.90	\$96.69	\$64.46	\$32.23
29	86.50%	\$179.11	\$134.34	\$89.56	\$44.79	86.50%	\$134.34	\$100.77	\$67.18	\$33.59
30	90.00%	\$186.36	\$139.77	\$93.18	\$46.60	90.00%	\$139.77	\$104.85	\$69.90	\$34.95
31	91.00%	\$188.43	\$141.33	\$94.22	\$47.12	91.00%	\$141.33	\$106.01	\$70.68	\$35.34
32	92.00%	\$190.50	\$142.88	\$95.25	\$47.63	92.00%	\$142.88	\$107.18	\$71.45	\$35.73
33	93.00%	\$192.57	\$144.43	\$96.29	\$48.15	93.00%	\$144.43	\$108.34	\$72.23	\$36.12
34	94.00%	\$194.64	\$145.99	\$97.32	\$48.67	94.00%	\$145.99	\$109.51	\$73.01	\$36.51
35	95.00%	\$196.71	\$147.54	\$98.36	\$49.19	95.00%	\$147.54	\$110.67	\$73.78	\$36.89
36	96.00%	\$198.78	\$149.09	\$99.39	\$49.70	96.00%	\$149.09	\$111.84	\$74.56	\$37.28
37	97.00%	\$200.85	\$150.65	\$100.43	\$50.22	97.00%	\$150.65	\$113.00	\$75.34	\$37.67
38	98.00%	\$202.92	\$152.20	\$101.46	\$50.74	98.00%	\$152.20	\$114.17	\$76.11	\$38.06
39	99.00%	\$204.99	\$153.75	\$102.50	\$51.26	99.00%	\$153.75	\$115.33	\$76.89	\$38.45
40	100.00%	\$207.06	\$155.30	\$103.53	\$51.77	100.00%	\$155.30	\$116.49	\$77.66	\$38.83

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1 **2025 Pension Arrearage**

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¶638.4 of the 2020/2024 Book of Discipline requires the Conference Board to keep a permanent record of defaults by churches of the conference in paying clergy pension and benefits. The board is further required to render annually to each church that is in default a statement of the amounts in default for that and preceding years. The Conference default total was \$46,091.39. According to our Conference Treasurer, for 2023 the following churches were in default by greater than \$500 on the direct billed Clergy Retirement Security Program & the CPP premiums by the following amounts:

Name of Church/Charge	Arrearage as of 3/31/2026
<u>Central</u>	
Bryant 1st	\$ 8,470.43
Highland Valley	\$ 7,079.72
Jacksonville 1st	\$ 4,918.84
Maumelle 1st	\$ 27,843.98
NLR 1st	\$ 3,801.00
Perryville	\$ 1,011.45
St. Andrews-LR	\$ 2,649.90
Salem-Benton	\$ 2,980.44
<u>Northeast</u>	
Corning	\$ 12,835.58
Cotton Plant	\$ 9,458.64
Hazel Edwards	\$ 3,264.15
Helena 1st	\$ 19,358.10
Lepanto	\$ 4,327.50
Marvell	\$ 1,034.98
Trumann	\$ 3,402.68
Tuckerman	\$ 17,202.36
<u>South</u>	
Hope 1st	\$ 5,177.15
Malvern 1st	\$ 1,224.29
Prescott 1st	\$ 2,846.75
St. James-PB	\$ 3,862.94
<u>Totals</u>	
Central	\$ 58,755.76
Northeast	\$ 66,566.49
Northwest	\$0.00
South	\$ 13,111.13

Grand Total: \$138,433.40

Total:

1. Notice of claims request for pension credit shall be made in writing to the Conference Benefits Officer, POB 3611 Little Rock, AR 72203-3611.
2. In determining years of service, the Board of Pension and Health Benefits shall carefully examine and consider those years listed in the conference Journal prior to accepting them as

- valid years; and any years in question shall be subject to validation by the applicant and by approval of the Board of Pensions. 1
2
3. Copies of individual service records are held at Wespath, 1901 Chestnut Ave, Glenview, IL 60025-1604. 3
4
 4. A Retired Minister’s Day is recommended to be the Third Sunday of May each year. The purpose of this day is to recognize the service of the retired servants and their families, and to involve the local churches in the recognition of the needs, both present and future. 5
6
7
 - a. If a retired minister does not reside within the bounds of a charge, but a member of a retired minister’s family does, they shall be invited to participate in the service (or observance); otherwise, recognition of these servants, and their service, should be observed appropriately. “Appropriately” should be determined by the Pastor/Parish Relations Committee of each local church. This committee shall have the responsibility of locating these people and relate the service of these persons to the local church and our Annual Conference. The Conference Board of Pension and Health Benefits will be responsible for providing promotional ideas and some materials (i.e., total years of service, percentage of retired ministers serving churches while in their retired status, etc.) when requested. 8
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 5. Please notify the Conference Center Benefits Office when: 18
 - a. You are eligible to enroll in pensions programs; 19
 - b. Information relative to pension matters is needed; 20
 - c. You have questions about participating in Social Security; 21
 - d. You have questions about healthcare; 22
 - e. A change in marital status, mailing address or income occurs; 23
 - f. You have a question about past service or annuity credit or to request a change in service records; 24
25
 - g. There are health issues that may lead to disability; 26
 - h. Death in the immediate family occurs; 27
 - i. A change of beneficiary is desired; 28
 - j. Request for retirement is made to the bishop, cabinet, and board of ordained ministry; 29
 - k. You Separate or Withdraw to Unite with an Other Denomination. 30
31

Health Savings Account Program 32

The Arkansas Conference will establish a Health Savings Account (HSA) program and provide funding for all Clergy under Episcopal Appointment and Conference Staff within the Arkansas Conference of the United Methodist Church. This initiative is designed to enhance the financial wellness of our servants by providing direct, tiered conference contributions as follows. 33
34
35
36
37

Eligibility and Funding Structure 38

Funding is determined by the specific appointment status or employment classification of the individual. The Conference will provide non-taxable employer contributions to the HSA of each eligible participant based on the following tiers: 39
40
41
42

- Full-Time (100% Appointment): \$1,000.00 annual contribution 43
- Three-Quarter Time (75% Appointment): \$750.00 annual contribution 44
- Half-Time (50% Appointment): \$500.00 annual contribution 45
- Quarter-Time (25% Appointment): \$250.00 annual contribution 46
- 47

Compliance and IRS Regulations 48

To receive these funds, participants must meet IRS eligibility requirements for an HSA: 49

- Enrollment: Must be enrolled in a qualifying High-Deductible Health Plan (HDHP). 49
- Other Coverage: Participants cannot be enrolled in Medicare, TRICARE, or have other disqualifying health coverage. 50

- 1 • 2026 Limits: Total contributions (Conference + Personal) must not exceed the [2026 IRS maximums](#) of \$4,400 for
2 individuals or \$8,750 for families. Those aged 55+ are eligible for an additional \$1,000 catch-up contribution.

3 **Administrative Implementation**
4

- 5 • Account Ownership: The HSA is owned by the individual. Funds roll over year-to-year and remain with the
6 participant even if they transition out of the Arkansas Conference or into retirement.
7 • Disbursement: Funds will be deposited directly into the participant’s HSA through the Conference's designated
8 benefit provider.
9 • Effective Date: The plan will begin 01/01/2027.

10 **2026-2027 Housing Allowances for the Arkansas Conference**
11

12 The Arkansas Conference (the “Conference”) adopts the following resolutions relating to rental/
13 housing allowances for active, retired, terminated, or disabled clergypersons of the Conference:
14

15 WHEREAS, the religious denomination known as The United Methodist Church (the “Church”), of
16 which this Conference is a part, has in the past functioned and continues to function through
17 ministers of the gospel (within the meaning of Internal Revenue Code section 107) who were
18 or are duly ordained, commissioned, or licensed ministers of the Church (“Clergypersons”);
19

20 WHEREAS, the practice of the Church and of this Conference was and is to provide active
21 Clergypersons with a parsonage or a rental/housing allowance as part of their gross
22 compensation;
23

24 WHEREAS, pensions or other amounts paid to active, retired, terminated, and disabled
25 Clergypersons are considered to be deferred compensation and are paid to active, retired,
26 terminated, and disabled Clergypersons in consideration of previous active service; and
27

28 WHEREAS, the Internal Revenue Service has recognized the Conference (or its predecessors) as
29 an appropriate organization to designate a rental/housing allowance for Clergypersons who
30 are or were members of this Conference and are eligible to receive such deferred
31 compensation;
32

33 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED:
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35 THAT an amount equal to 100% of the pension, severance, or disability payments received from
36 plans authorized under *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church* (the
37 “Discipline”), which includes all such payments from Wespeth by each active, retired,
38 terminated, or clergyperson receiving disability benefits who is or was a member of the
39 Conference, or its predecessors, be and hereby is designated as a rental/housing allowance
40 for each such Clergyperson; and
41

42 THAT the pension, severance, or disability payments to which this rental/housing allowance
43 designation applies will be any pension, severance, or disability payments from plans,
44 annuities, or funds authorized under the Discipline, including such payments from Wespeth
45 and from a commercial annuity company that provides an annuity arising from benefits
46 accrued under a Wespeth plan, annuity, or fund authorized under the Discipline, that result
47 from any service a Clergyperson rendered to this Conference or that an active, a retired,
48 a terminated, or a disabled Clergyperson of this Conference rendered to any local church,
49 annual conference of the Church, general agency of the Church, other institution of the
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Church, former denomination that is now a part of the Church, or any other employer that employed the Clergy person to perform services related to the ministry of the Church, or its predecessors, and that elected to make contributions to, or accrue a benefit under, such a plan, annuity, or fund for such an active, a retired, a terminated, or a disabled Clergy person's pension, severance, or disability plan benefit as part of his or her gross compensation.

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

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The 2026 Funding Plan is in process. When approved by Wespath it will be available on the ARUMC website.

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Submitted by:
Roy P. Smith, Board of Pension & Health Benefits Chairperson
Todd Burris, Treasurer
Wendy Brunson Daniels, Conference Benefits Officer

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Board of Trustees

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The Arkansas Conference Board of Trustees meets monthly in order to carry out its fiduciary responsibilities to the Annual Conference and the greater Church. Our 2025-2026 officers are:

President - Rev. Maxine Allen, 2026 (clergy)

Vice President - Stark Ligon, 2028 (lay)

Treasurer - Todd Burris (ex-officio, Director of Admin Services/Treasurer)

Secretary - Audrea Stephens (ex-officio, Executive Assistant)

We function utilizing subcommittees and taskgroups. The 2025-26 sub-committees/task groups are:

- Local Church Insurance
- Real estate/property
- Legacy/Redevelopment
- Litigation

Throughout the year we have sponsored learning opportunities for our members, local church trustees, and District Boards of Church Location and Buildings. In September, at the Methodist Foundation for Arkansas, the South Carolina Chancellor Kay Crowe provided informative training. Additionally, Jason Kennedy, Pulaski Brownfield Grant Coordinator, shared how congregations could get grants for remediation and removal of toxic chemicals. This training hosted 34 persons from across the state serving at all levels of leadership as trustees. From the evaluations at this initial event we uncovered a need for additional specific training. The Southcentral Jurisdiction hosted subsequent training for local church trustees in January. Larry Weir, a member of the North District Board of Locations and Buildings, co-lead the session on Local Church Trustees. We are planning to have a training in the fall for District Boards. The Trustees will sponsor a training for District Committees on Building and Location, Friday, September 18, 2026, again at The Methodist Foundation for Arkansas.

As a group we participated in reading Elsdon's *Gone for Good? Negotiating the Coming Wave of Church Property Transitions*. The sessions were held as a component of our regular board meetings. Topics included: the theology of buildings and sacred spaces, transforming sacred spaces into collaborative community spaces, and developing mission strategies for ministry spaces in changing demographics. The Trustees encourage all trustees and persons in leadership to begin to develop missional strategies that have a spiritual impact for a future that is ever-changing.

On February 28, the chair/president assisted in the unveiling of a historical marker at Sequoyah UMC, Fayetteville, in honor of Theresa Hoover. Miss Hoover was the first Black Woman to be named as the chief executive of the Women's Division of the General Board of Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church. Also representing ARUMC was Amy Ezell, ARUMC Director of Conference Ministries. Others participating in the event unveiling included the current General Secretary of United Women in Faith, Sally Vonner; past General Secretary Joyce Sohli; United Women in Faith from all across the Arkansas Conference; women members of Theresa Hoover UMC in Little Rock; the mayor of Fayetteville; with friends and family joined to celebrate this African American female change-maker. The plaque was funded by the Black History Commission of Arkansas, United Women in Faith, with a reception funded by the Arkansas Methodist Foundation for Arkansas.

While we presented a type of congregational insurance plan in 2025, we were not able to implement the plan as there were many issues with identified participation in the plan that existed at the time. We continue to work on a comprehensive plan for local congregation insurance and hope to announce at the 2026 Conference.

Church Closings/Discontinuance (¶ 2549)

Northwest District

- Vietnamese-Van Buren, 3006 Hwy 282 East, Van Buren, AR 72956

South District

- Huttig, Corner of Frost & Floyd Cramer Streets, Huttig, AR 71747
- Trinity (Star City), 21022 State Hwy 11 North, Star City, AR 71667
- Winthrop, 701 Broad St., Winthrop, AR 71866

Property For Sale For The Benefit of the Conference

Central District

- Aaron Cemetery, Pulaski County
- Vacant Lot, parcel 001-10639-000, Saline County

Northeast District

- Asbury, 750 S. 17th St, Batesville, AR 72501
- Horseshoe Bend, 600 W. Church Rd, Horseshoe Bend, AR 72512 (3/16/2025)
- Parkin, Smithdale and Church St., Parkin, AR 72373
- Vacant Lot, parcel 030-00093-000, Randolph County
- Viola, 544 Hwy 223 N, Viola, AR 72583
- Wiseman, CR 5, Wiseman, AR 72587

Northwest District

- Mount Pleasant, Hwy 248, Waldron, AR 72958 (Par. 2549.3.b)
- Waltreak, Hwy 80 Box 25133, Waltreak, AR 72833 (Par. 2549.3.b)

South District

- Emmet, 209 S. Walnut St, Emmet, AR 71835
- Lydesdale, 2820 Columbia 61, Magnolia, AR 71753
- Spring Hill, 601 Hwy 355 W, Hope, AR 71801 (Par. 2549.3.b)
- Wilmar, 2390 Hwy 278 W, Wilmar, AR 71625

**Property Sold For The Benefit of the Conference
{income - expenses = net (net loss)}**

Property	District	Sales Price	Expenses	Net
DeValls Bluff	NE	\$158,000	\$40,554	\$117,446
Valley View	NE	\$95,000	\$28,427	\$66,573
Winthrop	SO	\$18,000	\$597	\$7,403

March 31, 2026 balance of funds from sold properties \$768,464

1 **Exigent Circumstances (§ 2549.4 (b))**

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Property	District
Grady	SO
Hunter's Chapel-Roe	SO
Jasper	NW
Keo	CE
Marion	NE
Marvell	NE
Mayflower	CE
Mount Peasant-Waldron	NW
Pleasant Hill-Texarkana	SO
Rockport	SO
Waltreak	NW

Additional recommendations and action items may be presented during the 2026 Annual Conference but were not ready for distribution when this report was printed.

We want to thank outgoing trustees Mr. Aaron Cochran and Rev. Maxine Allen for their outstanding service and commitment to the Arkansas Conference Trustees. Their willingness to work and their wisdom in decision-making will certainly be missed.

Submitted by:
Rev. Maxine Allen, President
Stark Ligon, Vice President
Todd Burris, Treasurer
Audrea Stephens, Secretary



Proposed 2026 Arkansas Conference Standing Rules (with proposed changes to SR 109.6 and 202)

Chapter One

GENERAL PROVISIONS

101 Mission

The Mission of the Arkansas Conference is to make disciples of Jesus Christ equipped to transform the world with excellence and passion.

102 Vision

The Vision of the Arkansas Conference is congregations and surrounding communities transformed by the Holy Spirit to demonstrate love of God and neighbor, holy living and justice.

103 Trajectory

The Trajectory of the Arkansas Conference is to create vital congregations that make disciples of Jesus Christ, who make disciples equipped and sent to transform lives, communities and the world.

104 Core Measures

1. We will be enriched by our Wesleyan heritage of scriptural holiness so that we are connected by our mission of making disciples instead of being connected by our apportionments, appointments and benefits.
2. We will establish the mission field as the primary focus of our attention and resources instead of directing the majority of our attention and resources to mere maintenance of congregations and clergy.
3. We will equip laity and clergy to transform individuals, communities and the world instead of trying to satisfy personal preferences of current members and ensure congregational preservation.
4. We will address the unique context of each mission field instead of depending on standardized programs and structures.

105 Establishment of Standing Rules

The Arkansas Annual Conference establishes the Standing Rules under the authority of *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church* ¶ 610, which permits the Annual Conference to structure its own administrative procedures and ministries in order to accomplish its purpose of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

106 Purpose of Standing Rules

The Standing Rules prescribe the administrative procedures the Annual Conference will utilize to carry out its mission, vision, core measures and trajectory.

107 Changes to or Suspension of Standing Rules

A two-thirds (2/3) vote of the Annual Conference members present and voting shall be required to change or suspend the Standing Rules.

1 **108 Procedural Authority**

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3 Roberts Rules of Order shall be the procedural authority for the Annual Conference when not in
4 conflict with the current *Book of Discipline*, Arkansas Conference Standing Rules or Arkansas
5 Annual Conference Session Rules.

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7 **109 Definitions**

- 8 1. *The Discipline*: unless otherwise noted, refers to the current *Book of Discipline of the*
9 *United Methodist Church*.
- 10 2. *Annual Conference or Conference*: unless otherwise noted, refers to the Arkansas Annual
11 Conference of the United Methodist Church.
- 12 3. *Conference Agency*: Any council, board, commission, committee, task force, or other
13 structural grouping established by the Standing Rules of the Conference or mandated by
14 The Discipline.
- 15 4. *Ex-officio member*: Unless otherwise noted, all ex-officio members shall have vote.
- 16 5. *Majority Vote*: A majority vote is defined as more than half of the members present and
17 voting.
- 18 6. *Resolution*: A non-legislative **mandatory** proposal for the Annual Conference to address or
19 **take urge** action regarding a particular issue.
- 20 7. *Petition*: Proposed changes to *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church* or
21 *The Book of Resolutions of the United Methodist Church* that are forwarded to the General
22 Conference for action.
- 23 8. *Annual Conference Session*: Any regular or special session of the Annual Conference
24 comprised of clergy and lay members as mandated by *The Book of Discipline*, Standing
25 Rules or Structure.

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28 **110 Mandated Changes**

29 The Committee on Review and Research shall work with the Conference Secretary, Journal
30 Editor and Assistant to the Bishop to ensure that changes mandated by General Conference will
31 be reflected in the Conference Standing Rules, Structure and Journal.

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33 **Chapter Two**

34 **ORGANIZATION OF THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE**

35
36 **201 Conference Structure**

37 The structure of the Annual Conference shall be flexible, responsive and inclusive of age, gender
38 and diverse ethnicity.

39
40 **202 Changes to Structure**

41 **Notwithstanding Rule 107 above, a 60% supermajority of the Annual Conference members**
42 **present and voting shall be required to change the Conference Structure.**

203 Officers of the Conference

The Officers of the Conference shall be the following and are governed by the provisions of the current *Book of Discipline*. In the *2016 Book of Discipline*, they are:

1. Bishop ¶¶414-416
2. Conference Secretary ¶603.7
3. Conference Treasurer ¶619
4. Conference Statistician ¶603.7
5. Conference Chancellor ¶602.10, 603.8
6. Conference Lay Leader ¶607.9
 - a. The Conference Lay Leader shall be nominated by the Conference Nominating Committee upon consultation with the bishop and Board of Laity and elected by the Annual Conference. Terms of office shall begin at the adjournment of the annual conference at which they are elected and shall be for a period of four years with a maximum of two consecutive four-year terms, with a minimum of four years before reelection.

204 Lay Members of the Annual Conference ¶¶602.10

1. The lay membership of the Arkansas Annual Conference shall be governed by the provisions of the current *Book of Discipline*. (¶33, 34, 602.1(e) and 602.4.)
2. In addition to the disciplinary provisions, there shall be added to the lay membership an additional one youth between the ages of twelve and seventeen from each district currently serving on the District or Conference Council on Youth Ministry and one young adult between the ages of eighteen and thirty from each district to be selected by the District Leadership Team or District Nominating Committee in consultation with the District Superintendent.
3. When at any time a lay member is excused by the Annual Conference from further attendance during the session, the duly elected alternate lay member, if present, shall be seated. The lay member or the alternate shall be the lay member of the Annual Conference, and it shall be the duty of the lay member to report to the local church on actions of the Annual Conference. The lay member or alternate, whoever was last seated in the annual conference, shall be seated in a special session of the annual conference when convened (Par.602.5)

205 Clergy Members of the Annual Conference ¶¶ 602.1 – 602.3

The clergy membership of the Annual Conference shall consist of deacons and elders in full connection (¶333), provisional members (¶327), associate members, affiliate members (¶344.4, 586.4), and local pastors under full-time and part-time appointment to a pastoral charge (¶317).

1. Clergy members in full connection shall have the right to vote on all matters in the annual conference except in the election of lay delegates to the General and jurisdictional conferences and shall have sole responsibility for all matters of ordination, character, and conference relations of clergy.

2. Provisional clergy members shall have the right to vote in the annual conference on all matters except constitutional amendments, election of clergy delegates to the General and jurisdictional conferences and matters of ordination, character, and conference relations of clergy. Provisional clergy members who have completed all of their educational requirements may vote to elect clergy delegates to General and jurisdictional conferences.
3. Associate clergy members shall have the right to vote in the annual conference on all matters except constitutional amendments, and matters of ordination, character, and conference relations of clergy. When associate members are members of the conference Board of Ordained Ministry, they have the right to vote at the clergy session on matters of ordination, character, and conference relations of clergy (§ 634.1). Affiliate clergy members shall have the right to vote in the annual conference on all matters except the constitutional amendments, election of clergy delegates to the General and jurisdictional conferences, and matters of ordination, character, and conference relations of clergy.
4. Full-time and part-time local pastors shall have the right to vote in the annual conference on all matters except constitutional amendments, election of delegates to the General and jurisdictional conferences and matters of ordination, character, and conference relations of clergy. When local pastors are members of the Conference Board of Ordained Ministry, they have the right to vote at the clergy session on matters of ordination, character, and conference relations of clergy (§ 634.1). Local pastors who have completed course of study or an M. Div. degree and have served a minimum of two consecutive years under appointment before the election may vote to elect clergy delegates to General and jurisdictional conferences.

206. Equalizing Lay and Clergy Membership

If the lay membership should number less than the clergy members of the Annual Conference, the following formula will be used in the Arkansas Conference to nominate and elect persons for the purpose of lay equalization (Par.33, 602.4):

1. When additional lay members are required to equalize representation, the total number needed will be divided among the districts in proportion to the ratio of lay membership of each district.
2. Persons previously elected by the annual conference or district conference to the following positions shall be given vote and subtracted from the total lay members needed to elect within the district in which they reside:
 - a. Lay members of the Cabinet and lay officers of the conference.
 - b. Lay Delegates and Alternate Lay Delegates to General and Jurisdictional Conference during the quadrennium for which they are elected.
 - c. Lay chairpersons of conference boards, committees and agencies
 - d. Officers of the Conference Boards of Laity, United Methodist Women, United Methodist Men, and Conference Council on Youth Ministries
 - e. Elected laypersons to General and Jurisdictional Conference boards and agencies
 - f. District presidents of United Methodist Women, United Methodist Men, and District Councils on Youth Ministry
3. If additional lay members are still needed, The Conference Secretary will notify each District Superintendent of the number of at-large members their district nominations committee is

to nominate. With attention given to racial, gender and theological diversity, as well as adequate representation of youth, young adults and small-membership congregations, district nominating committees will present a slate of at-large lay members for election at a District Conference. Nominations from the floor will be allowed.

4. Upon their election, the District Superintendent shall notify these persons in writing of their membership status.
5. The names and addresses of lay members of the Annual Conference elected by the Charge Conferences shall be compiled by the District Superintendents and sent to the Conference Secretary at least 60 days prior to the opening day of the Annual Conference session. Names and addresses of lay members elected at the District Conference shall be sent to the Conference Secretary within one week of election.

207 Pre-Conference Journal

There shall be a *Pre-Conference Journal*, which shall contain reports of all program agencies of the Conference, proposed legislation, resolutions and petitions, and information about the Annual Conference session. This Pre-Conference Journal shall be provided to each member of the Arkansas Conference at least 30 days before the annual session. The Conference Secretary shall be the editor of this publication. Pre-conference reports submitted for inclusion in the Pre-Conference Journal shall be submitted to the Conference Secretary by a deadline to be determined and widely publicized by the Conference Secretary. Any agency making a report not included in the *Pre-Conference Journal* that proposes changes in policy or has financial implications shall provide the Conference Treasurer and chair of CF&A with the report no later than 10 days prior to the opening Business Session of Annual Conference.

208 Resolutions and Petitions

1. Resolutions or petitions not offered by a Conference agency must be signed by at least ten lay and/or clergy members of the upcoming Arkansas Annual Conference Session. These signatures must be obtained before the proposed resolution or petition may be submitted to the Conference Secretary. Petitions and resolutions must be included in the Pre-Conference Journal to be considered by the Annual Conference Session.
2. *Footnotes.* Resolutions and petitions shall contain footnotes that clarify the source of any facts, quotes, or generalizations made within the proposed resolution or petition. These footnotes must be included with the proposed resolution or petition before it may be submitted to the Conference Secretary. These footnotes shall include enough information to allow the Conference some level of confidence that the content of the proposed resolution or petition is accurate and reliable. These footnotes shall also include enough information to allow the content of the proposed resolution or petition to be checked for accuracy.

209 Items for Distribution

All items for general distribution shall be prepared by the sponsoring person or agency at their own expense and must be in the hands of the Conference Secretary no later than 3:00 p.m on the day before the opening Business Session.

210 Journal of the Annual Conference

1. There shall be a *Journal*, which contains a record of the Annual Conference proceedings.

- 1 2. All content for the Journal shall be provided to the Conference Secretary no later than
2 the close of the Annual Conference session. All material to be published in the Journal
3 that does not meet this deadline may be excluded unless specific permission for delay is
4 granted by the Conference Secretary. The Conference Secretary, Dean of the Cabinet, and
5 Conference Treasurer shall be authorized to edit all reports for printing in the Journal.
- 6 3. Addresses delivered to the Conference, except for the Episcopal Address, Laity Address
7 and Youth Address, shall not be printed in the Conference Journal.
- 8 4. All reports not printed in the Pre-Conference Journal shall be in the hands of the
9 Conference Secretary and Presiding Officer no later than 3:00 p.m. the day before the
10 opening Business Session.
- 11 5. The Conference Standing Rules shall be reprinted each year in the Journal, incorporating
12 any changes made during the preceding Annual Conference.
- 13 6. The Conference Secretary shall distribute an electronic copy of the Journal to active
14 and retired clergy, seminarians, all probationary members, lay members of the Annual
15 Conference, and chairpersons of Conference board, committees, and agencies. Printed
16 copies may be obtained upon request.
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- 18

19 **211 Election of Delegates to General and Jurisdictional Conferences**

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21 At the Annual Conference session preceding the year of delegate election, the Conference may
22 adopt rules governing the election of delegates.

23 24 **212 Conference Expense Fund**

25
26 Registration fees and non-designated offerings taken at the Annual Conference shall be
27 administered by the Conference Treasurer to defray expenses of the session.

28 29 **213 Payment of Annual Conference Expenses**

30
31 Expenses of the Annual Conference session shall be paid by funds received from:

- 32 1. Registration fees, which shall be set by the Conference Session Planning Committee;
- 33 2. Offerings, other than special designated offerings; and
- 34 3. If necessary, the Conference Administration Fund.

35 36 37 **214 Retired Clergy, Spouses, and Surviving Spouses**

38
39 No registration fee shall be required for retired clergy, their spouses or surviving spouses. The
40 expense of retired clergy, spouses, and surviving spouses shall be paid in keeping with the
41 guidelines of the Council on Finance and Administration when proper vouchers are presented.

42 43 **215 Student Local Pastors and Seminary Students**

44
45 No registration fee shall be required for student local pastors or seminary students.

46 47 **216 Location of the Annual Conference Session**

48
49 Location of Annual Conference sessions will be selected by the Annual Conference Planning
50 Committee and reported to the Annual Conference on a schedule sufficient to secure adequate

facilities for meetings and lodging.

217 Annual Conference Session Rules

The Annual Conference Session rules will be proposed by the Annual Conference Session Planning Committee and adopted at the opening Business Session of each Annual Conference by a majority vote. Session rules shall remain in effect during all sessions of the Arkansas Conference until superseded by action of the Annual Conference.

218 Virtual Meetings

1. When the Bishop, Director of Connectional Ministries, Conference Lay Leader, and a majority of District Superintendents are in agreement that circumstances call for a meeting of the Annual Conference to be held in whole or in part by virtual conferencing, the Bishop may call for such a meeting of the Annual Conference to be held as allowed by Arkansas Act 253 of 2021. Virtual presence in such a duly called meeting shall be deemed equivalent to presence in person.
2. The Director of Administrative Services shall recommend the method of remote balloting or voting to be used, which shall be clearly specified in the call for the virtual or hybrid meeting issued by the bishop.
3. Virtual and Hybrid Annual Conference meetings must be organized and conducted such that all members have reasonable opportunity and ability to participate in the meeting, can simultaneously hear discussion, and can, as recognized by the chair, speak and address all those meeting as well as vote on matters submitted at the meeting.
4. This provision for remote voting includes all matters that may properly come before the Annual Conference. Further, voting eligibility and voting margins designated in the *Book of Discipline* or Session Rules of the Conference will be followed.
5. These provisions may also be used for District Conferences, Lay and Clergy Sessions, and any Special Called Session of Annual Conference.

Chapter Three

NOMINATION AND ELECTION TO CONFERENCE AGENCIES AND OFFICES

301 Conference Nominating Committee

1. Purpose.

- a. Except as otherwise indicated by *The Book of Discipline* or the Standing Rules of the Arkansas Conference, the Conference Nominating Committee shall identify and nominate all members and chairpersons of the Annual Conference boards, teams, commissions and committees, the Conference Lay Leader, Associate Lay Leader, the Conference Secretary, and the Conference Statistician.

2. Structure.

- a. Composition: Membership, elected by the Conference for terms of four years with a maximum of two consecutive terms, shall include one clergy and one lay member from each district and two cabinet representatives. In order to ensure racial, ethnic, and gender diversity, there may be up to four at-large members. The following shall serve as ex-officio members with vote: The Bishop, Conference Lay Leader, Associate Lay

1 Leader, President of the Conference Council on Youth Ministries and the Chairperson
2 (or representative) of the Committee on Ethnic and Language Concerns. The Director of
3 Connectional Ministries and Assistant to the Bishop shall serve as ex-officio without vote.

- 4 b. Nominations for Committee Membership. Nominations shall be received from each
5 District Leadership Board. Nominations for membership on the Conference Nominat-
6 ing Committee shall be received from the District Leadership Board and elected by the
7 Annual Conference. Additional nominations may come from the floor. Elected mem-
8 bers may serve a maximum of eight consecutive years as long as they continue to live
9 within the bounds of the district. If an elected district member moves out of the district
10 mid-year, they will continue serving on this committee until their successor is elected at
11 the next Conference session.
- 12 c. Filling Vacancies on the Committee. Any vacancy occurring between sessions of the
13 Annual Conference shall be filled for the remainder of the term at the succeeding ses-
14 sion of the Annual Conference in the same manner as described above. If a member
15 representing a district is unable or unwilling to attend meetings, the District Superinten-
16 dent may name a substitute to ensure that the district is represented.
- 17 d. Officers. The committee shall organize, by electing from within its membership, a
18 chairperson, a vice chairperson, a secretary, and such other officers as it may deem
19 necessary.
20

21 **3. Process.**

- 22 a. All nominees shall be consulted regarding their nomination. The right to nominate from
23 the floor of the Annual Conference session shall not be abridged. "In the nomination
24 and election of the membership of councils, boards, and agencies of the Annual Confer-
25 ence, special attention shall be given to the inclusion of clergywomen, youth, (§1256.3),
26 young adults, older adults, persons from churches with small memberships, persons with
27 disabilities, and racial and ethnic persons, in keeping with policies for general church
28 agencies. It is further recommended that the membership of such agencies, except for
29 the Board of Ordained Ministry, include one-third clergy, one-third laywomen, and one-
30 third laymen, who are professing members of local churches." (§1610.5) Attention shall
31 also be given to geographical representation.
32
33

34 **302 Board, Agency and Committee Service**

- 35
36 1. Elective membership on any specific board, agency, or committee of the Annual Confer-
37 ence may not exceed two consecutive terms of four years, excepting ex-officio membership,
38 unless otherwise prescribed by *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church*.
39 After eight consecutive years on any specific board, agency, or committee of the Annual
40 Conference, no person may return to the same body until the passage of four years, except-
41 ing ex-officio membership. Membership begins upon election, with the date noted in the
42 Conference Journal.
- 43 2. No person shall be elected by the Annual Conference to serve on more than two Council,
44 Board, Committee, Commission, Agency, etc. at any one time. This does not affect ex-officio
45 positions.
- 46 3. "In the nomination and election of the membership of councils, boards, and agencies of
47 the Annual Conference, special attention shall be given to the inclusion of clergywomen,
48 youth (§1256.3), young adults, older adults, persons from churches with small memberships,
49 persons with disabilities, and racial and ethnic persons, in keeping with policies for general
50

church agencies. It is further recommended that the membership of such agencies, except for the Board of Ordained Ministry, include one-third clergy, one-third laywomen, and one-third laymen, who are professing members of local churches.” (§1610.5) Special attention shall also be given to geographical representation.

4. Members of general agencies shall serve as ex-officio members of the corresponding Annual Conference agency or its equivalent structure. If this results in a person being a member of more than one Annual Conference agency in violation of either Annual Conference policy or another provision of *The Book of Discipline*, the person shall choose the Annual Conference agency on which to serve.
5. "No member or employee of any Conference agency and no employee, trustee, or director of any agency or institution participating in the funds of any Conference budget shall be eligible for voting membership on the Council on Finance and Administration." (§1612.2b)
6. Agencies of the Annual Conference are to keep records of member attendance and participation and report to the Nominating Committee. The Nominating Committee may recommend to the Annual Conference that new board/committee members be elected to replace those whose lack of participation inhibits the effectiveness of the board/committee.
7. Unless provided for elsewhere, a vacancy between sessions of the Annual Conference shall be filled by the Cabinet on nomination by the Nominating Committee.

303 Task Force Service

1. Boards, committees, commissions, and other agencies are encouraged to develop task force groups to address emerging missional opportunities. Each board, committee, commission, and other agencies will invite to these task forces persons who will bring passion, experience, and expertise to the work.
2. Membership on Task Forces shall be inclusive of ethnic minorities and persons from small membership churches. A balance of laymen, laywomen, and clergy shall be the norm.
3. The norm for Task Force membership shall be a broad base of participation from throughout the Conference.
4. Persons are limited to membership on one Conference task force at a given time. It is recommended that persons will not immediately begin service on a new task force after completion of their service.

Chapter Four CONFERENCE AGENCIES AND OFFICES

The Arkansas Annual Conference establishes the following Structure under the authority of *The 2020-20204 Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church*, which permits the Annual Conference to structure its own ministries and administrative procedures in order to accomplish its purpose of making disciples of Jesus Christ. The Structure prescribes the ministries, organization and procedures the Annual Conference will use in carrying out its mission, vision, core measures and trajectory. §1610

401 Required by *The Book of Discipline* §§1607-654

(The following includes required agencies and officers, any rules that impact the agency or officer and the name given by The Arkansas Annual Conference to that agency if it differs from the name

1 listed in *The Book of Discipline*.)

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1. Board of Discipleship ¶¶ 629

2. Board of Laity ¶ 630

3. Conference Associate Lay Leader ¶ 607.9

- a. The Conference Associate Lay Leader shall assist the Conference Lay Leader in fostering awareness of the role of the laity in achieving the mission of the Church and for enabling and supporting lay participation in the planning and decision-making processes of the Annual Conference, district, and local church.
- b. The Conference Associate Lay Leader shall be nominated by the Conference Nominating Committee upon consultation with the bishop and Board of Laity and elected by the Annual Conference. Terms of office shall begin at the adjournment of the annual conference at which they are elected and shall be for a period of four years with a maximum of two consecutive four-year terms, with a minimum of four years before reelection. The Conference Associate Lay Leader shall be a member of the Annual Conference, the Conference Nominating Committee, the Conference Committee on Episcopacy, and the Annual Conference Planning Committee; and may be designated by the Bishop to any Conference agency.

4. Board of Ordained Ministry ¶ 634

5. Committee on Episcopacy ¶ 636

6. Episcopal Residence Committee ¶ 637

7. Board of Higher Education and Campus Ministry ¶ 633

- a. Membership of the Board of Higher Education and Campus Ministry shall include a chairperson and two representatives from each district nominated by the District Leadership Board and elected by the Annual Conference. In addition, there shall be one representative from each Wesley Foundation, one representative from the campus ministry at Hendrix College named by the President of Hendrix College, and one representative of the campus ministry at Philander Smith College named by the President of Philander Smith College. The campus minister from each campus and the Conference Director of Connectional Ministries shall be ex-officio members without vote. In addition, any member of the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry from the Annual Conference shall be a member of the Conference Board.

8. Board of Global Ministries ¶¶ 632

- a. The membership of the Conference Board of Global Ministries shall include a Chairperson, the Conference Secretary of Global Ministries and the District Secretaries of Global Ministries who shall be nominated by the District Leadership Board and elected by the Annual Conference, the Mission Coordinator of Education and Interpretation of the Conference United Methodist Women.
- b. The Board shall designate a coordinator (or coordinators) for Volunteer In Mission

opportunities, a coordinator (or coordinators) of missionary personnel, a coordinator (or coordinators) for disaster response, a coordinator (or coordinators) for ecumenical and interreligious concerns, and a coordinator (or coordinators) of Parish and Community Development. In addition, any member of the General Board of Global Ministries from the Annual Conference shall be an ex-officio member of the Conference Board.

9. Conference Secretary of Global Ministries ¶ 632.3

- a. The Secretary of Global Ministries shall be nominated by the Conference Nominating Committee and elected by the Annual Conference and will be a member of the Board of Global Ministries.

10. Conference Board of Church and Society ¶¶ 628

- a. The membership of the Conference Board of Church and Society shall consist of a chairperson, one representative from each district, the United Methodist Women Mission Coordinator for Social Action, and one at-large member nominated by the Conference Nominating Committee and elected by the Annual Conference. The membership shall include persons with disabilities. The board will be half clergy and half laity. The Board shall elect a secretary from its members.
- b. The members of the Board shall organize themselves into committees to work on the various issues of concern to the Board as outlined in the Social Principles, including local, state, national, and international issues. The Board shall include a coordinator (or coordinators) of Peace with Justice Ministries. In addition, the Board shall include a coordinator (or coordinators) of disability concerns.

11. Conference Commission on Religion and Race ¶ 643

- a. Membership shall include a chairperson and one member from each district to be represented by racial and ethnic minority persons. Selection of commission members shall ensure adequate representation of women, youth, young adults, older adults, and people with disabilities.
- b. Members of the General Commission on Religion and Race residing in the Annual Conference shall be ex-officio members of the Annual Conference Commission on Religion and Race with vote. The commission chairperson and members shall be nominated by the Conference Nominating Committee and elected by the Annual Conference.

12. Conference Committee on the Status and Role of Women ¶ 644

- a. Membership will include one representative from each district, and a chairperson, who shall be a woman, to be nominated by the Conference Nominating Committee and elected by the Annual Conference. In addition, there shall be a representative from the United Methodist Women and the Board of Laity.

13. Committee on Ethnic and Language Concerns ¶¶ 631

- a. The membership shall include:
 - 1) Chairperson to be nominated by the Conference Nominating Committee and elected by the Annual Conference.

1 2) One representative from each district, appointed by the District Superintendent.
2 Race, gender, and age shall be taken into consideration, with special attention to
3 ensure that the committee represents the racial makeup of ethnic groups within
4 the Arkansas Conference (Asian Americans, African Americans, Hispanic
5 Americans, Pacific Islanders, and Native Americans.) At no time shall ethnic
6 persons make up less than 51% of the persons represented on the committee.

7
8 3) Representatives without vote:

9 a) A representative of the Conference Staff;

10 b) One representative from the Conference Commission on Religion and Race
11 (chairperson or designee) to act as liaison; and

12 c) Liaison(s) to other bodies as needed to accomplish the Committee's work.
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17 **14. United Methodist Women ¶ 647**

18 **15. United Methodist Men ¶ 648**

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20 **16. Conference Council on Youth Ministries ¶ 649**

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22 **17. Conference Council on Young Adult Ministries ¶ 650**

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24 **18. Conference Council on Adult, Singles, Family, and Older Adult Ministries ¶ 651**

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26 **19. Council on Finance and Administration ¶ 611 to 618**

- 27
28 a. The Council members will be nominated by the Conference Nominating Committee and
29 elected by the Annual Conference. The Council shall be composed of twenty-one (21)
30 members. The Conference Coordinator of Stewardship shall be an ex-officio member.
31 There will be at least one more layperson than clergy included on the Council.
32 Members will be elected to four-year terms of office. Those whose terms have expired
33 will be eligible to be elected to one additional four-year term. Churches of fewer than
34 200 members shall be represented on the council. Ex-officio members of the Council
35 (without vote) shall be (1) the Conference Treasurer, (2) any member of the General
36 Council on Finance and Administration who resides in Arkansas, (3) the presiding
37 Bishop (4) a Cabinet representative and (5) the Director of Connectional Ministries. The
38 Council will elect from its voting membership a president, vice president, and
39 secretary.

40 **20. Conference Treasurer ¶ 619**

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42 **21. Conference Statistician ¶ 603.7**

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44 **22. Conference Secretary ¶ 603.7**

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46 **23. Conference Chancellor ¶ 602.10, 603.8**

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48 **24. Conference Board of Trustees ¶ 2512 to 2516**
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25. Board of Pension and Health Benefits ¶ 638	1
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26. Commission on Archives and History ¶ 641	3
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27. Commission on Communications ¶ 646	5
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28. Commission on Equitable Compensation ¶ 624	7
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29. Joint Committee on Incapacity ¶ 652	9
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30. Administrative Review Committee ¶ 635	11
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31. Committee on Investigation ¶ 2703.2a	13
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32. Committee on Investigation for Deacons ¶ 2703.2b	15
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33. Cabinet ¶ 424	17
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a. The purpose of the Cabinet shall be to act as the central team that develops and implements ministry and mission strategies of the Arkansas Annual Conference. It also shall serve as the body to which all financial requests for ministry resources are submitted. The Director of Connectional Ministries will have primary responsibility to receive requests. It will be the responsibility of the Cabinet to present a budget to the Council on Finance and Administration with a listing of ministry priorities and rationale for budget requests.	19
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b. The membership of the Cabinet shall be determined by the presiding bishop to address the missional needs of the Annual Conference.	26
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34. Committee on Disability Concerns ¶ 653	29
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402 Additional agencies, committees, and offices ¶ 610.2-3	31
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(The following includes additional agencies and officers, any rules that impact the agency or officer and the name given by The Arkansas Annual Conference.)	33
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1. Leadership Table	36
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a. The Leadership Table shall resource and facilitate ministry networks to strengthen local church ministries.	38
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b. The Leadership Table shall be composed of the chairs or designated representatives of the Conference boards and agencies and the coordinators of ministries within those entities under the guidance of the Director of Connectional Ministries.	40
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	43
2. Conference Council on Children’s Ministries	44
	45
a. The Conference Council on Children’s Ministries is responsible for resourcing and providing ongoing training for local church children’s ministry leaders, for offering district and conference level discipleship opportunities for children, and for promoting and advocating for children’s ministries throughout the conference.	46
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- 1 b. The Conference Council on Children’s Ministries shall be composed of the following
2 position, with authority to add persons if required.
3 1) Conference Coordinator
4 2) Three representatives of each district, organized in 3-year classes (w vote)
5 3) Safe Sanctuary Coordinator (w/o vote)
6 4) Wonderfully Made Trainer (w/o vote)
7 5) New Children's Minister Mentor (w/o vote)
8 6) Child Care Ministry Advocate (w/o vote)
9

10 **3. Conference Camp and Retreat Ministries**
11

- 12 a. The Conference Camp and Retreat Ministries is responsible for providing experienc-
13 es in outdoor settings that enable persons of all ages to become disciples of Jesus
14 Christ and to grow in their faith. The Conference Camp and Retreat Ministry Committee
15 will be responsible for budget requests and funding allocations. The Committee will
16 provide proper communication and alignment between Arkansas Conference entities
17 and camps/retreat centers with relationship statements with the conference.
18
19 b. The committee will consist of the following positions, with authority to add persons if
20 required.
21
22 1. Conference Camp and Retreat Ministries Coordinator
23 2. Director of Connectional Ministries
24 3. Conference Director of Children’s Ministries or representative
25 4. Conference Director of Youth Ministries or representative
26 5. Conference Council on Youth Ministries President or designee
27 6. Conference Young Adult Ministries Chair
28 7. Conference Coordinator of Adult, Singles, Family and Older Adult Ministries
29 8. Board of Higher Education Representative
30 9. Camp Tanako Director
31 10. Mount Eagle Retreat Center Director
32 11. Bear Creek Camp Representative
33 12. Shoal Creek Camp Representative
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39 **4. Bishop's Annual Conference Session Planning Task Group**
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- 41 a. The Bishop's Annual Conference Session Planning Task Group shall:
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43 1. Advise the Bishop in developing the Annual Conference theme, agenda, and
44 selection of conference preachers;
45 2. Advise the Bishop on dates and locations for future Annual Conference sessions to
46 present to the Annual Conference for approval.
47 3. Advise and approve plans of the worship committee for the Annual Conference
48 session;
49 4. Maintain a checklist of local host responsibilities;
50

5. Review and approve an evaluation process; 1
 6. Review evaluations of the previous session prior to planning the next session. 2
- b. Membership of the Bishop's Annual Conference Session Planning Task Group shall be: 3
1. Bishop, who shall serve as chairperson; 4
 2. Assistant to the Bishop, who shall serve as vice-chairperson; 5
 3. Bishop's Executive Assistant who shall serve as secretary; 6
 4. Annual Conference Session Administrator 7
 5. Worship Coordinator selected by the bishop; 8
 6. Director of Communications; 9
 7. Conference Treasurer or designee; 10
 8. Host District Superintendent or designee; 11
 9. Annual Conference Session Technical Director 12
 10. At-large members, selected by the Bishop, in order to ensure racial and gender 13
 - diversity within the task group, including two ethnic persons and four lay people. 14
 11. Other members selected as needed by the bishop. 15

5. Committee on Review and Research 16

- a. The Committee on Review and Research shall: 1) Ensure changes in the Conference 17
- Standing Rules and Structure that are mandated by the General Conference and 18
- are published in each subsequent edition of *The Book of Discipline of the United 19*
- Methodist Church*; 2) Review all resolutions presented to the Annual Conference 20
- that call for changes in the Standing Rules or Structure and report to the Conference; 21
- and 3) Propose changes in Standing Rules and Structure that will enable the Annual 22
- Conference to more faithfully carry out its mission, vision, core measures and trajectory. 23
- b. The Committee on Review and Research shall include a chairperson, one representative 24
- from each district, and three at-large members. The chairperson and members shall be 25
- nominated by the Conference Nominating Committee and elected by the Annual Con- 26
- ference. 27
- c. The Committee will work with the Conference Secretary, Journal Editor, and Assistant to 28
- the Bishop to ensure that changes mandated by the General Conference are reflected 29
- in the Conference Standing Rules and Structure, and are published in each subsequent 30
- edition of the Journal. The Committee will review all resolutions, **and** petitions, **and** leg- 31
- islation presented to the Annual Conference that calls for changes in the Standing Rules 32
- or Structure and reports to the Conference. 33

403. Participation by Telephone Conference or Virtual Platform 34

At the discretion of the agency chair or president, conference agency meetings may be held by 35

means of a telephone conference or virtual platform through which all persons participating in the 36

meeting have reasonable opportunity and ability to participate in the meeting, can simultaneously 37

hear discussion and can, as recognized by the chair, speak and address all those meeting as well 38

as vote on matters submitted at the meeting. 39

1 **Chapter Five**
2 **DISTRICTS**

3
4 **501. District Conference (§658-659)**

- 5
6 1. The District Conference sets the district’s annual budget, elects officers, and implements
7 the Arkansas Conference trajectory within its geographic bounds through the members,
8 clergy, congregations, ministries, and leaders of the district.
9
10 2. In addition to the Administrative Structure, the District includes mission and ministry commit-
11 tees, councils, and organizations, such as those for youth, Lay Servants, and UMW.

12 **502. District Leadership Board §660.7, §661, §669, §2518**

- 13
14 1. The DLB serves as the district conference’s administrative executive committee, with the
15 duties and responsibilities of the District Superintendency Committee and District Trustees
16 as well as nominations and finances. The DLB will administer the district budget, assets and
17 real property, and personnel support.
18
19 2. The DLB shall be composed of the following:
20
21 a. Six elected members with representation (§669.1, §2518) by laywomen, laymen, and
22 clergy who serve as the District Trustees (§2518) and fulfill the role of the District’s legal
23 Board of Directors, if the District is incorporated
24
25 b. 2 At-Large Members §669.1
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27 c. 2 members appointed by the CMS/DS
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29 d. District Lay Leader §660
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31 e. Chief Mission Strategist/District Superintendent
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33 f. Advisory members may be added as needed (§669.2)
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35 g. The bishop of the area, or his or her authorized representative, shall be an ex officio
36 member of said committee (§669.2) in its role as the Superintendency Committee

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38 **503. District Committee on Ordained Ministry (§666)**

- 39
40 1. The DCOM is amenable to the conference Board of Ordained Ministry. It is responsible
41 for candidacy, the examination of candidates seeking ministerial office and the ongoing
42 credentialing for licensed local pastors.
43
44 2. Members nominated annually by the CMS/DS in consultation with the BOM chair or
45 executive committee and approved by the annual conference §666.1

46 **504. District Board of Church Location and Building (§2519-2524)**

- 47
48 1. The DBCLB is responsible for reviewing building projects and purchases, and it partners
49 with the Chief Mission Strategist/ District Superintendent (CMS/DS) to implement a strategy
50

with conference trajectory-aligned priorities for the mission fields of the district, including the to explore the repurposing, closing and realignment of churches.

- Membership shall be composed of the district superintendent and six to nine members nominated by the district superintendent in consultation with the district nominating committee and elected by the Annual Conference for three-year terms and divided into classes with one-third laywomen, one-third laymen, and one-third clergy ¶2519. The District Lay Leader may also be included. ¶660.8.

505. District Lay Leader (¶660.2)

The District Lay Leader, and one or more associate district lay leaders if so desired, will be nominated by the District Leadership Board and elected at the District Conference. Terms of office shall begin at the adjournment of the district conference at which they are elected and shall be for a period of four years with a maximum of two consecutive four-year terms, with a minimum of four years before reelection.

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Consent Calendar Reports

200,000 More Reasons to Fight Childhood Hunger



Mission: 100% of Arkansas United Methodist churches will participate in an initiative to significantly reduce childhood hunger through feeding ministries, public witness, and education for long-term stability.

As 200,000 More Reasons, we invite local congregations to do more for hungry children and families around strategies that provide stability and long-term solutions. We encourage ministries focused on access to food, childhood literacy, and promoting healthy, stable family life. Local church ministries provide access to food now; greater learning potential for the child in the future; and, opportunities for living without food insecurity for the next generation.

Grants totaling \$52,150 were shared in Spring and Fall of 2025 with fifty-one churches around the state to support ministries related to each of our objectives: Nutrition, Literacy, and Stability at home.

Nutrition: Arkansas ranks number one in the nation for food insecurity. Unfortunately, the number of children living with food insecurity has increased from 139,000 in 2020 to approximately 168,430 in 2022, largely due to the end of COVID-19 pandemic hunger funding. Children account for approximately 30% of hungry Arkansans. 83%, or 372 local UMC congregations and organizations, reported in 2025 offering or supporting a local ministry that feeds food-insecure children and their families. These include blessing boxes, food pantries, mobile food distributions, backpacks of food, out-of-school meals, and congregational support of local and regional food distributions. Our goal is to have 100% of our churches doing something.

Approximately half of SNAP recipients in Arkansas are families with children. 200,000 More Reasons partnered with the Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance to offer SNAP training programs to feeding ministries across the state. In November, when SNAP benefits were at risk, 200,000 More Reasons partnered with the Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance to host an Advocacy 101 training for ministries seeking knowledge to advocate for their neighbors.

200,000 More Reasons is collaborating with Bishop Merrill's new Immigrant Justice Taskforce to equip our feeding ministries to be safe spaces for immigrant neighbors and families.

200,000 More Reasons is launching its next phase of eliminating childhood hunger in Arkansas. Beginning in May, the initiative will transition to equipping churches to advocate for their hungry neighbors and create sustainable, vital, and connectional ministries.

Literacy: Only 32% of Arkansas third graders read proficiently, according to 2023 school-year data from the ACT Aspire assessment, down from 37% in 2017. Research indicates that the transition from third to fourth grade marks a shift from learning to read to reading to learn. Almost all readers who were proficient in the third grade (96%) graduated from high school. This new data highlights the importance of the work our churches are doing.

Approximately 21% of children in Arkansas have access to a high-quality summer reading program. Project Transformation has created an online guide so churches can implement a quality summer reading program for elementary-aged children. The 8-week curriculum focuses on literacy skills, spiritual development, and relationship-building and is an easy, flexible resource to implement. The cost also includes consultation from professionals to help churches design their program to fit the community's needs. Thanks to the Methodist Foundation for Arkansas, churches can receive this curriculum through a rolling 200,000 More Reasons Literacy grant.

Our goal is to have 50% of United Methodist Churches and organizations with ministries that increase access to books, offer in-school reading tutors or out-of-school reading programs. This year, 45% started, expanded, or continued their ministries of little free libraries, reading camps, after-school programs, tutoring ministries or distributed books to children.

Stability at home: In 2021, 22% of Arkansas' children experienced two or more ACEs – Adverse Childhood Experiences. These are traumatizing events such as divorce, living with someone who misuses substances or has mental illness, witnessing violence, or having a parent in jail or dying. Children in poverty are at higher risk for more ACEs.

For a state that ranks in the top 10 for most ACEs per person and low access to mental health, the ARUMC can do more to help children in poverty and the adults who care for them. Offering positive experiences through ministries and access to mental health will counterbalance the adverse impact some food-insecure children endure. 200K More Reasons encourages local congregations to promote healthy, stable families by 1) increasing awareness of mental health issues and the need for access to affordable and acceptable care; 2) opening church doors to community-wide support, training and learning; and, 3) creating topic-driven small groups for under-resourced families.

28% of ARUMC's reported in 2024 ministries that promote a stable family life, mostly around addiction care and crisis support. Our goal is to have 35% offering these ministries to food-insecure families.

All of Arkansas' United Methodist Churches are vital to their community. 200,000 More Reasons supports those churches and ministries that reach out beyond the pews to some of the most vulnerable children in food-insecure, under-resourced households. We celebrate what you are doing as local congregations and as disciples of Christ.

Contact us at 200kmorereasons@arumc.org if your church needs ideas or support in getting started in any of these ministry areas.

Age-Level Ministries

The work of Age Level Ministries of the Arkansas Conference of the United Methodist Church is to equip and encourage those working with kids and teens in our local churches and beyond. Our hope is that pastors, staff members, and volunteers will not only feel celebrated in their ministries, but also have access to the resources they need to encourage faith and community among their young disciples.

Over the last year, these goals have been met through various offerings. Monthly emails filled with resources and information are sent to anyone who wants to be connected to these ministries.

1 Another monthly connection opportunity was started in April as we began offering monthly zoom
2 gatherings for training and fellowship. Both of these are simple ways for those working with kids
3 and teens to remember that they are part of a community of people who share their passion and
4 calling.

5
6 We were also able to offer multiple continuing education opportunities. We provided scholarships
7 to both the 4EG (For Every Generation) Conference in St. Louis, Missouri and to the Perkins School
8 of Youth and Children’s Ministry in Richardson, Texas. Almost 40 adults were inspired and trained
9 by these events. In January, we gathered for a conference in Conway, Arkansas called ReCharge
10 where children and youth pastors could find community and education closer to home. This was a
11 weekend filled with laughter, conversation, and support.

12
13 While supporting the adults in these ministries is our primary work, we were also able to provide
14 opportunities for young people to gather at both Bible Bootcamp offered in February and
15 Confirmation Day with the Bishop in March. Both of these events provided discipleship
16 opportunities alongside a celebration of the UMC connection. We had over 150 combined students
17 participate in these events from around the state. We also had a team of children’s pastors create a
18 Lenten curriculum for kids that was distributed to all of our churches.

19
20 In the year to come, we are looking forward to continuing this work of encouragement and
21 equipping. The Arkansas Conference of The United Methodist Church is blessed with so many
22 adults who seek to welcome and disciple our kids and teens. Whether you are in a church with 100
23 young people on a Sunday or a church who welcomes one child a few times a year, you are a part
24 of this foundational, life-changing ministry. Thank you for sharing the love of Jesus with our
25 youngest disciples.

26
27 Respectfully Submitted,

28
29 Rev. Brittany Richardson Watson
30 Age Level Discipleship Coordinator
31 ARUMC

32 33 **Arkansas Conference Council on Youth Ministries (ACCYM)**

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35 Over the past year, the Arkansas Conference Council on Youth Ministries (ACCYM) has continued
36 to flourish as we have expanded our mission, outreach, and attendance at events. The investments
37 made in the youth of the ARUMC are evident in the ways youth are developing personal faith and
38 commitment to Christ, forming bonds of Christian fellowship, and becoming leaders at all levels of
39 the Church. Our members—the passionate and young disciples representing every corner of this
40 Conference—continue to do admirable work participating in service and outreach as we aim to
41 spread the Gospel and promote the connection of the UMC.

42
43 In November of 2025, we brought back hosting two weekends of our 6th-9th grade event, Ref-
44 uge, at Shepherd of the Ozarks in Harriet, Arkansas, to encourage youth to unplug and connect
45 with Christ. Our theme was “Shalom,” a Hebrew term often translated simply as “peace,” and our
46 two speakers, Rev. Lauren DeLano Grosskopf and Rev. Sam Meadors, expanded on this blessing
47 by highlighting how Shalom encompasses wholeness and harmony that can be found through the
48 Holy Spirit. The nearly 500 attendees both weekends also got to engage in worship with a
49 youth-led band and Central UMC Fayetteville band, as well as a wide variety of activities, games,
50 and spiritual connection.

At our largest event, Veritas, we learned about “Imago Dei,” meaning the Image of God, with four different speakers featured at each worship service: Rev. LaToya Shepherd, Rev. Josué Araujo, Rev. Tino Herrera, and Rev. Emily Nelms-Chastain. During this weekend event held in February at the Ft. Smith Convention Center, we also participated in worship led by Ben Grace, an abundance of breakout sessions exploring various topics, and late-night activities. We were overjoyed to welcome youth representing the Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference and the Horizon Texas Conference, with whom delegates of ACCYM connected after attending the South Central Jurisdiction Youth Organization Leadership Training Event in Oklahoma last fall.

Raising more than \$13,200 by selling merchandise at Refuge and Veritas and hosting special events like a Halloween Bash and luncheon, our Youth Service Fund (YSF) was fortunate enough to award a total of \$6,400 in grant funds. The 6 recipients of the YSF funds were: FUMC Sheridan, FUMC Cabot Youth, Arkansas Tech Wesley, FUMC Jonesboro Youth, FUMC North Little Rock Youth, and Project Transformation. After retiring our beloved mascot, Mark the Moose, the YSF is working on developing new graphics and launching a new mascot. Without their dedication and great ideas, these charitable funds would not have been raised and utilized to support outreach and mission throughout the state.

Jr. High and Senior High Assembly will take place the week of July 20th-24th at Hendrix College, and attendees will learn about 1 Timothy 4:12 with the theme of “Impact.” Youth attending this weeklong event will have the opportunity to connect with youth from across the state as they are split into small groups that engage in daily games, lessons, and worship together. It is a week filled with relationship and spiritual development, and we anticipate our attendance for this event to increase this summer.

We are sincerely proud of the work our members are doing and of the passion that is poured into each event. It is our sincere hope to further our growth in providing opportunities for United Methodist youth in our conference to strengthen their faith in Christ as we prepare for our next calendar year. The next generation of leaders in this Conference are ambitious, conscientious, grace-filled, justice oriented, and committed Christians. Over the next year, ACCYM will continue to thrive and work as the hands and feet of Christ within the ARUMC and beyond.

Blessings,
Sadie Ledbetter
Chair of the Arkansas Conference Council on Youth Ministries

Black Church Initiative: COC

Our goal is to empower the next generation of leaders by walking with them in faith, hope, and love—offering guidance, affirmation, and community as they grow into their God-given purpose. This initiative reflects our Wesleyan values of discipleship, connection, and social transformation.

Highlighting Special Moments from This Year

We sponsored six African American young people and three chaperons who attended Veritas for the first time. This event took place Feb. 27-March 1, in Fort Smith, AR.

On Saturday, December 20, 2025, I gathered with several youths and youth workers from Emory Chapel UMC at Newport, AR. I also attended worship service and delivered the morning message that Sunday, December 21, 2025.

1 We sponsored four youths to Mission U (from New Zion UMC, Maumelle, AR) on July 23, 2025.
2
3 I visited St. James UMC in Fayetteville, AR, on July 1 and August 10, 2025. This is an African
4 American community within the UMC that faces challenges related to its church and parsonage.
5 The superintendent asked me to meet with the pastor and members to discuss the church's future
6 viability. This is an ongoing process that will need significant financial support.
7
8 Cluster meeting with Scott's Memorial, Ebenezer, Mount Carmel, and Valley Grove UMCs on
9 August 7, 2025. This was an introductory and sharing session, focusing on getting to know the
10 pastors and members of these churches.
11
12 Chris Way UMC, August 30, 2025 is another church that faces challenges related to its physical
13 plant. The superintendent asked me to meet with the pastor and members to discuss their
14 situation. I am still waiting to hear from them.
15
16 Hunter, LR, Friends and Family Day, Sep. 6, 2026
17
18 Wesley UMC, LR, September 7, 2025
19
20 I met with Dr. Maurice D. Gipson, President of Philander Smith University, on September 23, 2025.
21 We discussed how to build a stronger relationship between Philander Smith University (PSU) and
22 the Arkansas Conference, with a particular focus on attracting more United Methodist Church
23 (UMC) African American students.
24
25 I attended Taylor Chapel UMC on October 12, 2025, for their 'Slabtown Mock Annual Conference.'
26 This was another effort to support and encourage the pastor and members of local congregations.
27
28 BCIATFV members met with Dr. Dana Lyles from October 14 to 16, 2025. During this meeting, we
29 reviewed the ministry's goals and expected objectives. We also discussed how to improve African
30 American members' connection to and involvement in conference-related matters.
31
32 St. James UMC, Pine Bluff, July 20, October 28, 2025
33
34 Haven UMC, Hot Springs, Nov. 2. 2025
35
36 Wesley UMC, Brinkley, AR, Nov. 16, 2025
37
38 St. Mark UMC, Pine Bluff, Dec. 14, 2025
39
40 St. Paul, Maumelle, LR, Jan. 4, 2026
41
42 **Emerging New Ministries, Programs, and Partnerships**
43 One of the partnerships I want to mention is the one between Black Church Initiatives – A Toolkit
44 For Vitality and Dr. Keneshia Bryant-Moore, Ph.D., RN, RNP-BC, UAMS Professor in the Department
45 of Health Behavior and Health Education, and founder and co-owner of Mariposa's Place of
46 Wellness.
47 Dr. Bryant-Moore will be our primary presenter on March 28, 2026, "You're Not Too Young to Lead"
48 Youth and Young Adult Leadership Workshop, a dynamic virtual gathering created to encourage
49 young people to recognize their influence, strengthen their leadership voice, and develop practical
50

habits that prepare them to lead with confidence and purpose.	1
	2
We partnered with the Arkansas Chapter of the American Community Gardening Association for the National Conference. To be held June 4-7, 2026, in Little Rock, Arkansas.	3
	4
	5
We partnered with Trisha Manns, the Church and Community Worker, with the United Methodist General Board of Global Ministries. Through this partnership, we co-sponsored one young adult's airfare to the Global Young People's Convocation (GYPC) in Dublin, Ireland, on July 7-11, 2026.	6
	7
	8
	9
Celebrating Milestones and Accomplishments	10
One of the biggest milestones is that of establishing and continuing a working relationship with the youth and young adults and their sponsors in the various churches.	11
	12
	13
Two of our high school graduates are planning to attend college. One will attend the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville, AR; the other will attend Arkansas State University at Jonesboro, AR.	14
	15
	16
Dr. Bryant-Moore will be our primary presenter on March 28, 2026, for "You're Not Too Young to Lead."	17
	18
	19
We are awaiting information that has been ordered that will focus on Black History and other culturally related information. This information will be used to help young people appreciate and value their cultural identity, ethnicity, and ancestral legacy on an ongoing basis.	20
	21
	22
	23
We also strive to create consistent participation in ministry gatherings while building healthy friendships and support networks.	24
	25
	26
Impacting Local Churches and Communities	27
We have met with church leaders who find themselves in sensitive situations relating to physical plant needs, financial support, and sound wisdom. In addition, we have sponsored youths and young adults to attend various gatherings, which will help them build self-esteem, broaden their worldview, and equip them for leadership in an ever-evolving world.	28
	29
	30
	31
	32
We have and are increasing the visibility and connection of African American youths and young adults with the annual and district conference(s). These young people, who are from various parts of Arkansas, are also establishing connections and building community.	33
	34
	35
	36
The story I will share is about our ministry sponsoring four young people to Mission U. They were so excited to attend that event. There are many details I could mention, but I will keep this brief. On that Saturday morning, when it was time for them to check out and go home, they wondered why they couldn't stay longer and eagerly asked if they could attend the next Mission U. A few days later, Janice, their aunt who is raising them, called to share how they kept talking about being part of that gathering and how they are looking forward to attending Mission U in 2026.	37
	38
	39
	40
	41
	42
	43
Collaborating and Connecting Our Ministry	44
We are excited about our collaboration with Trisha Manns, the Church and Community Worker with the United Methodist General Board of Global Ministries, who is serving as a youth and young adult coordinator at the Central District Parish Youth and Young Adult Ministry, Little Rock, Arkansas.	45
	46
	47
	48
We are thankful for the opportunity to work with the thirty-five African American churches, pastors, and laity in the Arkansas Conference.	49
	50

1 **Looking Ahead**

2 Develop consistent discipleship tracks for youth and young adults.

3

4 Expand mentorship opportunities with trusted, trained adult leaders.

5

6 To move forward with our “Legacy in Action: Faith, Culture and Real Talk Café” initiative. Isolation
7 becomes a barrier to belonging. Young adults often feel like “the only one” in their age group. We
8 hope to offer a community for these young people to tap into and broaden their perspectives and
9 gifts.

10

11 Create culturally rooted worship and devotional resources. Welcoming, Spirit-filled
12 worship.

13

14 Increase youth-led participation in worship, prayer, and teaching moments.

15

16 Relevant ministries with children, youth, and young adults. Small group and intergenerational
17 ministries.

18

19 **Emerging Opportunities**

20

21 **Support Academic, Career, and Life Development**

22 Offer tutoring, college prep, and scholarship navigation

23

24 Provide financial literacy, entrepreneurship, and career-readiness workshops

25

26 Celebrate academic and professional milestones throughout the year

27

28 Build partnerships with HBCUs, trade programs, and local employers

29

30 **Engage Churches and Leaders Across the Conference**

31 Track engagement, growth, and impact using simple digital tools

32

33 Develop a sustainable volunteer structure with clear roles

34

35 Secure grants, partnerships, or funding for long-term ministry vitality

36

37 **Recognizing Who Make the Work Possible with Gratitude**

38 Tiffany Simmons Cooper, my administrative assistant.

39

40 The members of BCIATFV

41 Bishop Merrill, the Cabinet members, and other staff personnel at the conference office

42

43 The pastors and laity that I have gotten to know and worked with this conference year
44 (2025-2026).

45

46 All of the young people who trusted this effort enough to participate in many of the activities we
47 invited them to this past year.

48

49

50

Lastly, we would like to thank all of the volunteers, staff and churches who have contributed to this ministry. In many ways, all of them have been gracious, supportive, and understanding. Many have gone out of their way to keep me informed about events, programs, and special days related to their faith communities. Several have taken the time to support and accompany youths to various conferences and district events, like Veritas, Mission U, camping, Zoom, and phone gatherings.

Our connectional partnership has assisted our work in various ways. The broadness of intellectual resources and the wisdom they have brought to our combined efforts. Through our connections with them, we can leverage other connections with other groups or entities. Our ecumenical and community partners established discussions about the rural church initiative with the cluster of churches in South Arkansas. Some of the pastors had invited leaders from other denominations and faith groups. This relationship will allow us to reach a broader audience as we move forward with the rural church initiative.

Respectfully Submitted,

Black Church Initiative-A Toolkit For Vitality
2025-2026
Rev. Ulysses Washington

Board of Church and Society

The Arkansas Conference Board of Church and Society continues to serve as a connectional bridge between the social witness of The United Methodist Church and the congregations and institutions of the Arkansas Annual Conference. Grounded in our Wesleyan commitment to personal and social holiness, we have sought this year to equip churches to live more fully into the Social Principles and our shared call to justice, reconciliation, and care for creation.

New Leadership for Peace with Justice and Creation Care

We are grateful to have filled two key leadership positions this past year to strengthen and expand our work:

- Peace with Justice Coordinator – Rev. Joshua Bland
Rev. Bland is assisting congregations in identifying, developing, and sustaining ministries that embody the church’s commitment to justice and peace, as well as coordinating the Peace with Justice Grant process.
- Caretaker of Creation – Rev. Kelly Giese
Rev. Giese is coordinating a statewide Creation Care network, connecting green teams and advocates of creation care, and compiling examples of how local churches and institutions are stewarding their buildings and land for greater ecological faithfulness within their unique ministry contexts.

Together, these leaders are helping our conference move from conversation to collaboration and from intention to implementation.

Creation Care Gathering

There will be an additional opportunity for organizing, equipping, and celebrating Creation Care and Green Team work at the Arkansas Conference Third Annual Breakfast for Creation Care/Green Team ministries, as well as the presence of practitioners like EarthKeepers and other partners. This gathering continues to grow as a space for encouragement, idea-sharing, and spiritual grounding for those engaged in and sharing creation care ministries.

1 *Resolution and Best Practices in Land Use*

2 The Board developed and is proposing a resolution to encourage increased networking,
3 resource-sharing, and best practices regarding land use among Arkansas United Methodist
4 churches and affiliated organizations. Many congregations steward significant property and land
5 that serve as important sites of ministry—through food production, conservation, affordable
6 housing partnerships, and community gathering space.

7
8 **A Land Use Audit**, developed by Rev. Lindsey Russell, a UMC EarthKeeper, is available to guide
9 churches and equip them to discern additional ways to steward creation directly under
10 congregational care. Our aim is to foster greater collaboration and imagination so that church
11 properties may become visible signs of God’s renewing/creating work in our communities.

12
13 *Peace with Justice Grants*

14 During 2025–2026, the Board invited local congregations and United Methodist institutions across
15 Arkansas to apply for Peace with Justice Grants. These grants are designed to support innovative
16 and faithful ministries aligned with the Social Principles in areas such as education of and
17 advocacy of our Social Principles; as well as key quadrennial priorities such as climate change,
18 racial and social justice, civil and human rights, e.g., voting rights, migration, peace-making, civic
19 engagement, and influencing policy makers. Grant applications were due March 29 (Palm Sunday).
20 Award recipients will be announced prior to and celebrated during the Arkansas Annual
21 Conference session, highlighting the creative and courageous ministry happening across our
22 connection.

23
24 *Immigration and General Church Engagement*

25 The Board has received and reflected upon reports regarding the work of the General Board of
26 Church and Society, particularly related to immigration advocacy and policy engagement. We have
27 also heard updates from the ARUMC Immigration Task Force, learning how congregations are
28 responding pastorally, prophetically, and compassionately to immigrant communities within our
29 state. A border education trip is being considered to foster understanding of the issues. These
30 conversations continue to shape our awareness, advocacy, and educational efforts within
31 Arkansas.

32
33 *Education*

34 All Arkansas UMC institutions are encouraged to access the Arkansas Board of Church and
35 Society and General Board of Church and Society social media pages and the C&S page on the
36 arumc.org website to help our conference embody the Gospel through faithful public witness,
37 compassionate action, and courageous advocacy. We encourage congregations and groups that
38 need more information and educational resources to reach out to members of the Arkansas Board
39 whose members are listed on the website page. We work year round to equip all the conference in
40 faithful justice work and in the Spirit of Jesus’ bold and prophetic teaching, preaching, and actions
41 to address injustice and alleviate suffering.

42
43
44 Respectfully submitted,
45 Rev. Betsy Singleton Snyder
46 Chair, Arkansas Conference Board of Church and Society

47
48
49
50

Board of Discipleship

This past year has been a season of dreaming, discerning, and planning for the future ministry of the church across Arkansas. The primary focus of the Conference Board of Discipleship has been strengthening the connection between Arkansas United Methodist congregations so that we may more faithfully live out our shared mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ.

One of the most promising initiatives currently being developed by the Board is a cooperative parish model centered on congregational affinities. This model seeks to connect congregations based on the specific ministries to which the Lord is calling them. Rather than viewing churches as isolated ministry settings, we are imagining ways congregations can partner according to their shared passions, gifts, and callings.

For example, one congregation may feel called to serve our senior population through exercise and wellness ministries, while another congregation may be led to provide meals and care for seniors who face challenges leaving their homes. These ministries naturally complement one another and create opportunities for partnership, shared resources, and expanded impact. Similar connections could emerge in areas such as children's ministries, food security, community health, discipleship groups, recovery ministries, and outreach to young families. The possibilities are truly endless.

We believe that fostering these kinds of intentional connections will not only strengthen our collective impact across Arkansas but will also deepen the relationships between our United Methodist congregations. By working together through shared callings, we can more effectively serve our communities while building stronger bonds within the connection.

The Board looks forward to continuing this work and moving toward implementation of these partnerships in the coming appointive year.

Respectfully submitted,
Bill Sardin
Chair, Conference Board of Discipleship

Board of Global Ministries

"Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice... to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house?" — Isaiah 58:6-7

The Board of Global Ministries serves as the link between the Arkansas Annual Conference and the global mission work of the United Methodist Church. Our work is grounded in four mission priorities: Missionaries and Evangelism & Church Revitalization, Global Health, Creation Care, and Humanitarian Relief and Recovery.

Our 5-Star Church Award program continues to gain traction. Introduced in 2023 with First UMC Conway as our inaugural recipient, this initiative encourages congregations to engage holistically in mission by paying 100% of the Arkansas Tithe Initiative, contributing to UMCOR Sunday, and actively participating in all five mission categories. We look forward to recognizing additional churches at this year's Annual Conference.

Our partnership with missionaries continues to grow. Trisha Manns, our Church and Community Worker, has sustained and expanded youth and young adult ministries with historically Black

1 congregations in the Central District, including White Memorial, Hoover, St. Paul—Maumelle,
2 Hunter, Mark's Chapel, and St. James in Pine Bluff. This year, her focus has shifted toward
3 leadership succession, working to ensure ministries are institutionally rooted in congregations
4 rather than tied to individual leaders. This summer, she will lead college students to the Global
5 Young People's Convocation in Ireland. Working with Rev. Lindsey Russell, our Conference
6 Secretary of Global Ministries, we have committed to hosting missionary Decal Gilvren Antipolo for
7 itineration through Arkansas in fall 2026, offering congregations an opportunity to build covenant
8 relationships with a new global mission partner.

9
10 Mission U remains central to our educational efforts. The 2026 session will be held July 29—
11 August 1 at Hendrix College under the theme "Experiencing Emmanuel." This year's programming
12 includes a new three-session Bible study alongside the adult curriculum, eleven workshops, and
13 mission projects supporting Methodist Family Health. We are grateful for our partnership with
14 United Women in Faith and the Methodist Foundation for Arkansas.

15
16 The Conference Creation Care Initiative continues under the leadership of Rev. Dr. Angie Gage,
17 our EarthKeeper, who is developing organic community garden guidelines for distribution across
18 the conference. Rev. Kelly Giese now serves as the conference's Caretaker of Creation.

19
20 Our Abundant Health ministry, led by Dr. Laurie Barber, has connected global health priorities to
21 local action. This year's work included co-sponsoring the "Vaccines and the Call to Care" webinar
22 with the Board of Church and Society and participating in the "Love Your Neighbor" event in
23 Northwest Arkansas, focused on addressing the medical needs and dignity of unhoused
24 neighbors. Jeff Fuller, GBGM's Abundant Health Coordinator, plans to attend this year's Annual
25 Conference to strengthen connections with our local initiative.

26
27 Our Volunteer in Mission and Disaster Response Coordinators, Roy and Shelley Lee, have
28 significantly strengthened the conference's disaster readiness. Two Early Response Team
29 trainings—in Little Rock in September and in Bay in February—certified 31 new ERT members, with
30 additional training planned for the South District. The UMCOR Hub has been improved with new
31 HVAC units to protect supplies and make the facility usable year-round. Fall 2025's Ingathering
32 saw strong participation. Planning is underway for Ingathering 2026, blending disaster response
33 and hunger relief as in years past.

34
35 Our Conference Advocates for the Poor—Revs. Lupita Chavarria-Garcia, Brad Moore, and Paul
36 Atkins—have addressed both immediate needs and systemic challenges. Rev. Chavarria-Garcia's
37 food pantry ministry in central Arkansas serves Latino neighbors, veterans, and seniors while also
38 providing a ministry of presence to immigrant families facing uncertainty. Rev. Moore is developing
39 a rural poverty ministry resource for churches across the conference. Rev. Atkins continued his
40 work with Canvas Community, emphasizing relational ministry with persons experiencing
41 homelessness.

42
43 We celebrate the denomination's ratification of constitutional amendments strengthening our
44 commitment to combating racism and standing against Christian nationalism, as well as prohibiting
45 discrimination against women in church membership and against persons with disabilities.
46 When the nation experienced a SNAP benefits crisis in fall 2025, Arkansas United Methodists
47 responded. Four churches received \$3,000 emergency feeding grants from Global Ministries, and
48 local food pantries mobilized to serve neighbors facing hunger. The interfaith coalition organized
49 by Bishop Merrill and North Arkansas Food Bank CEO Jeff Quick continues to address systemic
50 solutions to food insecurity in our state.

As we align our work with the conference mission—"Following Jesus, Loving People, Sharing Grace"—the Board of Global Ministries invites each congregation in the Arkansas Conference to join us in this sacred work.

Rev. Dr. Hammett N. Evans
Chairperson, Arkansas Conference Board of Global Ministries
hammett.evans@arumc.org

Board of Global Ministries: Conference Secretary

At the Annual Conference last year, your Board of Global Ministries Committee presented a new focus and plan to live into our connectional system more fully through missionary itineration. Missionaries through Global Ministries itinerate, or travel, roughly every three years to share stories, make connections and build support for their mission work. We've set apart funds in our budget and set the goal of hosting up to four missionaries a year in the Arkansas Conference. I'm excited to report that our conference hosted two missionaries in 2025!

John Nday and Florence Kaying, originally from the Democratic Republic of Congo and now serving as General Board of Global Ministries missionaries living in Mozambique, visited churches in the Northwest District in late June of last year. Barry and Sami Allen from Grace Chapel UMC graciously hosted this missionary couple in their home for six days, providing multiple meals and lodging. While visiting the Northwest District, John and Florence preached in Sunday worship and served a community meal at Grace Chapel United Methodist Church, spoke at the Rogers United Women in Faith luncheon, toured the non-profit Cobblestone Farms and shared lunch with local church leaders, served at Local Mission Project and worshipped with students and leaders at First United Methodist Church Springdale, and enjoyed the local art museum Crystal Bridges before heading back to Mozambique! It was a busy but meaningful week full of stories and connections. John was able to learn about processes and equipment used at Cobblestone Farms and share about his work in the Yambasu Agricultural Initiative and Florence's work as a nurse and midwife at the health center in Cambine. We hope to welcome them back in 2028!

Due to travel visa restraints, Global Ministries Missionaries did not itinerate in the United States in the first quarter but are starting to make plans for itineration in quarter two and beyond. Your Global Ministries Committee has agreed to host another missionary in our conference in quarter three of 2026. Gilvren Antipolo Decal is serving as Church Developer and Planter with the Tanzania Annual Conference - Tanzania. Originally from the Philippines, Gilvren was commissioned as a missionary during General Conference 2024 and is currently seeking to build new church relationships and share about his mission field. Plans are underway to connect Gilvren with churches across our conference. If you are interested in possibly connecting with Gilvren, please contact me!

If you would like to learn more about John, Florence and Gilvren's stories and how you can support them, you can visit the Global Ministries Advance website and search using each missionaries Advance number.

<https://gbhem-umc.my.site.com/hemgm/s/missionaries>

1 Kyoni John Nday
2 Country: Mozambique
3 Advance #3022170

4
5 Florence Kaying
6 Country: Mozambique
7 Advance #3022177

8
9 Gilvren Antipolo Decal
10 Country: Tanzania
11 Advance #3022779

12
13 In addition to connecting with and supporting these missionaries, we continue to celebrate the
14 ways that our local churches are generously supporting the work of God through Global
15 Ministries Mission Projects, both around the globe and within our state. In 2025, close to 100
16 churches generously gave over \$156,000 to Global Ministries projects and missionaries. I am
17 grateful for the generosity of this Annual Conference and our commitment to sharing God’s love
18 through these missions and missionaries.

19
20 Joyfully,
21 Rev. Lindsey Russell
22 Conference Secretary, Global Ministries
23 lindsey.russell@arumc.org

24 25 **Board of Higher Education and Campus Ministry**

26 Campus ministry continues to be a vital and growing presence across Arkansas. There are
27 amazing stories coming from our Wesley Foundations and Religious Life—stories of connection,
28 leadership development, and meaningful engagement with students.

29
30 This work is deeply relational. Much of ministry is happening through weekly meals, small groups,
31 one-on-one conversations, and consistent presence on campus. In these spaces, students are
32 asking honest questions, building community, and exploring faith in authentic ways.

33
34 We are especially encouraged by:

- 35 • Strong participation in weekly gatherings and meals
- 36 • Ongoing small groups and discipleship opportunities
- 37 • Student leadership development across campuses
- 38 • Collaboration through joint events and shared experiences

39
40 These joint gatherings continue to be a strength, helping students see they are part of something
41 larger while deepening relationships across campuses.

42
43 At the same time, we recognize the challenges students are facing—academic pressure, mental
44 health concerns, and financial stress. Campus ministry remains a steady and needed presence,
45 offering belonging, support, and hope.

46
47 As a board, we continue to focus on strengthening communication, supporting campus ministers,
48 and equipping local boards for sustainability and growth. We are also looking ahead to upcoming
49 opportunities to highlight this ministry more broadly.

50

We are grateful for the continued support of our campus ministries through our conference and local churches. Campus ministry is shaping lives in meaningful ways, and we trust that the impact of this work will continue for years to come.

Church and Community Worker

Greetings ARUMC Family!

The Central District Youth and Young Adult Coordinator position was initially conceived in 2017 as a result of a collaboration between the Arkansas Conference Board of Global Ministries and the Arkansas Caucus of Black Methodists for Church Renewal. This Church and Community Worker site was not funded until 2022 when a match of gifts and graces and community needs was found. Following an intensive interview with the Church and Community Worker and two training sessions with the Partner Churches, Trisha Manns was placed in Arkansas in December 2022. The Youth and Young Adult Coordinator was designed as a pilot program in the Central District which could be expanded over the six-year period of the ARUMC commitment to other districts and additional congregations.

The CCW in the past year has continued to work with the six partner churches in the ARUMC Central District supporting projects, youth and young adult ministries, and events. The CCW has continued to assist the partner churches in applying for grant funding to support the work they are doing in their communities. Through her assistance the local church has received funding from The Methodist Foundation for Arkansas and the General Board of Global Ministries. The CCW continues to look for opportunities for the partner churches to work together for the youth and young adults across all our communities in the Central District. One of the biggest opportunities that we were able to offer our families is to attend the 2026 Global Young People's Convocation in Dublin, Ireland. We look forward to how our young people will be transformed from this experience in learning about the global impact of the United Methodist Church. A special thank you to the Methodist Foundation for Arkansas and the Arkansas Annual Conference, Rev. Brittany Watson, Age Level Discipleship Coordinator.

As we consider the future of the CCW role and church partnerships, we are looking forward to partnering with new church communities, local programs, and outreach ministries. We are looking forward to the programs and events planned for our communities. We also hope to continue to work in supporting each other's communities in our visions of service with each other in our contexts. We appreciate your support as the CCW role continues as a part of the Arkansas Annual Conference.

Trisha Manns, Central District Parish Youth and Young Adult Coordinator

Commission on Archives and History

With a focus on the past 10 years and renewal, the Commission on Archives and History has remained steadfast in its calling to preserve, interpret, and make accessible the rich heritage of United Methodism in Arkansas. Its mission, grounded in the Book of Discipline, continues to guide its work as it promotes and cares for the historical interests of the United Methodist Church in our state.

Since 2015, the Winfred D. Polk Archives has experienced remarkable growth and strengthening.

1 A multi-year digitization project has made more than 170 historic conference journals available
2 online, significantly expanding access to records from the Arkansas, North Arkansas, Little Rock,
3 Ouachita, Southwest, and White River Conferences.

4
5 This expansion has provided an invaluable foundation for clergy, laity, researchers, and local
6 churches. At the same time, the Archives has continued to maintain and enlarge its extensive
7 collections of local church histories, clergy files, and bound congregational histories—now
8 numbering around one hundred—ensuring that the stories of our churches and their people
9 remain preserved for future generations.

10
11 The commitment to public access has also been unwavering. The Archives, housed at Bailey
12 Library on the campus of Hendrix College, has sustained regular hours and support from
13 dedicated archivists who guide visitors, answer inquiries, and assist researchers. Their work has
14 included preserving historic newspapers, membership records, photographs, disciplinary texts,
15 hymnals, Methodist-related publications, and rare volumes such as John Wesley’s
16 eighteenth-century works.

17 Through these years, the Commission’s ministry has supported the ongoing production of the
18 Pre-Conference Journal. Even the recent 2025 edition benefited from the depth and accessibility
19 of the archival collections, demonstrating the enduring value of this ministry for the annual
20 conference.

21
22 As we look beyond the Covid-era disruptions and losses and the recent years of disaffiliation, the
23 Commission’s leadership and I wish to express our deep desire to strengthen this ministry for the
24 future. We recognize that in these times of transition, identity and heritage become even more
25 vital. The Archives and History Commission stands committed not only to preserving the past but
26 also to helping the Arkansas Annual Conference understand its story, reclaim its spiritual memory,
27 and anchor itself for the years ahead.

28
29 The Commission envisions a renewed period of growth—enhancing digital access, expanding
30 congregational and pastoral files, increasing public awareness of available resources, and
31 encouraging churches to preserve their own histories. The commission leadership hopes that by
32 continuing to cultivate and share the story of Arkansas United Methodism, our conference will
33 better navigate its present challenges with clarity, faith, and purpose.

34
35 We are also looking ahead with a renewed commitment to strengthening our structure and more
36 clearly defining our mission as a Commission. In recent years, a combination of challenges—
37 including the disruption of the Covid-era and the season of church disaffiliations—has delayed
38 some of the developmental work we had hoped to complete.

39
40 Yet these obstacles have also clarified the importance of a firm organizational foundation and a
41 clearly articulated purpose. As we move forward, we are dedicated to meeting these challenges
42 with intention, restoring the momentum that was paused, and preparing our Commission to serve
43 the Conference with greater readiness, resilience, and historical faithfulness in the years to come.

44
45 With gratitude for your continued support of this ministry and with great hope for the future,
46 Chairperson and Pastor Rollie Thomas “Tom” Mullins, Jr.

47 rollie.mullins@arumc.org

48 The Arkansas Annual Conference Commission on Archives and History

49
50

Commission on Communications

United Methodist Communications embraces our mission of engaging The United Methodist Church through Christ-centered communications.

At UMCCom we are focused on denominational communications needs as we support the current and emerging communications needs of The United Methodist Church. We do so, following our strategic goals:

- Engage people with the story of God's work in the world through The UMC
- Foster partnerships throughout the denomination to create a stronger voice for The UMC
- Drive technology innovation to reach people where they are
- Nurture our people and demonstrate good stewardship

The agency's work is structured into three overarching ministry areas:

- Communications & Marketing
 - Denominational Content
 - Public Relations
 - Marketing
 - Promotion of Giving
 - Creative Strategy
- Partnerships, News & Production
 - UM News
 - Agency Partnerships
 - Regional Conference Partnerships
 - Denominational Partnerships
 - Production
- Operations, Infrastructure & Innovation
 - Denominational communications infrastructure
 - Contextual communications technology for regional ministry
 - Innovating processes, culture, learning, and technologies

United Methodist Communications strives to support, inform, and equip annual conferences. Efforts surrounding this partnership include monthly communicator meetings, disaster and crisis communications support, supplying resources for annual conference use or adaptation (such as The UMC vision, #BeUMC campaign, United in Impact, regionalization information and legislation explainers), media pitching and consultation, and sharing stories from within conferences to broader United Methodist audiences. Serving annual conferences is an integral part of our commitment to ensuring that The United Methodist Church remains present and engaged in existing and emerging communication platforms and strategies. UMCCom is here to team up with our annual conference ministry partners.

Highlights of resources provided to keep all annual conferences and their members informed, equipped, and inspired include:

- Resources for church leaders
 - Discover the latest ministry resources from across our global connection at ResourceUMC.org.
 - The Source e-newsletter highlights new ideas and updates for church leaders.
 - The MyCom e-newsletter and podcast offers practical tips about communications, marketing, technology, video production, social media and outreach to help your ministry be more effective.
- Resources for church members
 - At UMC.org, find inspirational and informational content to share with your congregation.

- 1 -The United Methodist Now e-newsletter brings United Methodists inspiration for daily living.
- 2 -The Get Your Spirit in Shape podcast will keep your soul as healthy as your body.
- 3 -The Recap video news segments sharing insights into the lives of United Methodists around
- 4 the world.
- 5 • News updates
- 6 -UMNews.org keeps you plugged into the latest news from around the denomination with fair,
- 7 faithful and trusted reporting.
- 8 -The UM News Digest is a free newsletter, emailed Monday-Wednesday and Friday, that
- 9 includes news from annual conferences, United Methodist agencies, and other sources.

10
11 UCom is dedicated to creating and sharing stories and messages that highlight God's mission and
12 ministry through The United Methodist Church. Though the topics and needs may shift over time, our
13 commitment to worldwide denominational communications remains.

14 Dan Krause, General Secretary
15 United Methodist Communications
16

17 18 **Committee on Disability Concerns** 19

20 Many of you will remember one of the results of last year's Annual Conference and that is the
21 requirement that the Accessibility Audit is now part of the required package for Charge
22 Conferences. Congratulations are in order for 69% of Arkansas Conference United Methodist
23 Churches who completed the audit and thereby have earned at least Honorable Mention status for
24 accessibility. In 2026, watch for the Accessibility Olympics and "Go for the Gold!" The
25 committee will be determining ways to identify which congregations have achieved Bronze (Basic),
26 Silver (Satisfactory), or Gold (Great) accessibility status. Stickers reflecting the level of accessibility
27 are available for every entrance to churches.

28 Also at last year's Annual Conference, the addition of closed captioning for most presentations was
29 very helpful. That will be present this year as well.

30
31 One of our goals in 2025 was to seek out ways to increase the level of participation of those with
32 visual impairments. With the help of the committee, we have learned of a source to be able to
33 have the Pre-Conference Journal and possibly the program book for 2026, available in Braille. A
34 resource that I learned about from a committee member is audio description, which is used to
35 describe the setting in which things occur, ambience, dress of participants, etc.

36
37 Our committee liaison is in the process of assisting us in researching the availability of scooters
38 that individuals can rent to get to and from the hotels to the conference meeting room.
39 If your church has a kit or a bag with items included for those with sensory processing differences,
40 we are requesting that churches please bring them to Annual Conference and we will show them
41 on our display table. Please identify your church on the items.

42
43 During 2026 we hope many churches will complete their scoring for badges and share their l
44 evel of accessibility so they can be part of the Accessibility Olympics. Churches are encouraged to
45 include that information on their web page and/or Facebook page.

46 We also plan to encourage congregations to celebrate Disability Awareness Sunday. This Sunday
47 does not require an offering to be taken and you may choose the date. This celebration is
48 mandated in the United Methodist Discipline, Paragraph 265. Resources are available from
49 umcdmc.org.

50 Goals not completed this year will be carried over and will include physical accessibility and other

supports as well as the inclusion of those with disabilities in all aspects of church life. 1

2

Please visit the Committee on Disability Concerns display for more information. 3

4

I wish to thank all the members of the Committee on Disability Concerns for their contributions. 5

They have all been full of ideas and ways to plan for the inclusion of all, regardless of our 6

differences, in the life of the church. “Go for the Gold.” 7

8

Doni Martin, Chair 9

10

11

Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Concerns 12

The Arkansas Conference Ecumenical Council has had a fruitful year that began with a gathering 13

of faith leaders from across the state at Pulaski Heights United Methodist Church on September 4, 14

2025. Approximately thirty-five leaders representing twelve different denominations and faith 15

traditions joined with leaders from Arkansas’ Feeding America food banks and the Arkansas 16

Hunger Relief Alliance to discuss collaborative strategies for reducing food insecurity in our state. 17

According to the 2025 USDA Food Insecurity report, Arkansas ranked as having the highest rate of 18

food insecurity in the nation for the third consecutive year, with a rate of 19.4 percent. More 19

recently, the Arkansas Health Study released by the University of Arkansas and the University of 20

Arkansas for Medical Sciences found that 28.8 percent of adult Arkansans experience food 21

insecurity. These sobering statistics come at a time when Arkansas food banks have more than 22

doubled their annual food distribution in recent years. 23

24

In response, Feeding America food banks in Arkansas and the Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance 25

undertook a new study designed to examine two factors that are typically measured separately: 26

food access and access to food assistance. This survey assessed the state’s population along a 27

“continuum,” an emerging research-based approach that provides deeper insight into the 28

experiences of people facing challenges accessing food in Arkansas. By shifting the focus from 29

isolated indicators to a more comprehensive picture, this approach helps illuminate how 30

households experience both food insecurity and participation in food assistance programs. 31

32

One outcome of the September gathering was the appointment of Samantha Menley to a group of 33

statewide leaders tasked with developing and implementing strategies to reduce food insecurity in 34

Arkansas based on the findings of the continuum study. The work of this body continues, and we 35

look forward to measured results. We are also hopeful that the September gathering will become 36

an annual or semi-annual opportunity for faith leaders to strengthen relationships, collaborate in 37

problem-solving, and offer mutual support to one another while addressing critical needs within 38

our communities. 39

40

In addition, the Ecumenical Council developed and distributed a survey of Arkansas United 41

Methodist clergy and laity entitled Exploring Our Relationships Across Denominations. The 42

purpose of the survey is to listen to the experiences of clergy and lay members while assessing the 43

current state of ecumenical relationships among United Methodist churches and identifying 44

opportunities for greater Christian unity. By learning how churches currently connect, collaborate, 45

and pray with one another, we hope to encourage deeper relationships and strengthen shared 46

ministry in communities across Arkansas. 47

48

49

50

When SILENCE BECOMES SIN

SOLIDARITY IN THE AGE OF EPSTEIN

A Blessing for Survivors

by GCSRW

The Commission on the Status and Role of Women (COSROW)

When old wounds are stirred by public harm

Blessed are you whose body remembers what the world would rather reduce and redact to headlines and files; whose nervous system activates at names resurfacing, at taled doors pried open too late, at power once again exposed, and yet left undealt with.

Blessed are you when the release of records also releases the ache, the fury, and the grief you did not choose for yourself; when what is called "headline news" for others, becomes a reopening of closed wounds for you.

Rest in this truth: God does not ask you to be brave today.

God does not ask you to be poised, or grateful, or strong. The Holy One, instead, is shelter — the One who know how memories live in our Chodies: as the God who keeps count of tears that never made it into the record.

Blessed are you if and as anger rises — *for anger is often grief refusing to disappear quietly.* It is faith expressed as justice is denied.

Blessed are you if exhaustion settles in your bones, for even Christ withdrew for rest when the crowd pressed in too close.

Blessed are you if you cannot look, cannot listen, cannot carry one more weight, for your survival has already been a holy labor.



Una bendición para sobrevivientes

por GCSRW

Una bendición para sobrevivientes

por GCSRW

The Commission on the Status and Role of Women (COSROW)

Cuando viejos heridas y recién reveladas se reavivan por el daño público,

Benditos sean ustedes, cuyo cuerpo recuerda lo que el mundo preferiría reducir y censurar en titulares y archivos, cuyo sistema nervioso se activa ante los nombres que resurgen, las puertas zóltadas que se abren demasiado tarde, ante el poder expuesto una vez más, sin embargo, sin respuesta.

Bendito seas cuando el *abrir de archivos* es rondidos también *agren el dio, la fularr* la hunay la treumn que no elegiste, para ti cuando lo que para otros es "noticia de primera pame," para ti se convierte.s.

Descansa en esta verdad: Dios no te pūs que seas valiente hoy.

El-Santo, en cambio, ee refugio,' dajet que salte cómp viven les réccur die en medtesa vemion, se aquel bics que las a la cuemu de runtee io lescál gúmas que nunca quedaton registradas.

Bendita seas si aun cuando la ira surge, pues la ira a menudo es dolor que se niega a desaparecer en silencio. Es la fe expresada cuando se niega to justicia.

Bendito seas si el cansando se moula en toa huesos, pues incluso Crido se rectiró a descansar cuando la multhud se agolipaba demustado.

Bendito seas si no puede; miret, no puedes escuchar, no puedes soportar un peso más, pues io supervivencia ya ha sido, und labor sagrada.

Y cuando el ruido se agite, que escuches en cambio la voz más a beloved.



Committee on Episcopacy

This summer we celebrate three and a half years of Bishop Merrill’s leadership in the Arkansas Conference, and the Arkansas Conference Committee on Episcopacy is grateful for her leadership.

In her time with us, Bishop Merrill has traveled the state participating in worship services with our local churches, attending youth events, confirmations, and sharing in all aspects of the life of the church here in the Arkansas Conference. In addition to this, she is also serving as Bishop of the Oklahoma Conference and the Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference. Last year, Bishop Merrill was elected president of the South Central Jurisdiction College of Bishops, and she also serves in numerous positions in the general United Methodist Church.

We thank her for the grace and compassion in which she balances this work, and we are appreciative for her vision and communication she shares through videos, written messages and social media.

Those who serve on the Committee on Episcopacy meet with the Bishop for a check in at least once per year, and as members of the committee we agree to:

- support Bishop Merrill in her work,
- be available to her for counsel,
- assist in determining the episcopal needs of the area, and keep the bishop advised of conditions within the area as they affect relationships, and
- engage in annual consultation with the bishop.

We are honored to work with her and express our deep appreciation for her work. Thank you, Bishop, for your service in the Arkansas Annual Conference.

Respectfully Submitted,
Karon Mann, Chair
Arkansas Conference Committee on Episcopacy

Committee on Ethnic and Language Concerns

As the Arkansas Conference continues to embrace the theme, “Loving People. Sharing Grace. Following Jesus,” the work of the Ethnic and Language Concerns Committee (ELCC) remains grounded in that very calling. We seek to live out this vision by ensuring that all people are seen, supported, and strengthened across the connection.

Rooted in the spirit of 1 Corinthians 12:12—“For just as the body is one and has many members...”—we remain committed to honoring the diversity of the Body of Christ through intentional investment and advocacy.

Over the past year, ELCC has focused on equipping, empowering, and investing in ministries that serve historically underrepresented communities, with particular attention to youth, young adults, lay leadership, and clergy support.

One of the highlights of our work has been the funding and support of campus ministry initiatives connected to our Historically Black Colleges and Universities, including Philander Smith University and the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff (UAPB). Through ELCC funding, students participated in a transformative mission experience in New Orleans. This investment helped remove financial barriers by supporting travel and meal expenses, ensuring that students could fully engage in

service, outreach, and leadership development.

ELCC has also approved support for young adults from historically Black churches to participate in the upcoming Global Young People’s Convocation in Dublin, Ireland, pending participation this summer. This opportunity will allow participants to engage in global connection, leadership development, and spiritual formation within The United Methodist Church. By assisting with registration costs, the committee is helping to ensure that these young voices will be present in spaces where representation matters.

Additionally, ELCC provided support for a lay person attending a national leadership training event. Funding assistance helped offset transportation costs for participation in the General Commission on Religion and Race (GCORR) Leadership Training in Baltimore, Maryland. This investment reflects ELCC’s commitment to strengthening lay leadership and expanding access to connectional opportunities across the wider church.

The committee also continued its support of Church and Community Worker (CCW) partnerships, strengthening collaboration between congregations and the communities they serve. These partnerships remain essential in extending the Church’s presence and impact in historically underserved areas.

Furthermore, ELCC has continued to assist clergy in their endeavors to participate in continuing education opportunities, recognizing that strong, informed, and equipped leadership is essential for vibrant and sustainable ministry across our conference.

Through these efforts, ELCC awarded grants totaling several thousand dollars, prioritizing:

- Removing financial barriers to participation
- Expanding leadership development across laity and clergy
- Strengthening connections between local and global ministry
- Supporting historically underrepresented communities
- Building sustainable partnerships between church and community

These investments reflect our ongoing commitment to equity in access, leadership development, and spiritual growth.

As we look ahead, ELCC remains focused on expanding its reach, deepening partnerships, and continuing to advocate for ministries that reflect the full diversity of God’s people. We believe that when we are truly loving people, sharing grace, and following Jesus, the Church becomes a more faithful witness to the Kingdom of God.

Finally, I want to thank the dedicated members of this committee for their willingness to serve the Church at large. Your commitment, compassion, and consistency make this work possible and meaningful.

Respectfully submitted,
Rev. Danita Waller Paige
Chair, Ethnic and Language Concerns Committee (ELCC)
Sr. Pastor St James UMC - PB
UAPB Wesley Foundation Director

Committee on Native American Ministry

1
2 The Committee on Native American Ministry continues its work of helping the Arkansas Annual
3 Conference deepen its understanding of Native American history, culture, and the ongoing
4 realities facing Native communities both within Arkansas and across our connection.

5 Over the past year, the committee has focused primarily on education, relationship-building, and
6 advocacy. Through presentations, workshops, and conversations across the conference, we have
7 worked to increase awareness of Native American cultures, histories, and contemporary concerns.
8 These efforts are intended to help congregations move beyond stereotypes and develop a more
9 faithful and informed engagement with Native peoples and traditions.

10
11 One of our primary avenues for this work has been cultural education sessions offered at Mission
12 u, where participants engaged in learning about Native history, cultural perspectives, and the ways
13 the church can respond faithfully in the present. In addition, members of the committee have
14 continued to offer educational presentations in local churches throughout the conference,
15 providing opportunities for congregations to learn about Native traditions, historical realities, and
16 the importance of respectful partnership.

17
18 This year also brought a significant challenge for Native American ministry within Arkansas. For
19 many years, Arkansas had a central organization that served Native communities and provided a
20 point of partnership for the church, the American Indian Center of Arkansas. We were no longer
21 able to work with them following the former director being charged with the misappropriation of
22 more than one million dollars in funds. The loss of this centralized organization has created a gap
23 in coordination and partnership for Native ministry efforts within the state. As a result, the
24 committee has had to rethink how we engage Native communities and identify new ways to build
25 relationships and support ministry.

26
27 Despite these challenges, we remain encouraged by the strength of our connectional
28 partnerships, particularly our continued relationship with the Oklahoma Indian Missionary
29 Conference. This partnership has provided meaningful opportunities for shared ministry and
30 mutual learning. Churches and leaders from the Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference have
31 continued to participate in the Veritas Youth Conference, offering an important Native voice and
32 perspective for youth across our conference, as well as a presence at our Annual Conference

33
34 These relationships remind us that Native American ministry in The United Methodist Church is
35 inherently connectional. Through collaboration with Native churches and leaders in Oklahoma, our
36 conference continues to learn from Indigenous Christian communities whose faith, resilience, and
37 cultural traditions enrich the wider church.

38
39 Looking ahead, the Committee on Native American Ministry hopes to continue expanding these
40 relationships. We are particularly interested in exploring additional opportunities to partner with
41 congregations in the Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference. Possible future initiatives include
42 cultural exchange opportunities, shared worship experiences, and learning visits to Native
43 churches in Oklahoma, allowing members of the Arkansas Annual Conference to experience
44 Native expressions of Christian faith more directly.

45
46 The committee remains committed to helping the Arkansas Annual Conference grow in cultural
47 understanding, deepen relationships with Native communities, and continue the work of
48 reconciliation, respect, and partnership.

We give thanks for the opportunity to serve the conference in this work and look forward to continuing to build meaningful connections in the year ahead.

Respectfully submitted,
Rev. Dan Read
Committee on Native American Ministry
Arkansas Annual Conference

Congregational and Clergy Development Report

Local church leaders and clergy continue to discover ways to bring vitality, excellence and enthusiasm to new and existing ministries in the Arkansas Conference. Whether these initiatives are celebrating our identity as United Methodists, learning new ways of being the church, or building more meaningful connections with one another and our communities, Arkansas United Methodists are Following Jesus, Loving People and Sharing Grace!

With so many exciting initiatives and opportunities to equip, enrich, and empower our churches and clergy over the last year, this report also relies on several leaders' voices to tell you about the great things going on in the Arkansas Conference!

OUR UNITED METHODIST IDENTITY

At Annual Conference 2025, we received news of our new Arkansas Conference Mission statement and accompanying identity campaign that launched last fall. Living into our mission statement, we have been "Working together to build vital faith communities by following Jesus, loving people, and sharing grace" ever since! This has been a year of Following Jesus, Loving Others and Sharing Grace in so many ways.

Through a generous donation from Rush and Linda Harding, the ARUMC launched a United Methodist identity campaign which included outdoor advertising, streaming video, and digital media in the fall of 2025. Thousands of people were reached with the message that United Methodists are people who follow Jesus through worship and sharing in the sacraments, love others through connection with our community, and share grace through our ministries. Churches who used the hashtag #FollowingLovingSharing in their social media posts competed for a billboard of their own. Congratulations to St. Paul UMC Fort Smith for a town population over 2500 and Hays Chapel UMC for a town population under 2500 for winning the billboards!

Along with the new Arkansas Conference Mission statement, the conference leadership developed Seven Vital Markers to help each ministry setting to measure vitality. Those markers are:

1. Welcoming, Spirit-filled worship
2. Lay leadership identified and equipped for ministry in the church and the world
3. Disciples engaged in relationship and service with diverse neighbors
4. Small group and intergenerational ministries
5. Connectional work in partnership with others
6. Intentional work for healing and reconciliation

1 Samantha Menley, Outreach Ministry Specialist, explains how our conference is relying on the
2 seven markers to assess our transformational impact.

3
4 *After the seven Vital Markers for Congregations were defined by Bishop Merrill and the Cabinet, a*
5 *task force was formed to measure vitality in local congregations using those metrics. Rev. Jacob*
6 *Lynn, Rev. Zach Roberts, Rev. Lindsey Russell, Trisha Manns, Rev. Ron Hayes, Becky Neighbors,*
7 *Todd Burris, Samantha Menley, and Amy Ezell created a vitality survey that was submitted to*
8 *each church.*

9
10 *The survey helped clergy and laity to reflect on the various ways their church is successful in*
11 *meeting the seven markers and where there is room to grow. The form included self-selecting*
12 *options designed by the task force and open-ended questions to include an individual*
13 *congregation's interpretation of the vitality marker and how they were achieving it beyond the*
14 *given options. One hundred and thirty-three churches responded to the survey.*

15
16 Our congregations continue to thrive as they identify and develop ministries and worship
17 opportunities that uniquely empower the people called United Methodist in Arkansas to fulfill the
18 vital markers in their specific contexts.

19

20 **EXISTING AND EXPANDED MINISTRY POSSIBILITIES**

21 Equipping local churches and clergy for ministry is vital to effective ministry. Several of our
22 conference initiatives supporting clergy and church leadership have continued and some have
23 expanded over the last year:

24

25 • **Healthy Church Academy** Rev. Dr. Ron Bell, director of Healing and Resilience for
26 Discipleship Ministries at the Upper Room, offered a five-month course to lay leaders, SPPR
27 chairs, and other leaders on the topics of:

28 A Theological Framework for Emotional Freedom

29 God's Image in Broken Clay

30 Disagreeing Well: How to Fight and Win

31 The Stories We Tell

32 Eating for the Battle Ahead

33 • **Simplified Accountable Structure** Church leadership received textbooks and Rev. Dr. Blake
34 Bradford again led a webinar to support churches in simplifying local church governance
35 structures.

36 • **Simplified Accountable Structure for Small Churches** Rev. Dr. Blake Bradford again
37 provided online instruction and church leadership received textbooks to support them in
38 considering the unique needs of smaller congregations in simplifying local church governance.

39

40 **NEW MINISTRY OPPORTUNITIES**

41

42 **Emerging Partnership Coaching and Spiritual Direction**

43 This program provides leadership coaching, spiritual direction, and resources to clergy and some
44 leadership teams to help them discern, engage in strategic planning, and implement emerging
45 church partnerships which include, but are not limited to the following contexts:

46 -Cooperative parishes

47 -Property sharing

48 -Merging churches

49 -Creating multi-site locales

50 -Repurposing property

The leadership coaching aided clergy in trusting their inner wisdom and knowledge of the context they are serving and set clear, measurable, and accountable outcomes while encouraging them in their ministry development. These experienced leadership coaches have helped the clergy participants stay focused on God-sized goals and lead their congregations with courage and resilience. The leadership coaches included: Rev. Dirk Elliot, Rev. Rebeckah Simon-Peter, and Paula Ihms.

By utilizing spiritual direction, clergy deepened their relationship with God by having a safe space to reflect on their spiritual life, discern God's voice in their personal experiences, and address challenges they might face in their ministry, all through intentional listening and thoughtful questioning, all the while working and leading congregations through emerging partnerships.

These resources have led to more resilient and hope-filled clergy and lay leadership and places a vitally important emphasis on holistic clergy vitality for the promising future of our conference.

The clergy and churches participating included:

Rev. Jennie Williams	Central Fayetteville and Trinity	Merger / Adoption
Rev. Lyn Poplin	Charleston, Washburn and Coles Chapel	Cooperative Parish
Rev. Rachel Crest	Oakley Chapel and Grace	Merger
Rev. Zeke Allen	Arkadelphia 1st and St. Andrews	Merger / Adoption
Rev. Blake Bradford and	Ft. Smith 1st and Faith UMC	Merger / Satellite
Rev. Abby Maynard		
Rev. Robin Roark	Smackover	Cooperative Parish
Rev. Rob Holifield	Central Rogers and Living Waters	Merger / Adoption
Rev. Donna Ward	Calico Rock / Norfolk / Spring Creek	Merger/Repurpose
Rev. Terry Gosnell	Faith - Little Rock and Western Hills	Emerging Ministries

Town Square Collaborative - Rural Ideas Conference 2025

This new initiative for rural churches became available to United Methodist Churches in late summer of 2025. Rev. Dr. Bud Reeves and Rev. Allen Stanton provide their insights on this amazing opportunity for the Arkansas Conference:

The genius of Methodism in the 19th century was Bishop Francis Asbury's vision to plant Methodist churches at every crossroads in the growing frontier of America. Two centuries later, the rural church is still the backbone of The United Methodist Church, and these small, family-oriented, community-focused churches are the anchors of many small towns and open country settlements across the land.

In 2025, the Town Square Collaborative was established through a grant from the Lilly Endowment to strengthen and support rural ministry in Arkansas. Growing out of a previous grant to the University of the Ozarks, the Town Square Collaborative supports rural churches of all denominations. The Town Square Collaborative places the rural church at the center of everything they do. A distinctive feature of the Town Square Collaborative is their work with rural churches to generate partnerships with a network of non-profits and agencies. The result is a stronger church and a stronger rural community.

The first major event of the Town Square Collaborative was the Rural Ideas Conference, held July 16-18, 2025, at the University of the Ozarks in Clarksville. About 40 United Methodists

1 from Arkansas joined dozens of pastors and laity from other denominations to celebrate the
2 rural church and learn from the best in the field.

3
4 In 2026, the second Rural Ideas Conference will be held June 24-26 at the University of the
5 Ozarks. This year, Brad Roth, author of *God's Country: Faith, Hope, and the Future of the Rural*
6 *Church* will keynote the conference, and a strong lineup of workshop leaders will celebrate the
7 rural church and provide resources for strengthening community ministry. Interested persons
8 may find more information or register at <https://townsquareco.org/>. Registration is free,
9 funded by the Lilly Endowment.

10

11 **On-Boarding of Pastors in Newly Appointed Churches**

12 Sandy Smith has been instrumental in bringing on-boarding opportunities to churches and clergy
13 in preparation for new appointments in 2025, 2026 and beyond. Thanks to a grant from the
14 Methodist Foundation for Arkansas, up to 21 laity and clergy on-boarding facilitators will be trained
15 for the Arkansas Conference. Sandy explains:

16

17 *Beginning in June 2025, the ARUMC began its initiative to On-Board newly appointed pastors*
18 *with their new church staff and lay leadership through an intentional On-Boarding process. Thus*
19 *far, 12 ARUMC members have become certified as On-Boarding Facilitators through the Center for*
20 *Christian Leadership at the Candler School of Theology at Emory University. It is the intent for an*
21 *additional 11 people to become certified by the 2027 Annual Conference.*

22

23 *Through the On-Boarding process newly appointed pastors quickly move beyond mere*
24 *introductions and begin to build relationships with staff and lay leadership in a safe environment*
25 *supported by a certified On-Boarding facilitator. Responses from the 5 pastors and churches*
26 *benefitting from On-Boarding last summer have been most affirming of the process. One lay*
27 *person stated, "Amazing process; I wish our previous pastors could have been on-boarded."*
28 *Another simply said, "Incredibly helpful." And a pastor shared, "I realized though this process*
29 *people want to know and love their pastor. And they want to know me."*

30

31 **Creating a Culture of Renewal**

32 Rev. Lyn Poplin, Rev. Sara Pair, Rev. Jesse James, and Rev. Peaches Smith began a three year
33 commitment to participate in Creating a Culture of Renewal as a pilot program in Arkansas.
34 Rev. Lyn Poplin was influential in bringing this promising opportunity to the Arkansas Conference.
35 He explains:

36

37 *The Creating a Culture of Renewal (CCR) program has been a meaningful and timely investment*
38 *in both personal leadership and congregational health. This past year, our focus has been on*
39 *developing greater awareness of how we lead—especially through tools like DiSC and*
40 *Congregational Intelligence. We've been learning how different leadership styles impact*
41 *communication, decision-making, and the overall culture of a church. More than just theory, CCR*
42 *has helped us begin to shift how we engage people, moving from simply managing ministry to*
43 *cultivating environments where renewal can actually take root. It has challenged us to listen more*
44 *deeply, lead more intentionally, and recognize the systems and behaviors that either support or*
45 *hinder growth.*

46

47 *Looking ahead to year two, there is a growing sense of anticipation. The foundation we've built*
48 *this year is preparing us to move from awareness into deeper application—helping our churches*
49 *not just understand renewal, but live into it. I expect we'll continue developing practical strategies*

50

for aligning leadership, strengthening teams, and fostering cultures where both people and mission thrive. For any clergy who feel the weight of leading in this season—or who sense that their congregation is capable of more but aren't sure how to get there—CCR offers both a framework and a community for that journey. It's not a quick fix, but it is a faithful and forward-looking path toward renewed vision, deeper connection, and meaningful transformation.

Gratitude to our Conference Ministry Partner

The Methodist Foundation for Arkansas continues to support the educational and spiritual development of the laity and clergy in Arkansas. They are a primary partner in our work to provide a variety of excellent learning and growth opportunities to Arkansas congregations and clergy. The ARUMC is grateful for this important partnership which helps us continue to strive for excellence as we Follow Jesus, Love Others and Share Grace.

Council on Young Adult Ministries

The Conference Council on Young Adult Ministries serves laity and clergy in the Arkansas Annual Conference between the ages of 18 and 35. Our desire is to help make connections between young adult clergy and laity in the ARUMC across districts so that they might grow in their faith with God and in relationship with one another.

One of the trademarks of the Young Adult ministries in the Arkansas Conference over the last few years have been our Zoom Monthly Book Clubs. So far, we have read six books together and met for monthly discussion of these books. We have had ten to fifteen young adults sign up for each book club gathering and there have been clergy and laity from across the state, and even those beyond our state who are in school and would like to stay connected to the UMC in Arkansas. I want to thank Revs. Chad and Miranda Hornsby for leading our young adult book club in the Fall of 2025 on *The Art of Gathering* by Priya Parker.

At the time this report is due, we are a week away from our Spring 2026 Young Adult Retreat, which is set for March 20-21, 2026. We have 12 clergy and laity signed up from across all four districts to spend 24 hours at Ferncliff Camp thinking about the intersection of art and faith. We'll be doing hands-on creative work ourselves and we will learn about how the faith of young adults in the conference is impacted and influenced by their own artistic pursuits.

If you are a young adult in the ARUMC, to connect with the Conference Young Adult ministries, please fill out this information form so that we can be in touch with you: <https://arumc.wufoo.com/forms/arumc-young-adult-information-form/>. If you are a pastor or campus minister, please share this link with young adults in your ministry context.

Finally, I began serving as the chair of the Conference Council on Young Adult Ministries in 2021. And it has been a joy and an honor to lead this group of laity and clergy seeking to build community. I will be stepping down at the end of this conference year as chair as I age out of being a young adult. I look forward to the work this group will continue to do in the future.

Respectfully Submitted,
Reverend Lauren DeLano
Chair, Conference Council on Young Adult Ministries

Equitable Compensation Commission

For 79 years, the Arkansas Annual Conference has faithfully supported its churches by providing financial resources that enable congregations to offer pastoral salaries appropriate to their mission fields. This long-standing commitment reflects our shared belief that effective pastoral leadership is essential to making disciples of Jesus Christ.

The mission of the Commission on Equitable Compensation (CEC) is to assist charges and churches in fulfilling that calling by ensuring fair and sustainable compensation for clergy. The CEC carries out this work in several key ways: recommending minimum compensation standards for all clergy under full-time appointment, and providing support through Key Charge assistance, Minimum Base Compensation, and emergency Salary Arrearage funding for churches identified by the Cabinet. All requests for equitable compensation are submitted through the District Superintendent of the respective church or charge.

For the 2025–2026 conference year, one charge received support through the Minimum Base Compensation program:

- Murfreesboro UMC

At this time, no churches are receiving Key Charge support, and no churches are currently receiving Minimum Base Compensation assistance beyond the charge listed above.

I. Minimum Full-Time Compensation

2026–2027 Compensation

As approved by the 2025 Annual Conference, a 3% Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) to the Minimum Compensation Schedule has been implemented for the 2026–2027 appointment year.

This adjustment represents the first formal increase in base pastoral compensation since 2020 and reflects the Conference’s continued commitment to providing fair, equitable, and sustainable support for clergy across the Arkansas Annual Conference, while also recognizing ongoing increases in the cost of living and the expanding responsibilities of pastoral leadership, and affirming the Conference’s commitment to maintaining compensation that is appropriate and responsive to current economic conditions.

Minimum Compensation Comparison Table

Conference Relationship	Conference Year 2024-2025	Conference Year 2026-2027 (Approved)
Full Connection	\$48,330	\$49,780
Provisional Associate Member	\$47,280	\$48,699
Local Pastor	\$46,230	\$47,617

With Group Health Insurance Provided by the Charge

Conference Relationship	Conference Year 2024-2025	Conference Year 2026-2027 (Approved)
Full Connection	\$36,330	\$37,420
Provisional Associate Member	\$35,280	\$36,338
Local Pastor	\$34,230	\$35,257

A parsonage or housing allowance is still required in addition to these amounts.

II. Key Charge/Church Program for Base Compensation Support

The Key Charge/Church program provides Base Compensation Support to pastors who are appointed to charges/churches targeted for significant growth by the Conference or are in transition and require short-term multi-year support for effective pastoral leadership for various other reasons. **Requests for equitable compensation based on a Key Charge/ Church targeted for significant growth by the Conference must be supported by: six months of Vital Signs reports; 2) a current MissionInsite report; and 3) a narrative of the potential vitality of the congregation including ongoing faith development, congregational identity and values, and community impact.**

Requests for equitable compensation based on a Key Charge/Church in transition and requiring multi-year support for effective pastoral leadership must clearly identify the reason for the transition and the plan of action to move the charge/church toward vitality.

Key Charges/Churches are related to the CEC by a covenant agreement. The covenant is negotiated by the chair of the Commission, the appointive cabinet, and representatives of the charge/church. **The covenant shall include completion of a rubric provided by the Equitable Compensation Committee that clearly identifies the SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound) goals for the Key Charge/Church, the accountability expectations of the Key Charge/Church, and the consequences of non-compliance.** The persons or their successors, shall be the trustees of the covenant, having verified it with their signatures.

The covenant shall include:

1. The initial amount of the Base Compensation Support needed,
2. The duration of the covenant (normally five (5) years or less), and
3. **The completion of the Key Charge/Church rubric, and**
4. The signatures of the persons negotiating the covenant.

The nature of the covenant is such that the amount of compensation support given shall decrease proportionately each year, while the compensation paid by the charge/church increases by at least the same amount, thus keeping the compensation at least stable over the covenant period. After the covenant has expired, no further compensation support will be granted to the charge/church.

Under the Key Charge/Church arrangement, there shall be no required minimum or maximum levels of support by the charge/church. The only limitation will be the amount of funding budgeted for this program.

1 Each church receiving compensation shall report by April 15 to the Appointive Cabinet for review
2 and the Commission on Equitable Compensation for continuing approval. The report form is
3 available from the district superintendent and the Arkansas Annual Conference website at
4 arumc.org.

6 **III. Minimum Base Compensation Support**

7 The Minimum Base Compensation program is intended to assist in providing compensation for
8 capable, effective pastoral leadership to charges/churches which function in areas of extreme
9 economic limitation and which are unable to provide a viable level of pastoral support. Where
10 charges/churches are in need of additional compensation in order to meet the Minimum
11 Compensation Base Support, this support is available to Elders in Full Connection, Provisional/
12 Associate Members (not to be confused with associate pastors), and Full-Time Local Pastors who
13 are not retired. Upon recommendation by the Commission on Equitable Compensation, the
14 minimum base compensation is set annually by the Annual Conference for Elders, Provisional/
15 Associate members and Full Time Local Pastors. (Minimum Full-Time Compensation has appeared
16 previously in this report.)

17
18 Charges/churches receiving Minimum Compensation Support are related to the CEC by a
19 covenant agreement negotiated by the chair of the Commission, the appointive cabinet, and
20 representatives of the charge/church. The signors or their successors shall be the trustees of the
21 covenant, having verified it with their signatures.

22 It is understood that:

- 23 1. A parsonage or housing allowance in lieu of the parsonage shall be provided in addition to the
24 set compensation.
- 25 2. Associate pastors (not to be confused with Associate Members of the Annual Conference) are
26 not eligible for Minimum Compensation aid.
- 27 3. Retired pastors are not eligible for Minimum Compensation aid. See Paragraph 358.6 of the
28 *2020/2024 Book of Discipline*.
- 29 4. Each charge/church receiving Minimum Compensation Support shall provide to the
30 Commission the amount(s) received from the Arkansas Conference for the past five (5) years.
31 We further require that each local church describe how they will reduce this support through
32 the local church's ministry plan.
- 33 5. Each church receiving compensation shall report by April 15 to the Appointive Cabinet for
34 review and the Commission on Equitable Compensation for continuing approval. The report
35 form is available from the district superintendent and the Arkansas Annual Conference website
36 at arumc.org.

38 **IV. Emergency Salary Arrearage Support**

39 **Each church or charge has an obligation to provide the compensation amount approved for the**
40 **applicable charge conference year and for the appointed clergy.** Every clergy under
41 appointment shall receive the full compensation set at Charge Conference. (See Paragraph 623.4
42 of the *2020/2024 Discipline*.) If a church is financially unable to provide the full compensation in a
43 timely manner, the Annual Conference through the CEC may provide emergency funding to ensure
44 the clergy is provided the compensation the church promised at the Charge Conference, even if it
45 is in excess of the minimum base compensation. The arrearage will only be allowed for the
46 remainder of the conference year. The Arkansas Annual Conference Salary Arrearage Policy is
47 found in Paragraph 1003 of the Policy & Guidelines section of this Journal **and all requests must**
48 **follow this policy.**

V. Equitable Compensation Covenant

When Equitable Compensation support has been granted to a charge/church, an acknowledgement of the conditions and amount of that funding shall be executed by the appointive cabinet, pastor, and leaders of the charge/church before any payment of funds shall be made. This acknowledgement shall be made on a form provided by the commission. No funds shall be disbursed until the agreement is signed and returned to the district superintendent. These forms are available from the district superintendent and the conference website at arumc.org.

The charge/church receiving financial support shall submit an annual report. The report form is available from the district superintendent and the conference website at arumc.org. Included in this report is the explanation of how these funds have aided the local charge/church. Each church receiving compensation shall report by April 15 to the Appointive Cabinet for review and the Commission on Equitable Compensation for continuing approval.

VI. Additional Priorities

1. The Commission on Equitable Compensation shall maintain adequate reserves to fund needs which may emerge.
2. Each charge/church receiving equitable compensation in any of the above categories is expected to pay its conference tithe in full. If the charge/church is unable to accomplish this, they shall submit a written plan of action approved by their district superintendent, detailing the steps to be taken in order to achieve this goal. Notification of the plan will then be forwarded to the CEC.
3. All CEC funding is for pastoral support only. Using funds for any other purpose, such as program costs or other compensation violates the agreement.
4. Equitable Compensation funds are paid directly to the church/charge by the fifteenth of each month. The compensation shall be paid to the pastor as a supplement to funds budgeted by the charge/church. Typically, the calendar year of support is from July 1 through June 30, but the initial request and approval process may take place at any time during the year.

Submitted by Rev. Ronnie Miller-Yow, Chair

General Board of Higher Education and Campus Ministry (GBHEM)

The General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM) reflects on the past year with a clear sense of the challenging moment in which we serve. Global political shifts continue to transform foreign aid, educational systems and ministry settings, and here in the United States, efforts to advance diversity, equity, and inclusion face increasing opposition. Proposed and enacted reductions to the U.S. Department of Education limit essential support for students from low income backgrounds and others who depend on federally funded academic programs. Amid these pressures, we take encouragement from Paul's message to the church in Galatia: "Let us not grow weary in doing good, for at the right time we will reap a harvest..."

GBHEM remains steadfast in its mission to connect the church and academy and develop transformative leaders for the church and the world. Rooted in our Wesleyan belief that education is a channel of God's grace, GBHEM champions equitable access to learning and strengthens the educational mission of The United Methodist Church by fostering environments of intellectual development alongside spiritual growth. We collaborate closely with United Methodist-related colleges, universities, and theological schools to bolster their identity, increase cooperation, and support long-term sustainability. Through the University Senate, GBHEM assists

1 in setting and maintaining the standards of United Methodist-related schools in the United States.
2 GBHEM also networks with campus ministers, religious life directors, Wesley Foundations, and
3 ecumenical and interreligious ministries to provide support and offer resources. By convening and
4 collaborating with major regional and global educational organizations, GBHEM helps connect the
5 church with pan-Methodist and ecumenical collaborative partners around the world.
6

7 Through grants and scholarships, GBHEM invests in both schools and students who carry forward
8 the church's educational calling. Together with Global Ministries, GBHEM provided more than \$6.4
9 million in scholarship support in 2025 to 2389 students pursuing undergraduate, graduate and
10 theological degrees at 615 institutions in the U.S. and across the globe. Through the church's
11 support of the Black College Fund, GBHEM distributed more than \$7.9 million in critical funding to
12 11 United Methodist-related Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). Ministerial
13 Education Fund grants totaling more than \$13 million were approved in 2025 for each of the 13
14 United Methodist theological schools in the U.S. GBHEM granted more than \$1.2 million through
15 the Central Conference Theological Education Fund, which supports innovations in education and
16 ministry and strengthens programs and ministries in Africa, Europe, and the Philippines.
17

18 To help strengthen GBHEM's work as U.S. policy changes adversely affect vulnerable populations,
19 GBHEM has partnered with Global Ministries to launch a new granting and fundraising effort: This
20 Moment Matters (ThisMomentMatters.org), which seeks to bridge a portion of the financial gap
21 stemming from budget reductions. It focuses on five areas of urgent need—agriculture and food
22 security, education, global health, migration, and peace.
23

24 GBHEM's alignment work with Global Ministries continued with the formation of a joint agency
25 leadership team, and numerous staff serving both agencies. Alignment work also extends to
26 programmatic areas, for example, a health and agriculture partnership with Africa University.
27 GBHEM prepares worldwide leaders for The United Methodist Church, supporting both candidates
28 and clergy as they discern and follow their calls to ministry. Two groups facilitated by GBHEM – the
29 Study of Ministry Commission and the Course of Study (COS) Review Team – both met in 2025.
30 Through dialogue and discernment, the commission will shape the future of ordained ministry in
31 the UMC. The review team will consider revisions to the COS to ensure the program meets the
32 needs of today's licensed local pastors.
33

34 Elders, deacons, and local pastors benefit from GBHEM training, candidacy programs, and
35 resources. GBHEM strengthened resources for clergy leadership by updating the Board of
36 Ordained Ministry Library and Handbook (gbhem.org/bom-library). The collection of tools supports
37 licensing, ordination, and spiritual formation and better equips annual conferences to walk
38 alongside those answering God's call to licensed and ordained ministry with wisdom and
39 compassion. A comprehensive online Course of Study catalog ([gbhem.org/ministry/course-of-](http://gbhem.org/ministry/course-of-study)
40 [study](http://gbhem.org/ministry/course-of-study)) launched in March 2026.
41

42 Young adults find help in clarifying their vocation and God's call on their lives through our
43 leadership and discernment programs. For clergy that seek to serve beyond the walls of a church
44 in roles like chaplains or pastoral counselors, the United Methodist Endorsing Agency (UMEA), part
45 of GBHEM, supports them in their ministry settings such as prisons, hospitals, and military bases.
46

47 This moment challenges us, yet it also reveals the depth of God's faithfulness and the
48 transformative power of the UMC connection. Thank you for your partnership as we continue,
49 together, to advance a vision of education and ministry grounded in hope and justice.
50

Respectfully Submitted:
Roland Fernandes,
General Secretary,
Higher Education and Ministry, Global Ministries, and UMCOR

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General Commission on Religion and Race

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On February 4th of this year, I traveled to Baltimore for training, being the Arkansas conference Chairperson for this committee. The assignment started in July, but it took a while for the concept to wrap around my head with terms and clarity of meaning. After training, the words that stood out for this area of work are **diversity, Equity and Inclusion**. Moving forward with Church Appointments and presenting a strong united force of Christian Love for each other, the Bishop and the Cabinet must consider Cross Racial (CR) and Cross Cultural (CC) appointments. This area is a support group for conversations with congregations for a true spiritual connection. Each district has a member for a spiritual connection. May we move forward with love! Listed below is the GCORR team.

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Northeast, Dr. Kelvy Matthews (Clergy)
Northwest, Chelsea Hodge (Laity)
South, Larry Hatley (At-Large)
Central, Brenda Norwood-Henson (Laity)
Cabinet Member, Representative David McCormack
Natasha Murray (Clergy)

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Bettye Johnson, Chairperson

24

Historic Arkansas Methodist Museum (HAMM)

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HAMM preserves and displays donated cultural and historical artifacts of Arkansas Methodists. It also generates related resources, like its Oral History Project, and exhibits materials around the state. HAMM's purpose is to illustrate and teach United Methodists and others about the rich Methodist traditions in Arkansas. For example, confirmation classes are enriched artifacts in HAMM's collections.

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In 2025, HAMM has been re-organizing and envisioning a new future for the ministry of the Museum as self-supporting yet still connected to the Arkansas Conference. It is pursuing a new status as a non-profit organization with the State of Arkansas and the US Internal Revenue Service, planning a financial structure with the Methodist Foundation of Arkansas that will sustain its operations, reviving relations with church historians, possibly creating memberships, clarifying its relation with the Arkansas Conference's Historical Society, and reconstituting its board of directors.

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During much of 2025, HAMM's artifacts were stored while its space at First United Methodist Church in Little Rock was reconstructed. Visits to the collections and exhibits did not occur. However, HAMM was represented at Annual Conference in the exhibit area where it was promoted and supporters recruited. In 2025, a search began for a new location that is more visible and accessible to visitors.

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In 2026, with artifacts returned to its reconstructed space, the new board will proceed with tasks named above. This is an exciting if challenging year to engage with HAMM as it revives its activities, enhances appreciation of our remarkable heritage, and continues preservation and

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1 display of its resources.

2

3 Written and submitted by Liam Hankins-Hull, Acting Chair of the Historic Arkansas Methodist
4 Museum.

5

6 **Historic Arkansas Methodist Museum Quick Links Page:**

7

8 The Museum is making changes! "If you would like to see one of our digital projects, visit our
9 YouTube page to watch oral history interviews with clergy. If you'd like to know more, send us an
10 email at ummac.lr@gmail.com."

11

12 In the meantime, scan the QR code below to join Rev. Garry Teeter in his podcast "Know Burning
13 Bush" with the QR code below.

14

15 Website: <https://arumc.org/our-ministries/archives-and-history/united-methodist-museum-of-the-arkansas-conference/>

16 Facebook: Arkansas United Methodist Museum

17 Youtube: @ARMethodistMuseum

18 Email: Museum@Arumc.org

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25 **Laity Report**

26 Blessings are flowing to and through the Laity of the Arkansas Conference. We have enjoyed
27 another year of loving and serving our Lord in mission and in action. Our commitment to be
28 authentic followers of Jesus is reflected in our zest for knowledge, our outreach beyond the local
29 church and our commitment to see with new eyes the needs around us. We have grown in our
30 faith by prayerfully seeking to go deeper into who we are as United Methodist Christians.

31

32 Our first Annual Laity Assembly was held at Pulaski Heights UMC in August and brought together
33 laity from across the Annual Conference for a time of learning, fellowship and a sharing of ideas.
34 David Teel from Discipleship Ministries brought encouragement to those who attended. The
35 afternoon was filled with information about Conference offerings for growing in your faith and
36 upcoming workshops and seminars to educate us so we can be better disciples in the world. We
37 are already making plans to continue this connection with each other for next year hoping it will
38 grow to become a valuable resource for strengthening the church and the role of the laity.

39

40 Our churches are intentional in seeing beyond their usual, every year programming and looking to
41 the possibilities of being bold in the name of Jesus and stepping fully into their mission of being
42 Jesus to the world. They enjoy sharing these new ideas and being a part of a church that helps
43 them grow in outreach. I want to particularly speak for the "One More Question" ministry. New
44 eyes, open hearts, asking the right question to those we are seeking to minister with brings a
45 camaraderie between each other that feels like Jesus. This has been a ministry changing program
46 for so many churches of all sizes. Going that extra step can make all the difference in the world and
47 to the world. Thank you Conference.

48

49 The South Central Jurisdiction Lay Leaders presented a "My Job" webinar in February with

50

breakout groups for SPRC, Lay Leadership, Trustees, Finance and Administrative Board Chairs. We had 2 from our Arkansas Conference facilitate groups. Thank you to Larry Weir from Ft. Smith UMC who helped with Trustees, and Melissa Simpson from Pinnacle View UMC who assisted with Lay Leadership and gave closing comments. You can be proud of the job they did in representing our conference among the 10 Conferences in our Jurisdiction.

I have been blessed to attend 2 retreats this year with the Conference officers from Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference and Oklahoma Conference. This has been a special experience for me as I have gotten to make new friends who share our Bishop. Cathy Hall and I attended the Association of Annual Conference Lay Leaders meeting in Nashville in September. We were encouraged to not continue to face the past which keeps our backs to the future because in doing so we trip over the possibilities that are right there but we are unable to see.

Our Certified Lay Ministry group is growing and we are excited to see them being assigned to churches as needed. And they are needed. We have had 5 complete the training this year. This is a program we as a Conference are very proud of and their training is making a difference in the United Methodist Church.

The new celebration of Rural Church Sunday in March, did a wonderful job in shining a spotlight on smaller churches and declared that no matter your size you can accomplish great things. These are spirit filled congregations that are overflowing with love for their neighbor wherever they are located.

Perkins Seminary continues to bless our churches, pastors and laity with the yearly Summit for Faith and Learning seminar. This year Norman, OK was the host for this spiritual and uplifting experience. We thank The Methodist Foundation for Arkansas for providing scholarships for this gathering.

Our laity are the constant in our churches. They welcome a new pastor and pastoral family and they say good bye to pastors who have experienced life with them as they have grown in their faith and lived through all that life gives. Their strength keeps each local church offering energy and goodness to their communities for generation after generation. We applaud all our laity that have spent years being models of faith and trust as United Methodists and pray the calling they have demonstrated will continue to change the world for good.

The laity of the Arkansas Conference have shown the world that their choice in all things is guided by love. Living and sharing with the world never ending grace, unceasing mercy and unconditional love is our calling and our life's offering to God. May we continue to be a presence for holiness and goodness to all we meet and may our influence sweep across those we may never meet in God's bounteous way.

I am humbly honored and blessed to serve our Lord as the Lay Leader of the Arkansas Annual Conference.

Kathy Conley

Lay Servant Ministries

1
2 The Arkansas Conference Lay Servant Ministries office is celebrating a hopeful milestone this year
3 with the launch of our first fully online Certified Lay Speaker Fast Track Training. This new approach
4 meets the growing need across our Conference for committed and qualified pulpit supply while
5 making space for laity to answer God's call with greater ease, flexibility, and confidence. By offering
6 the coursework in a fully digital format, we have opened new pathways for disciples who feel the
7 Spirit nudging them toward leadership yet previously found distance or scheduling to be barriers.
8 The response has been nothing short of inspiring. Registrations thus far have filled quickly, with
9 participants joining the virtual classroom with energy, curiosity, and deep love for the Church.
10 Their commitment, engagement, and willingness to grow remind us that God continues to raise
11 up courageous lay servant leaders in every corner of Arkansas. The success of this first Fast Track
12 Training affirms our belief that accessible, Spirit-led education can equip the saints for the work of
13 ministry in powerful new ways.

14
15 At the same time, we remain grounded in the value of gathering in person. Throughout the year,
16 we will continue offering face-to-face classes across the state—especially within the South
17 District—so that those who thrive in a shared physical learning environment may be nurtured as
18 well. We are also expanding mentoring opportunities for individuals discerning a call to Certified
19 Lay Ministry, helping them listen deeply for God's direction and step faithfully into new forms of
20 service. If your church is interested in hosting such an event, please reach out the Conference
21 Directors at LSM@arumc.org.

22
23 As we move forward, we envision the Fast Track Training becoming a vital annual tradition—one
24 that complements our in-person courses and mentoring partnerships as together they strengthen
25 the leadership pipeline in our Conference. If you feel a stirring, a curiosity, or a gentle tug from the
26 Holy Spirit, we invite you to take the next step. Enroll in a course, seek a mentor, or simply reach
27 out. The Church needs your voice, your gifts, and your willingness to serve.

28
29

Nominating Committee

30
31 The opportunity to see the Arkansas Conference through the structure of the Conference boards,
32 committees, councils and special task forces is to own and celebrate United Methodist
33 connectionalism and polity. It is exciting to see the members of these teams come together and
34 create ongoing and meaningful work to further the mission of the Arkansas Conference to follow
35 Jesus, love people and share grace. The laity and clergy who accept the nominations to serve on
36 these important committees, bring the power of the Holy Spirit and their unique gifts for service in
37 Christ's name.

38
39 After revamping the online nomination form and making the link more accessible, the Nominating
40 Committee has received abundant self-nominations! Finding the perfect candidate for any given
41 position is challenging in terms of following the structure of the team, advancing diversity, and
42 ensuring new voices are at the table joining those with great experience and wisdom.

43
44 The Nominating Committee is determined to expand awareness of the variety of ways to be
45 involved and serve on the Conference committee level. Prayerful discernment of the leadership
46 needs of each committee and praying for God's timing for willing servants to accept the call to
47 jump in and lead is the spiritual mandate of this work.

48
49 In general, the work of the Nominating Committee is year-round, but the nomination season in the
50

months leading up to Annual Conference is particularly busy. It is our priority to complete the nomination report by mid-May in order to share it in full with the members of the Annual Conference in advance of our gathering for prayerful consideration.

Thank you to the members of the Nominating Committee for their diligent work and commitment. Thank you to the members of the Annual Conference for your witness to the ongoing ministry and mission of the Arkansas Conference.

In Christ,
Rev. Susan Ledbetter
Chair, Conference Nominating Committee

NOMINATING COMMITTEE (CONFERENCE) SR301

Chair: Susan Ledbetter (clergy), susan.ledbetter@arumc.org (2024)

District Reps:

Central Clergy: Hammett Evans (2021 ad interim)

Central Lay: Don Riggan (2025)

Northeast Clergy: George Odell (2024)

Northeast Lay: Evie Jones (2024)

Northwest Clergy: Steve Poarch (2018-2020) (2026)

Northwest Lay: Amy Rose McGovern (2026)

South Clergy: Matt Daniels (2025)

South Lay: TBA

At-Large:

Harold Hughes (lay) (2025)

UC Washington (clergy) (2025)

Ex-officio with vote:

The Bishop: Laura Merrill (clergy)

Conference Lay Leader: Kathy Conley (2016-2020)

Conference Associate Lay Leader: Karen Henery (2026)

President of CCYM: Riley Pearson (lay) (2026)

One More Question Initiative

One More Question (OMQ) is an initiative to support local churches in being better neighbors and partners in their communities. The goal is to teach, train, and resource congregations who want to design outreach ministries WITH their community. There is specific support for smaller churches (those who worship fewer than 200) so that the majority of ARUMC congregations can step out in faith to ask One More Question.

Through our partnership with The Neighboring Movement, three clergy and three ARUMC staff members were trained and then facilitated regional trainings related to the Good Neighboring Experiment in the fall. In this second year, a total of 111 laypeople and clergy from 20 different churches participated, providing representation from each district..

Much of the training offered through One More Question focuses on asking churches questions about themselves, their neighborhood, neighbors, and their communities. As churches take action, relationships with their neighbors and community will strengthen, ultimately creating ministries and programs that make room for OTHERS to join with the congregation, and vice versa, in order to

1 build stronger communities. In support of their efforts to reach out to their neighbors in new ways,
2 \$7,500 in microgrants was awarded to ten churches.

3
4 Through a partnership with the Living Faith Academy, a part of the Rio Texas Annual Conference,
5 Rev. Ray Altman has led a 5-week zoom cohort with 40 people representing nine churches that
6 focused on finding a neighboring style and putting it into practice. He also trained Rev. Sarah
7 Ellzey to lead a zoom cohort in November of 2025. Her cohort helped churches to recognize their
8 neighbors and encouraged them to connect in new ways.

9
10 One More Question is also working directly with United Methodist Churches who have a
11 community college in their local community. By partnering with Dr. Ed Franklin, Rev. David Fleming,
12 and ARUMC staff to discuss how to build new relationships with those on community and technical
13 campuses.

14
15 Regional training events will be held in the Northeast, Northwest, and Southeast districts this
16 spring and summer. Churches that have recently added a campus or combined with other
17 churches will go through the “Beacon of Hope” training with Ken Williard and will also receive
18 follow-up OMQ training to build their techniques for connecting in new ways with new people.

19
20 Additionally, the churches that have already participated in a Regional training event will be invited
21 to attend follow-up training entitled OMQ 2.0: Asking the Question Well. These trainings will focus
22 on initiating conversation with neighbors and building trust to ask for their gifts and needs.

23

24

25 **Safe Gatherings**

26 Safe Gatherings continue to be an essential tool in helping make our churches and events safe
27 and welcoming spaces for kids and vulnerable adults. As we approach our fourth year of following
28 our Safe Gatherings policy, we continue to see growth in both numbers and understanding. Over
29 the past year, the number of approved individuals has grown to 2,555. These adults have
30 committed to serving the young and vulnerable in their communities in safe and loving ways. Since
31 our last Annual Conference and April 9, 2026, Safe Gatherings processed 1,067 applications for
32 the Arkansas conference, including 604 new applicants and 463 renewals. In addition, 97
33 approved adults were sent to Refuge, 45 to Assembly, and 150 to Veritas, supporting these
34 ministries with trained and certified volunteers.

35

36 As we passed our three-year mark of following our Safe Gatherings policy, many leaders in our
37 conference had their first opportunity to re-new their certification. Many more of you will have the
38 opportunity to renew your certification in the coming year. All users will receive a reminder email
39 from Safe Gatherings 45 days before their approval expires followed by another reminder email 21
40 days before expiration. If your email has changed since your original certification, please visit the
41 Safe Gatherings website to provide an updated email so you will receive these reminders.

42

43 The certification procedure saw a change this year as we were encouraged by Safe Gatherings
44 to move away from required reference checks and include additional Federal level background
45 checks. Federal background checks include searches of nationwide criminal databases, sex
46 offender registries, and identity verification systems. This broader scope helps identify offenses
47 that may not appear in a single state’s records, providing a more complete picture of an
48 individual’s history. This change has streamlined our process and allowed for a more thorough
49 background check. This is a big step in making this process both accessible and comprehensive.

50 While we celebrate all individuals and churches who participate in Safe Gatherings, we want to lift

up those churches who have exemplified this commitment. Below are the stats for the top 10 participating churches by both percentage and number of approved.

Top 10 Organizations by Percentage Approved

- 1.Lakeside UMC Pine Bluff 40%
- 2.Vilonia United Methodist Church 36%
- 3.First UMC De Queen 32%
- 4.Hunter UMC Little Rock 30%
- 5.Salem UMC Conway 28%
- 6.St. Paul UMC- Fort Smith 24%
- 7.Farmington UMC 23%
- 8.St. James UMC Little Rock 20%
9. Central UMC Rogers 19%
- 10.First UMC Springdale 19%

Top 10 Organizations by Number Approved

- 1.St. James UMC Little Rock 218
- 2.First UMC Springdale 147
- 3.Central UMC Rogers 110
- 4.Central UMC Fayetteville 101
- 5.Pulaski Heights UMC 97
- 6.First UMC Russellville 75
- 7.First UMC Bentonville 74
- 8.Lakewood UMC North Little Rock 64
- 9.First UMC Fort Smith 61
- 10.First UMC Conway 57

Written and Submitted by Brittany Watson
(Age Level Ministry Discipleship Coordinator) and
Alison Huskey (Safe Gatherings Administrator)

Task Force for LGBTQ Inclusion Resources

When Bishop Merrill authorized our group, we accepted the challenge to help congregations eager to live into the new reality caused by the removal of adverse church law about Human Sexuality from the 2020-2024 Book of Discipline. We have put together a bibliography on LGBTQ+ that can be found on the Conference website. Future plans include creating a filmography and creating videos of individuals or groups sharing their experiences of acceptance (or non-acceptance) in their local churches. In fact, our report today is just such a video. We are actively looking for stories of acceptance and inclusion- or exclusion- to archive on the Conference website. If any Conference member or congregation member would like to share their story, we will be happy to collect those stories for you. If there is a need, we could arrange panel discussions or individual speakers. This group exists to help our churches and church members, and we will be flexible enough to supply their needs. We trust that our efforts will help churches in conservative areas, or rural churches, or small membership churches with the resources to realize the equal sacred worth of all individuals in the eyes of God.

Respectfully submitted,
Harold Hughes
Task Force for LGBTQ+ Inclusion Resources

United Methodist Men

1
2 During 2025, we had groups holding monthly meetings. These meetings included meals and
3 devotionals. We had groups doing fund raisers to help local organizations. We had groups
4 helping elderly members with small maintenance needs at their homes. We have a group
5 providing a warming center with showers, clothes and food. We have another group providing
6 full meals each month to anyone who is hungry. We have a group that is very active in the Walk to
7 Emmaus and usually sends several men to each walk. If you have not been on a Walk to Emmaus,
8 I strongly encourage you to go. It is a weekend spiritual retreat. There are men's walks and
9 separate women's walks.

10
11 If your men are actively helping your congregation and community and I have not heard from you,
12 please contact me and share your activities so I can share them with the conference.

13
14 Clay McCastlain
15 Conference President
16 Arkansas United Methodist Men
17 clay.mccastlain@arumc.org
18

United Women in Faith

19
20
21 We believe love in action can change the world
22 and we connect spiritual women to act boldly for
23 justice and transform communities turning faith,
24 hope and love into action on behalf of women,
25 children, and youth around the world.



United
Women
in Faith

26
27 Eight women in 1869 determined to change the
28 world for the better became a lasting legacy. Our 156 year legacy boasts nearly half a million
29 members today. United Women in Faith is the public-facing name of United Methodist Women in
30 the United States and the women's organization of the United Methodist Church.

31
32 We have approximately 110 Local Units in the state of Arkansas. These Local Units are advocates
33 for justice and stand up for those in need. In November 2025, we celebrated eight centenarian
34 members with ages ranging from 100 to 104 years old. We further applauded one hundred
35 twenty-three members with fifty or more years of membership and service joined together by a
36 common faith impacting our ongoing mission programs and work.

37
38 Assembly 2026 will be held in Indianapolis, Indiana in May. Civil rights activist and member of
39 the Little Rock Nine, Elizabeth Eckford, is a Keynote Speaker at our Legacy Banquet. Assembly is
40 where we come together to be inspired, equipped, and energized to lead change in our
41 community, the church and the world. Our Conference United Women in Faith Luncheon is June
42 15 at Hot Springs First United Methodist Church. The Arkansas Conference Mission u will be held
43 at Hendrix College July 29th- August 1st and the theme is Experiencing Emmanuel. Mission u is a
44 transformative educational program that encompasses both Bible-based curricula and events for
45 women, children and youth. Our 23rd Annual Conference Meeting will be held on November 7th
46 at St. James United Methodist Church in Little Rock.

47
48
49 Arkansas Conference United Women in Faith is a community of women whose purpose is to know
50 God; to experience freedom as whole women through Jesus Christ; to develop a creative

supportive fellowship; and to expand concepts of mission through participation in the global ministries of the Church.

Maybelline Strong, President
Arkansas Conference United Women in Faith

VIM and Disaster Relief

Roy and Shelley Lee, Conference Coordinators for Disaster Response and Volunteers in Mission, are responsible for early response to tornadoes, flooding, ice storms, and hurricanes in the Arkansas Conference. Early Response includes clean up of homes, distribution of supply kits, and providing a caring, Christian presence to survivors. Volunteers also respond to out-of-Conference disasters; the last was for Hurricane Helene in South Carolina in October 2024.

All four Districts have a District Disaster Response Coordinator (DDRC); these individuals are the single most important factor in a fast, effective, local response to a disaster. District DRCs are Pamela Lamb, NE District; Andrew Orr, South District; Walt Garrett, Central District; and Brad Moore, NW District. A workgroup, known as the Disaster Response Committee, includes the Lees, Hub manager Donna Johnson, the four District DRCs, and the Director of Connectional Ministries, Amy Ezell. The full Committee had its first quarterly meeting in late 2025 and meetings are scheduled for all of 2026. Based on their experience in the Pulaski County tornado in March 2023, the Lees developed a timeline of tasks for District Coordinators to perform immediately after a disaster and have trained the District DRCs in its use. The District DRCs are tasked with the response to a disaster in their District, with oversight and assistance provided by the Conference Disaster Response Coordinators.

The Ingathering was held on November 15, 2026, at the Disaster Response Supply Hub in Conway. A Planning Committee was developed to generate new ideas. Due to heavy distribution following tornadoes in NE Arkansas in the spring of 2025, only four cleaning kits were on hand at the Hub prior to the Ingathering. Churches created kits and dropped them off and volunteers at the Hub for Ingathering used an assembly line process to create additional cleaning kits, resulting in over 300 cleaning kits now on hand. A first-ever Bucket Fill assembly line was hosted by the Methodist Foundation for Arkansas in June 2025, utilizing Project Transformation interns. Several churches also hosted Bucket Fill events for their own congregations.

The Disaster Response Supply Hub now has heat and air to allow year-round use of the building and safeguard donated supplies from extreme heat and cold. The Hub office has been finished. Organization and restocking of the Hub is an ongoing process.

Roy and Shelley were certified as UMCOR trainers in 2025 and have conducted two Early Response Team (ERT) training events: September 2025 in the Central District (St. James UMC, Little Rock) and February 2026 in the Northeast District (Bay UMC). These events produced 31 new ERT members, which are a specialized category of Volunteers in Mission. ERT training events are planned for the other two Districts this year.

Conference staff have contacted the seven United Methodist Volunteer in Mission (UMVIM) projects in the Conference to introduce themselves. Staff present a workshop at Mission u each year and staff a display table at Annual Conference and at Mission u. Staff participate in the monthly Board of Global Ministries meetings, are learning about Salud y Paz, an UMVIM project in Guatemala, and are exploring an UMVIM mission to Tanzania in late 2026.

Institution Reports

Africa University

Grace and peace to you in the name of Jesus Christ.

Thank you to the congregations of the Arkansas Conference of The United Methodist Church for engaging prayerfully and faithfully in ministry with Africa University. In 2025, Arkansas congregations generously invested 97.47 percent of their budget commitment to the Africa University Fund. That level of steadfast commitment makes a real difference in forming disciples who love boldly, serve joyfully, and lead courageously—across Africa and around the world.



2025 was a year of growth, missional impact, and momentum for Africa University (AU). In June, AU graduated its largest class ever—622 students from 20 African countries. In August, the university welcomed its most diverse incoming class, with students from 30 nations. They study in four colleges, a law school, and two institutes on a modern, fully debt-free campus built for learning and community.

Highlights from 2025:

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

These milestones are directly connected to your generosity. As this quadrennium continues, Africa University urges every congregation in the Arkansas Conference to maintain AUF support at the 2016 budget level and continue working toward 100 percent funding each year.

AU also encourages churches to consider becoming a “Keystone Congregation” by committing \$7,000 annually in scholarship support for one undergraduate student—and walking alongside that student with prayer and encouragement throughout their college journey. It’s a shared journey of discovery and growth, giving every Keystone Congregation a missional footprint beyond its local setting.

Africa University remains a living expression of our worldwide connection. Your constant engagement is transformational. Because you pray, Arkansas United Methodists, leaders are called

and formed. Because you give, research advances. Because you believe in Africa University, hope expands across nations.

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

James H. Salley

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

jsalley@africau.org | <https://support.africau.org> | www.africau.edu

Boston University School of Theology

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



Boston University School of Theology

NEWS:

- **Students:** The academic year 2025-26 entering class was among our most diverse, with 106 new students, 40% of whom are international students from 17 different countries.
- **Faculty:** In July, Rebecca Copeland and Luis Menéndez-Antuña were promoted to Associate Professor. In September, Nicolette Manglos-Weber became Associate Dean of Students & Community Life, and Rady Roldán-Figueroa ('05) started as Associate Dean for Academic Affairs. Timothy Adkins-Jones ('09,'21) joined as Assistant Professor of Homiletics.
- **Expanding Online/Hybrid Programming:** BUSTH launched a fully Online Master of Divinity (OMDiv) program in November and the first cohort is planned for Fall 2026. Learn more at bu.edu/sth/omdiv. In May, the Doctor of Ministry (DMin) program graduated its largest class ever, 18.
- **Faculty Research:** Professor Steven Sandage is a co-principal investigator for “Training and Treatment Integration Research for Virtue and Flourishing in Mental Healthcare: A Team Science Project,” which received a \$5.2 million grant from the John Templeton Foundation to address a growing need among therapists for training on how to integrate relational virtues and human flourishing in clinical practice. Faculty published more than 130 books, scholarly articles, op-eds, presentations, and book reviews during 2025. Many were interviewed by media publications or featured on podcasts for their scholarship in topics such as trauma-informed care, humility among religious leaders, and biblical agriculture. Selected stories: bu.edu/sth/research/faculty-research/.
- **Scholarships:** BUSTH continues to benefit from nearly 125 scholarships overall, donated to by school alumni, other BU alumni, and friends of BU including more than 20 named scholarships from living alumni and/or their family members.
- **Contextual Education:** Funded by the Lilly Endowment, Director of Contextual Education Anastasia Kidd and Director of Enrollment Chad Moore will lead “The New Wineskins Network” \$1 million initiative to build sustainable, collaborative infrastructure for student and clergy formation across the Boston region.
- **Online Lifelong Learning:** BUSTH offers online courses for professional and spiritual enrichment of religious leaders. Recent offerings include “Digital Ministry as Contemplative Practice.” Learn more at bu.edu/sth/oll.

- 1 • **Development:** Recent accomplishments include a generous pledge to endow a Praise &
2 Worship Fund as well as some new operating funds including the Manoog C. Peters
3 Chaplaincy Fund to further support the school’s chaplaincy curriculum, and the Center for
4 Global Christianity and Mission Film Project Fund to promote the Center’s ministry.

5 **COMMITMENT TO JUSTICE and COMPASSION:**

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

15
16 With faith and gratitude,
17 G. Sujin Pak, dean

18
19 **Camp Tanako**

20 Camp Tanako is a camp and retreat ministry of the
21 Arkansas Annual Conference of the United
22 Methodist Church. Tanako provides a sacred place, set
23 apart from the world. Persons of all ages are welcome
24 to come rest, play, and experience God in new and of-
25 ten profound ways. While campers are at Tanako, they
26 get to practice the concepts that they have learned in
27 their families and local congregations....things like love, forgiveness, prayer, worship, and
28 thanksgiving.



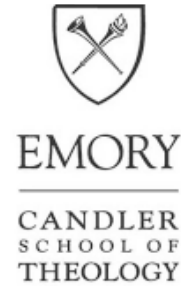
29
30 Campers are guided by young adult leaders who serve as mentors and foster community among
31 their campers. Tanako is a place where life-long relationships are made. In this diverse
32 community, campers recognize themselves and others as uniquely created in the image of God
33 through affirmations of gifts and experiences that help them grow into the places God is leading
34 them. Our goal is for campers to go home wanting to make a difference by serving others and
35 working to recreate the community they experienced at camp, and to go home empowered to be
36 the love of Jesus Christ to their neighbors.

37
38 In 2025, Camp Tanako served over 800 registered summer campers (Day and Overnight) and
39 guests. Campers in both programs came together in community to practice living in Christian
40 community while learning about God’s love for us through the lives of young people in the Bible,
41 such as Joseph, Samuel, David and more. Campers came from local churches across the ARUMC,
42 non-UMC congregations, and many campers listed no church affiliation. In addition to our summer
43 season, Camp Tanako hosted nearly 1,200 additional guests for retreats, conferences, and more
44 during the winter, spring, and fall.

45
46 Camp Tanako’s Board of Trustees and leadership want to thank the many churches and individuals
47 that support this extension ministry of the Arkansas Conference of the United Methodist Church
48 with their prayers, presence, gifts, service, and witness.

Candler School of Theology

As **Candler School of Theology at Emory University** continues in its second century of educating faithful and creative leaders for the church’s ministries throughout the world, we are heartened by the work and witness of The United Methodist Church and look forward to our enduring partnership as the denomination moves into its next chapter with a vision to **love boldly, serve joyfully, and lead courageously**. An official seminary of The United Methodist Church, Candler has a strong Methodist presence among our students, faculty and staff, while holding true to the



Wesleyan value of ecumenical openness. Our student body reflects the diversity and breadth of the Christian faithful, with an enrollment of 507 from 11 countries, 42 states, 45 denominations, 34 UM annual conferences, and 50% persons of color. We see this diversity as a blessing, enriching our life together and providing the perfect context for training for relevant ministry in the 21st century—a ministry that cultivates community across difference, welcomes all to contribute and belong, and embodies Christ’s love in and among us.

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

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

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

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

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

When we talk to Candler alumni and students about their call, one thing becomes clear: the

1 specifics may be different, shaped by their unique gifts, contexts, and life experiences, but their
2 drive to join God’s work of transforming lives and the world is a constant.
3 We recently launched a series called “Candler Changemakers” highlighting the range of
4 fascinating ways our alumni are leading change as they fulfill their call. Follow along on our
5 website (candler.emory.edu) and social media to see how God is working through them. You’ll be
6 inspired!

7
8 —Office of Communications
9 Candler School of Theology, Emory University

11 **Drew University Theological School**

13 Drew University Theological School is a global seminary with a global student population serving
14 the worldwide church. Drew Theological School educates and mentors pastors, preachers,
15 deacons, activists, teachers, thought leaders, and change agents for ministry and service in the
16 church, society, and the wider world. Building upon its Wesleyan and Methodist foundations, Drew
17 Theological School is diverse in theology, vocations, age, as well as racial, ethnic, national, and
18 international identities of its faculty, students, and staff. Many Drew students are just beginning
19 their ministry while others come to graduate theological education with prior ministry experience,
20 reflecting an ongoing trend among theological schools in the United States and Canada. In
21 providing theological education to the world, Drew holds in-person classes in Madison, New
22 Jersey, classes that meet exclusively online, while others meet in hybrid fashion, i.e., partially
23 online, partially in-person, as well as in-person Doctor of Ministry program in South Korea. Regular
24 chapel services are offered in a hybrid way on Tuesdays and Thursdays with people participating
25 from Seminary Hall as well as online. Chapel worship is live-streamed so that students, alumni, and
26 friends around the world can participate.

27
28 In the Fall of 2025, Drew Theological School welcomed 88 new students in all degree programs,
29 with total student enrollment (by headcount) in Fall 2025 semester being 365. Enrollment of
30 international students at Drew is very strong at 140 students in Fall 2025. This number includes
31 students who are studying full-time in the U.S.A. on a student Visa, students who are studying
32 online from their home country, and students in the South Korean Cohort of the Doctor of Ministry
33 program.

34
35 Drew’s interdisciplinary degree programs provide real-world apprenticeships, promote adaptive
36 leadership skills, and encourage innovation through team-taught core courses as well as a variety
37 of electives that integrate theological disciplines and faith practices. The Drew faculty’s shared
38 values are infused across in the teaching, learning, and the formation of students. These values
39 are: 1) a commitment to anti-racism; 2) gender and sexual-identity equality; 3) eco-sustainability and
40 environmental justice; and 4) interfaith understanding and cooperation. Drew Theological School
41 continues to experience an increase in United Methodist students, including United Methodist
42 Global Fellows pursuing further education for ministry. UMC graduates are serving in conferences
43 of The United Methodist Church across the United States, and especially within nearby regional
44 episcopal areas of Greater New Jersey, Eastern Pennsylvania, Susquehanna, Upper New York,
45 New York, and New England.

46
47 **Rev. Edwin David Aponte, PhD, ThD (honorary)**
48 **Dean and Professor of Religion & Culture**
49 **December 10, 2025**

DREW
THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL

Duke Divinity School

Duke Divinity School celebrated its 99th Opening Convocation in August 2025 with a sermon from Dean Edgardo Colón-Emeric to begin the Nicene Creed Preaching Series at Duke Divinity School.

He emphasized that the Nicene Creed is both a Pentecost profession and a peace proclamation:



DUKE DIVINITY SCHOOL

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

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

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

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

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

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

Respectfully submitted by Edgardo Colón-Emeric
Dean of Duke Divinity School

Escuela De Divinidad De Duke

Quizás esta sea la temporada para desenredar el Credo Niceno de la teología estatal y eclesiástica. Quizás esta sea una tarea para una escuela de teología cuya misión afirma 'participar en una educación espiritualmente disciplinada y académicamente rigurosa, en servicio y testimonio del Dios Trino en medio de la iglesia, la academia y el mundo'. ... Cristo no predicó la paz buscando reconocimiento ni premios. Su vida es un extenso sermón sobre la paz. La paz es creer que nuestro punto más bajo no limita nuestra mayor esperanza, porque reconocemos el poder del bautismo, la posibilidad del arrepentimiento y el perdón de los pecados. Creemos. Creemos. Esta es una profesión de Pentecostés, una proclamación de paz y también un pronunciamiento de alabanza.

Este año nos hemos unido a cristianos de todo el mundo para conmemorar el décimo séptimo centenario del Concilio de Nicea y el Credo Niceno. Los académicos y líderes ministeriales de la Escuela de Divinidad de Duke publicaron el libro "Asuntos Trinitarios: 1700 años moldeando la identidad y la práctica cristiana". La escuela organizó dos conferencias para explorar y aprender de Nicea: la Convocatoria y Escuela de Pastores, dirigida a quienes trabajan en la iglesia y en el ministerio vocacional; y "Visible e Invisible: Encuentros Sorprendentes en la Teología y las Artes", con presentaciones musicales, poesía y expresiones artísticas informadas por la riqueza del Credo Niceno.

Gracias a la gracia sustentadora de Dios, seguimos recibiendo estudiantes de todo el país y del mundo para capacitarlos en ministerios fieles al servicio de Dios en iglesias, capellanía y servicio comunitario. En 2025, se nos unieron 219 estudiantes. El programa de Maestría en Divinidad incorporó a 120 nuevos estudiantes, tanto en el programa residencial como en el híbrido, lo que representa un crecimiento del 10 % respecto al año anterior. La Maestría en Artes en Práctica Cristiana inscribió a seis nuevos estudiantes; el Doctorado en Ministerio, a 34; la Maestría en Teología, a siete; la Maestría en Estudios Teológicos, a 32; y el Doctorado en Teología recibió a cinco nuevos estudiantes en el campus. El Certificado en Teología y Salud recibió a 14 estudiantes.

La Escuela de Divinidad de Duke se compromete a facilitar caminos claros y de apoyo hacia la educación teológica para animar y equipar a quienes están discerniendo un llamado al ministerio. Confirmamos un memorando de entendimiento con Huntingdon College, reafirmando nuestra dedicación mutua a fomentar vocaciones, fortalecer la tradición metodista unida e invertir en la próxima generación de líderes cristianos.

Este año dimos la bienvenida a cuatro nuevos profesores: Jonathan Tran, profesor de ética teológica; Natalie Carnes, profesora de teología; Matthew Whelan, profesor asociado de investigación en teología; y Nina Balmaceda, profesora asociada de la práctica de la reconciliación y directora del Centro para la Reconciliación.

La Escuela de Divinidad de Duke continúa agradecida por su participación constante en la Iglesia Metodista Unida y por su colaboración con esta conferencia anual. Esperamos con ansias continuar trabajando con ustedes, uniéndonos a la guía del Espíritu de Dios en la tarea de preparar personas para el ministerio cristiano. Para obtener más información sobre la Escuela de Divinidad de Duke, visite nuestro sitio web: www.divinity.duke.edu.

Respetuosamente sometido por Edgardo Colón-Emeric
Decano de la Escuela de Divinidad de Duke

Gammon Theological Seminary

GAMMON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY remains the only Historically Black Theological Institution (HBTI) of The United Methodist Church. Gammon Theological Seminary's mission is to provide academic and degree-granting programs that help prepare individuals who understand their vocation as working in partnership with God in forming a just and generative world for all, for the practice of Christian ministry and public leadership.



Accreditation

- Launched Gammon's independent Master of Divinity program in 2024 as a key step toward separate accreditation with SACSCOC and ATS.
- Hosted initial SACSCOC site visit in October 2025, received affirmation of 93% compliance on all SACSCOC Standards, final review pending the June 2026 SACSCOC Board meeting.
- Starting the ATS Accreditation process in 2026 with a goal of full ATS accreditation awarded by December 2027.

Enrollment

- As of Spring 2026, Gammon enrolls 41 students (10 new and 31 continuing), reflecting sustained growth since the Fall 2024 launch of the independent MDiv program.
- Student body includes 30 United Methodist-affiliated students (73.2 percent), with 28 specifically identifying as UMC (68.3 percent), demonstrating Gammon's deep denominational roots.
- More than 70 percent of students are directly engaged in or preparing for ordained and licensed ministry: 42.5 percent actively discerning call and 30 percent already certified candidates or licensed local pastors.
- Student-to-faculty ratios have remained healthy (4:1 to 7:1), with more than 70 percent of students enrolled full-time each term, demonstrating stable instructional capacity and careful scaling.

Fund Development

- Secured a three-year, \$975,000 capacity-building grant from GBHEM to underwrite Gammon 3.0 operational expansion and strengthen institutional infrastructure.
- Received a \$375,000 grant from the William I. H. and Lula E. Pitts Foundation to support Phase III renovations, modernizing classrooms, offices, and the faculty hub for collaborative learning and academic planning.
- Obtained a \$250,000 scholarship grant from The SOMA Foundation to provide current-use aid for students in the 2025–2026 academic year, directly reducing educational debt.
- Launched the "Become 1 of 1 Million" endowed scholarship campaign fund to raise \$1 million in scholarship funds for Gammon students, enabling students to answer their call to ministry without incurring significant debt.

We offer profound thanks to God and to the entire United Methodist connection—bishops, cabinets, annual conferences, congregations, alumni, donors, and friends—for your faithful partnership in this season of renewal. Your prayers, apportionment support, special offerings, and generous gifts are establishing the work of our hands and making it possible for the vision of Gammon 3.0 to become a lived reality for current and future students. Together, we are strengthening Gammon as a vital, sustainable, and innovative seminary forming leaders for the

1 church and the world.
2
3 Respectfully Submitted,
4 Dr. Candace M. Lewis
5 President & CEO
6 Gammon Theological Seminary

Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary

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



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

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

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

49 Garrett has also experienced significant success in foundation and grant support for innovative
50

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

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

Submitted by:
Javier A. Viera, President

Hendrix College

"In religious and vocation programs combined with service learning, Hendrix continues to develop clergy and lay leaders for faithful service inside the church and beyond...helping students find meaningful vocations connected to who they are and how they want to serve in the world."



-Hendrix College Statement on Church Relatedness, adopted by the faculty and board of trustees in spring 2017

Vocational discernment, engaged learning, and academic excellence are hallmarks of Hendrix College that have their roots in the Methodist value of uniting faith and knowledge. The College is proud to continue the vision set out by its founders nearly 150 years ago, a vision which created a college now widely recognized as one of the best liberal arts colleges in the country.

Hendrix College appreciates the Arkansas Conference for the support it gives to the programs and mission of this institution. As a United Methodist Church-related college, the College embraces the freedom of the academy where students and faculty explore the boundaries of knowledge while setting a context for that exploration in an ethos that values growth of both the mind and the spirit. In this way we fulfill our mission to cultivate whole persons and to inspire our students to live lives of accomplishment, integrity, service, and joy in their communities.

We are pleased to highlight some of the many ways that Hendrix College changes lives and lives out its mission.

1 **Religious Life and Vocational Exploration**

2 Through the Office of the Chaplain and the Miller Center for Vocation, Ethics, and Calling, Hendrix
3 College focuses on connecting students with opportunities and resources to deepen their faith, to
4 grow in relationships and leadership, and to explore and discern vocational paths where their gifts
5 may be well cultivated and shared for a life of meaning and purpose.
6

- 7 • Since 2004, 64 Hendrix graduates have enrolled in seminary with 75% of these students
8 attending UM seminaries. Three recent Hendrix alumni are currently in seminary. Of those
9 being commissioned or ordained this year in the Arkansas Conference, over half are Hendrix
10 alumni.
- 11 • The UMYF Leadership Scholarship Program is completing its 31st year and continues to
12 graduate students who join over 320 alumni from the program. These scholars form a core
13 community on campus who share in and help lead weekly worship and communion, small
14 groups for support and discipleship, retreats, and opportunities for fellowship and serving.
15 Students who are discerning ministry are offered mentoring, opportunities to lead and serve on
16 campus and beyond, and engagement with leaders in ministry in a variety of roles.
- 17 • Internships in local churches and non-profit ministry settings match exploring students with
18 seasoned ministry leaders and opportunities for mentoring and discovery.
- 19 • Seminary Fairs are hosted on campus every other year (with the next one in fall of 2026) and
20 visits to seminaries by individuals and groups of students are supported in ongoing ways. The
21 Miller Center Service Scholars form a core community on campus which cultivates a spirit of
22 serving and vocational reflection.
- 23 • Service-learning is ongoing as a component of community life through the student-led
24 Volunteer Action Committee and travel opportunities locally, regionally, and internationally. The
25 2026 Miller Center service-learning trip took a group of 10 students and staff to Iceland for an
26 experience in climate action called "Planting Seeds for Resilience and Renewal." Since 2016, 97
27 high school students have attended the Hendrix Youth Institute (HYI), which is part of the Youth
28 Theology Network of similar programs across the nation funded by the Lilly
29 Endowment. The HYI format's current design is an intensive weekend retreat for ministry
30 exploration, immediately before and leading up to further calling exploration during Senior High
31 Assembly, HYI has been generously supported by the Arkansas Conference and the Methodist
32 Foundation for Arkansas.
33

34 **Church Relations**

- 35 • United Methodist groups that the College has hosted for no rental fee include the
36 Arkansas United Methodist Conference Historical Society, Board of Ordained Ministry,
37 Arkansas Conference Council on Youth Ministries planning group, Arkansas Area
38 Clergywomen, and various local and district meetings and retreats.
- 39 • In 2026, Hendrix will host the Jr. & Sr. High Assemblies for the Arkansas Conference Council on
40 Youth Ministries and "Mission u" for the Conference United Women in Faith.
- 41 • More than 450 churches across the Arkansas Conference have had Hendrix students assist
42 with worship services and/or serve as interns in the past 30 years.
- 43 • In its review by the University Senate of the United Methodist Church this past year, Hendrix
44 College received the highest rating of "approved without qualification" to continue to be listed
45 as an approved church-related institution.
- 46 • As we approach the 150th anniversary of the 1876 founding of Hendrix College, we will be
47 reflecting on the official relationship with the Methodist Church since 1884, and the rich shared
48 history across the decades since. We look toward the future with a firm grounding in the
49 experiences of the past as we determine what the College and the Church might require from
50 this relationship in the years ahead.

Continuing Education

- Hendrix College hosted David Worthington, Global Ambassador for Methodist Heritage Sites for the General Commission on Archives and History, in mid-April for presentations in the Central Arkansas area, including a Willson Lecture on the Hendrix campus, entitled "Wisdom from the Past-Hope for the Future."
- In collaboration with The Methodist Foundation for Arkansas' Compelling Preaching Initiative, we will host bestselling author, speaker, and storyteller Matthew Dicks as the John and Marjem Gill Preaching Workshop leader on October 5-6, 2026. Dicks, will preach on Monday evening, October 5 at 7:00 p.m. in Greene Chapel and lead a workshop on Tuesday, October 6, from 9:00 a.m.-3:30 p.m.

Funding Received from Outside Sources for Religious Life and Ministry Support

- An endowed gift from the John Workman family for a summer internship in churches, non-profits, or journalism.
- An endowed gift from the Wilder family to establish an internship in churches and non-profit agencies.
- Grants from the Lilly Endowment (listed above) for United Methodist youth who are discerning a call to ministry.
- A gift from the Methodist Foundation for Arkansas to partner with the Lilly Endowment for supporting youth discerning a call to ministry.
- An Innovation Grant from the Central District of the United Methodist Church.

Financial Aid/Enrollment

- Hendrix has been recognized as one of the top 100 Liberal Arts National Colleges in the U.S. News and World Report's 2026 Best Colleges (rising 18 places) and is the only Arkansas college on the list. A rise to #35 in Social Mobility among Liberal Arts schools underscores its success in serving students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. This achievement reflects Hendrix's accessibility and commitment to ensuring all students thrive, with resources such as faculty mentorship, strategic relationships with graduate schools, and close engagement with employers through internships and real-world experiences.
- Annually, Hendrix College provides more than \$1.2 million in institutional aid to United Methodist students. The majority of this aid is unfunded, coming in the form of discounts. That model is unsustainable.
- For the 2025 calendar year, the College received \$73,049.96 from the Arkansas Conference of the United Methodist Church, with 100% of the church apportionment going toward the Office of the Chaplain and programming through the Office of Religious Life. The apportionment is insufficient to fund fully the activities described above, thus limiting potential expansion.

I believe opportunity exists to strengthen our commitment to serving young adults from the Arkansas Conference. However, like the UMC, higher education is severely constrained by demographic changes. As the UMC responds to the new post-disaffiliation reality and higher education grapples with the decline in the size of the college-age population, new approaches are needed. One question dominates our conversations on campus: what do we stop doing so that we can do the things that secure our future and serve our mission? I welcome the opportunity to have conversations with leadership of the Arkansas Conference about how we might reinvigorate our mutual commitment to serving our shared interest in the future of the United Methodist Church by grappling with that question and others. Our sesquicentennial provides an ideal time to consider the future.

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5 Karen K. Petersen, Ph.D.
6 President

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11 **Lydia Patterson Institute**

12 ***Steady Presence at the Border. Shared Mission Across States.***

13
14 Some ministries begin with a building.

15
16 Others begin with a response to a need.

17
18 More than 110 years ago, Lydia Patterson began with a vision—
19 a bold vision for a school at the border where faith and education
20 would meet, and where every child, regardless of circumstance,
21 would have the opportunity to learn, grow, and lead.

22 Today, that vision continues at Lydia Patterson Institute (LPI), a
23 college-preparatory, faith-based middle and high school in El Paso, Texas, serving students who
24 live in Ciudad Juárez, México.

25
26 For our students, the border is not an abstract idea.

27
28 It is a daily reality.

29
30 Each morning, nearly all of our students cross an international bridge to attend school.

31 They navigate immigration systems, economic hardship, and uncertainty—yet they arrive ready to
32 learn, to lead, and to pursue their future.

33
34 In this moment, the stability our students rely on is increasingly fragile.

35
36 Immigration processes are shifting.

37
38 Delays are growing.

39 Families face uncertainty around documentation, employment, and mobility.

40
41 What is discussed as policy elsewhere is lived as daily reality for our students.
42 And yet—they come.

43
44 They show up prepared.

45 They take exams.

46 They lead chapel.

47 They apply to college.

48 They build futures beyond circumstance.

49 Last year, during the visa challenges that deeply impacted our students and families, the
50



uncertainty was not theoretical—it was immediate and personal.	1
Students did not know if they would be able to cross. Families did not know what the next day would hold.	2 3 4
And yet, because of your partnership, we were able to respond—not with fear, but with faith, structure, and care.	5 6 7
We adapted.	8
We supported.	9
We remained present.	10 11
Your support made it possible for our students to continue learning, to stay connected, and to move forward even when the path felt uncertain.	12 13 14
In that moment, the Arkansas Annual Conference was not just a partner—you were a steady presence.	15 16
Because of faithful partners like the Arkansas Annual Conference, our students do not walk this journey alone.	17 18 19
Your partnership helps ensure that:	20
• Education continues without interruption. Even when border disruptions or policy changes arise, we adapt to maintain continuity in learning.	21 22 23
• Essential resources remain accessible. Technology, academic support, and structured learning environments are available to every student.	24 25
• Academic and spiritual formation remain strong. Students grow not only in knowledge, but in faith, leadership, and purpose.	26 27
• Stability is provided in uncertain systems. In moments when families feel instability, the Church becomes a steady and faithful presence.	28 29 30
Our students are:	31
• Bilingual	32
• Bicultural	33
• Resilient	34
• Deeply committed to their education and their faith	35 36
They understand sacrifice.	37
They carry responsibility.	38
They demonstrate perseverance beyond their years.	39
They are not defined by their challenges—they are defined by their potential.	40 41
At Lydia Patterson Institute:	42
• 100% of seniors graduate on time	43
• 100% are accepted into college	44 45
• Students grow in both academic achievement and spiritual formation	46 47
This is more than educational success.	48 49 50

1 It is:

- 2 • Families gaining stability
- 3 • Cycles of poverty being interrupted
- 4 • Communities being strengthened
- 5 • Future leaders being formed

7

8 When one student succeeds, the impact ripples across generations.

9

10 To educate one student at LPI costs approximately \$11,500 per year.

11

12 100% of students receive scholarship assistance.

13

14 This is not simply financial support.

15

16 It is a witness—especially to our students—that says:

17

18 You are a child of God.

19

20 You belong.

21

22 Your future matters.

23

24 And we will walk with you.

25

26 Your partnership reminds us that:

27

28 • Mission extends beyond geography

29

30 • The Church moves where the need is greatest

31

32 • Faith builds bridges where systems create barriers

33

34 Every morning, when our students cross the bridge, they carry with them the prayers and
35 partnership of the Church.

36

37 Love crosses with them.

38

39 As the Arkansas Annual Conference continues its ministry, we invite you to remain part of this
40 shared calling:

41

42 • Pray for our students and families

43

44 • Visit and experience this ministry firsthand

45

46 • Partner in sustaining scholarships

47

48 • Share this story within your congregations

49

50 **Thank you for walking with us.**

Thank you for standing with students whose lives are shaped by resilience and hope.

Thank you for being present—especially in moments when that presence matters most.

47

48 Because of you, even in uncertainty,

49

50

education continues, faith grows,
and opportunity remains within reach.

Dr. Carla Cardoza
President, Lydia Patterson Institute

Memphis Theological Seminary

Grace and peace to you in the name of Jesus Christ.

As you are aware from the Seminary’s recent public announcement, Memphis Theological Seminary will conclude its academic operations following the 2025–2026 academic year and has entered into a teach out partnership with Perkins School of Theology at Southern Methodist University. This will therefore be my final report to you as Director of the Methodist House of Studies at MTS.



The implications for our United Methodist students are clear and steady. Current students will be able to complete their degrees at Perkins with full tuition scholarships. Perkins will continue remote and online delivery formats consistent with our present models, and has committed to offering in person, week long intensives in Memphis, and enrolling new students in the Mid South beginning Fall 2026.

For candidates under your care, this provides continuity in theological education within a University Senate approved seminary and ensures that no student’s path toward ordination is interrupted.

For more than sixty years, Memphis Theological Seminary has played a meaningful role in the formation of clergy now serving across the Arkansas Conference. In an ecumenical community shaped by scholarship, piety, and justice, students were trained to preach faithfully, to think theologically, and to pastor with attentiveness to both Church and world. While our institutional role in continuing that work is ending, the fruit of that formation remains alive in congregations, hospitals, classrooms, and communities throughout this region. The Seminary’s closure does not erase its imprint.

In recent years, the Methodist House of Studies has sought to deepen Wesleyan formation and strengthen connections and relationships with the historic expressions of Methodism with our AME, AMEZ, and CME partners. We have nurtured ordinands, offered Wesleyan coursework, and developed certificate initiatives serving clergy and laity. That commitment to Methodist formation in the Mid South continues to matter, even as the institutional landscape shifts.

Conversations with Perkins leadership include initial interest in sustaining an ongoing theological presence in Memphis that reflects the ecumenical and justice centered ethos long associated with MTS. While details are still emerging, there is shared recognition that this region remains a vital context for ministry preparation and that theological education here should not simply

1 disappear.

2

3 I am deeply grateful to the Arkansas Conference for your trust and partnership over these many
4 decades. You have walked with students in discernment, supported their formation, and shared in
5 the work of preparing leaders for Christ's Church. It has been an honor to serve alongside you.

6

7 Grace and peace,

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11

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jonathan L. Jeffords". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

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Jonathan L. Jeffords,
Director, The Methodist House of Studies
Memphis Theological Seminary
Memphis, Tennessee



Rebuilding the Lives of Children and Families since 1899

4,320 
Arkansans served


113,372 
mental health
services provided

88 
foster children
celebrated
birthdays
in our care

52 
pregnant women
& mothers received
support entering recovery
at Arkansas CARES

FY25 IMPACT

25 
years of Rev. Robert
Regnier
summer camp

255 
Volunteer-made fleece
blankets given to
kids entering care

\$9,433 
provided for therapeutic
requests like musical
instruments & sensory toys

338 
Christmas
lists fulfilled

564 
gas cards provided for
transportation assistance

OUR MISSION

To provide the best possible care for Arkansans who experience abandonment, abuse and neglect or struggle with psychiatric, behavioral and emotional issues

ABOUT US

Methodist Family Health (MFH) was founded as an orphanage & widely known as the Methodist Children's Home. MFH evolved to meet ever-changing mental health needs and now serves 4,000+ individuals each year. Our comprehensive system of mental and behavioral health care includes inpatient hospitals, residential treatment, therapeutic day school, outpatient and school-based counseling, Kaleidoscope Grief Center, and Arkansas CARES.

Because many of the individuals and families we serve struggle to afford necessities, the Foundation supplies the essentials not covered by insurance and amenities that aid their therapeutic journeys.

WHO WE SERVE

1. Children & teens receiving inpatient or outpatient mental health care
2. Adolescents in foster care
3. Youth & families who have lost a loved one
4. Pregnant women & mothers in substance use recovery

WHAT YOUR SUPPORT FUNDS

Your church's donations and participation in our Get Up & Give and Share the Light campaigns help provide the following:

- Everyday Necessities & Unique Needs
- Bibles & Inspirational Materials
- Transportation Assistance
- Summer Camp
- Scholarships
- Camp Healing Hearts
- Art Therapy
- Birthday & Christmas Presents

methodistfamily.org | mfhfoundation.org

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The Methodist Foundation for Arkansas



Over the past year, the Methodist Foundation for Arkansas (MFA) has continued to share the benefits of its more than six decades of sound management by providing more resources directly to local church and nonprofit ministries. In 2025, MFA once again distributed more than \$7 million to strengthen and expand Methodist ministries across Arkansas, including a record \$2.1 million in grants — more than any of the other 46 Methodist foundations in the United States.

Since focusing MFA's mission through the lens of helping congregations reach their communities in ways that make a meaningful impact, we have continued to see partners rise to the challenge. For example, Bishops' Club members help fund MFA's thriving grant ministry with 100% of their \$1,000 annual gifts going directly to the Grants Program — a factor that has fueled the membership growth of the Bishops' Club since we made this change in 2021. In addition, flexible options such as monthly payment of dues and lower dues for early career clergy have made membership accessible to a broader range of participants; visit www.methodistfoundation.org/bishops-club to learn more.

MFA is grateful to existing partner churches and nonprofits that have added to their holdings, and to those that have opened their first accounts with the Foundation over the past year. MFA closed out 2024 managing over \$226 million in assets; the 2025 calendar year ended with the Foundation managing more than \$260 million. While this growth was influenced by many factors, central among them is the faith and trust that churches, institutions, and individuals continue to have in the work we do. Our partner churches and organizations now number more than 170, with a combined total of more than 800 individual and organizational accounts.

Having recently honed our grantmaking priorities from 11 to 6, we continue investing in education and leadership development. A number of you have participated in the free Planning a Legacy workshops we present at local churches around the state (if you haven't, please contact us to schedule yours!), and the full scholarships provided for laity to attend the Perkins Summit for Faith and Learning, which SMU's Perkins School of Theology took to Norman, Oklahoma, in March. And at this writing, a diverse group of 50 persons are preparing to embark on a Civil Rights Journey across four states; they have pledged to carry their experiences back to their local churches to spur further learning and spiritual growth. Likewise, 18 clergy are preparing to travel to Taizé, France, in April to engage with the monastic community there and find ways to integrate the benefits of this experience into their ministry context.

MFA's other chief priority for its grant ministry is addressing food insecurity in Arkansas. This past year we have funded the establishment of a third feeding ministry hub, housed in the property made vacant upon the closure of St. Andrew UMC of Arkadelphia. A \$40,000 grant to First UMC of Arkadelphia helped equip this new hub to serve a multi-county area in collaboration with existing community partners. In another corner of the state, a \$20,000 grant to Grace Chapel UMC in Rogers is helping sustain a weekly food pantry called Blessings to Go. And a recent endowed funds distribution to the Arkansas Foodbank covered the cost of more than 600,000 meals for our neighbors.

Under the Foundation's current Strategic Plan, we continue to pursue healthy, sustainable growth using benchmarks set through 2029, including increasing our grant-making capacity, continuing

to provide education for laity and clergy, and helping more individuals and churches shape their legacies for generations to come. We invite you to join us in our work in whatever way helps your ministry bear fruit.

Blessings,

Rev. J. Wayne Clark, President & CEO
The Methodist Foundation for Arkansas
wclark@methodistfoundationAR.org
501-664-8632

The Methodist Foundation for Arkansas: Assets

At the close of 2025, the Foundation’s managed assets totaled \$260 million, reflecting positive investment performance and a significant number of new accounts. Based on total assets, MFA ranks in the top 10 of the 47 Methodist foundations nationwide.

Slightly more than half of the Foundation’s assets are owned by churches and institutions. The remainder were given in faith and trust to the Foundation over the last 60 years. A significant portion of the funds given to MFA have specific designations honored by the Foundation.

The Foundation’s managed accounts, established by Arkansas Methodist congregations or church members, generate money in perpetuity, returning earnings to church ministries year after year. These funds directly support a variety of needs, including children and youth ministries, scholarships, music programs, mission work, feeding ministries, and building maintenance.

The Methodist Foundation for Arkansas: Grants and Services

The Grant Administration Committee of the Foundation’s Board of Directors continued to dramatically impact the United Methodist Church in Arkansas during 2025, awarding more than \$2.1 million in grants — more than any other Methodist foundation in the country. MFA has been blessed over the years with unrestricted gifts, and our staff and Grant Committee work diligently to be good stewards of these funds. Grants are awarded in six priority areas: Food Security,

Homelessness, and Poverty; Clergy and Laity Education; Community Health; Evangelism and Discipleship; Diversity; and Environmental Awareness and Energy Education.

MFA also provides services that educate and equip clergy and laity in a variety of ways. Below are a few examples of how MFA grants and services have benefited United Methodists in the past year:

Compelling Preaching Initiative Grant from Lilly Endowment, Inc.

The Methodist Foundation for Arkansas continues to manage a grant of over \$1.2 million from Lilly Endowment Inc., focusing on serving local churches by providing resources and support for clergy leadership development. Funded through Lilly Endowment’s Compelling Preaching Initiative, it aims to foster and support preaching that inspires, encourages, and guides people to fully understand and love God and live out their Christian faith.

MFA’s Compelling Preaching Initiative grant is a statewide five-year program open to clergy members of the Arkansas United Methodist Conference. The Foundation is one of 81 organizations that received grants through this competitive process. Thus far, 36 clergy

1 have been selected to participate in this program across three cohorts; the fourth and final
2 cohort of 12 will be selected this fall.

3 Planning a Legacy: How Faithful People Prepare

4 The Foundation makes frequent local church visits to offer its Planning a Legacy (PAL)
5 program, a holistic estate seminar covering basic information about wills, funeral and
6 memorial services, end-of-life planning, and legacy gifts. It aims to inspire participants to
7 take their next steps in estate planning and to see it as a part of their legacy. The format is
8 a 90-minute gathering with a meal, a presentation from the Foundation, and a Q&A with an
9 attorney. Childcare and meal costs are covered by MFA. Participants receive a binder with
10 helpful documents for starting or continuing their legacy planning process. Contact MFA at
11 501-664- 8632 or info@methodistfoundationAR.org to schedule a PAL presentation at your
12 church.
13

14 Clergy International Pilgrimage: Taizé

15 The Foundation's goal of offering an international educational travel experience each year
16 continued with this year's April journey that took clergy to France to participate in the rituals
17 of the Taizé monastic community.
18

19 Fully Funding the Hope Scholarship

20 The Hope Scholarship for low-income undergraduate students is in its third academic year.
21 All reports from the partnering colleges, universities, and scholarship programs have been
22 positive. While the anonymous donors and Grants Committee committed to funding this
23 program at \$150,000 annually for four years, a permanent endowed fund has been
24 established at the Foundation so that the Hope Scholarship will now continue beyond
25 2027.
26

27
28 To learn more about the Foundation or to schedule any of MFA's programs or services, visit
29 MethodistFoundationAR.org.

30 **Methodist LeBonheur Healthcare**

31 Michael Ugwueke, President and Chief Executive Officer

32
33 At Methodist Le Bonheur Healthcare (MLH), our mission is
34 to enhance your health and well-being through high quality,
35 innovative, and compassionate care. We are a faith-based
36 institution, proudly affiliated with the United Methodist Church since our
37 founding more than 100 years ago, and our vision is to be nationally recognized for excellence in
38 clinical quality, patient safety, and compassionate care to improve every life we touch.
39
40



41 Today, MLH has grown from one hospital into a comprehensive health system offering a full
42 continuum of care to every corner of our community, including five adult hospitals, nationally
43 ranked Le Bonheur Children's Hospital, a home health agency, ambulatory surgery centers,
44 outpatient facilities, hospice residence, and widespread physician practices serving residents
45 across the Mid-South. As Tennessee's largest provider of care to TennCare/Medicaid and
46 uninsured patients, we are committed to living out our culture of providing care and compassion to
47 all regardless of circumstances.
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Achieving Excellence

Leading MLH is our President and Chief Executive Officer, Michael Ugwueke, MPA, DHA, FACHE. Under Dr. Ugwueke’s leadership, MLH has been widely recognized for providing the highest-quality of patient care and services, offering an array of care options including cancer care, emergency services, diabetes control and more for the whole family. MLH has been recognized for excellence in many ways. Recent achievements include awards from Money as a Best Hospital for Cancer Care and Cardiac Care. US News & World Report recognized MLH as a Best Regional Hospital overall and a Best Regional Hospital for Equitable Access. MLH had top quality ratings in the region with 4 and 5 star ratings from the Centers of Medicare & Medicaid Services as well as A and B grades for all hospitals from the Leapfrog Hospital Safety Group. MLH was also named a Top 150 Place to Work in Healthcare by Becker’s Hospital Review and one of America’s Greatest Workplaces by Newsweek.

Faith-Based Mission at Work

The faith-based mission of MLH continues to be at the heart of all that we do. That work includes programs like our clinical chaplaincy services, volunteer services, the Employee Assistance Program and Dennis H. Jones Living Well Network, Clinical Pastoral Education, the Center of Excellence in Faith and Health Equity, the Humanitarian Fund, United Methodist annual conference connections, the Office of Community Outreach, the Congregational Health Network and many other initiatives and projects. Mission Integration offers guidance and direction for the integration of MLH’s mission, vision, values, and guiding behaviors, especially from the perspective of the Social Principles of the United Methodist Church. Additionally, Mission Integration ensures that the relationship with the United Methodist Church and relevant social, ethical, and pastoral teachings are understood and integrated appropriately and consistently across the entire system.

Responding to Community Need

In 2025, Mission Integration programs and associates continued their life-changing work in many different ways. Our chaplains offered spiritual care for patients, families, and associates and responded to the wider community through a spiritual care helpline. The My Sister’s Keeper program continued its work to empower and highlight the voices of Black women in our community on healthcare, leadership, advocacy, and more. The Congregational Health Network organized hundreds of community events and resource distributions. We continued and expanded an educational initiative that offers evidence-based Chronic Disease Self Management classes to hundreds of community members across our area, in person and virtually, in English and in Spanish. The Office of Community Outreach continued running community clinics, home visitation programs, and school-based interventions. Our Employee Assistance Program and Living Well Network responded directly to districts and pastors who sought support and education for how pastoral leaders can care for their people and themselves in the midst of trying times. We continue working with students at the University of Tennessee Health Science Center (UTHSC) through the Serving The Underserved certificate course, a partnership with UTHSC and Church Health that has been educating students for 15 years. MLH continues the Healthier 901 program to educate, resource, and inspire our community to become healthier through exercise, nutrition, and holistic health practices. Mission Integration has been instrumental in the implementation of Healthier 901 as the program continues into 2026 and beyond.

We are deeply appreciative of the support of the three annual conferences who founded our system and continue to be vital partners. The healing ministry of Christ continues to be at our center.

Mount Eagle Retreat Center



1 **Mount Eagle Retreat Center**

2 Mount Eagle Retreat Center continues to offer
3 Christian hospitality and opportunities for holy
4 listening for groups and individuals. With over
5 2,000 visitors from over 120 churches and
6 organizations this past year, our grounds are
7 often alive with faces from all over Arkansas and surrounding states. We are thankful for all those
8 who have partnered with us to keep our ministries moving forward.
9

10 **Preserving This Sacred Space And Making It Accessible**

11 Mount Eagle stewards over 1,000 acres. We are committed to caring for this specific land, but also
12 our common global home. We do this with land management practices as well as offering a place
13 to engage creation care practices we can all participate in at our homes. Through our partnerships
14 with UWF, MFA, and Global Ministries we have been able to enhance and establish ministries that
15 have expanded our creation care mission. Through the installation of an EV charger and the
16 purchase of a commercial composting machine, our care for this sacred space and God's creation
17 is important to our overall ministry. Mount Eagle is also committed to making this sacred space
18 accessible for guests to experience holy listening in a unique setting. One way we do this is
19 charging guests only 60-70% of the actual cost of their stay. This has enabled so many ministries
20 to utilize this space. Our Hermitage Cabin is even further discounted to give leaders and laity a
21 space to get away from daily lives to make room for holy listening.
22

23 **Offering Formational Ministries**

24 Mount Eagle also continues to offer formational opportunities such as a Grief Retreat and Fishing
25 Retreat where people can experience fellowship and learning. We also have a Spiritual Formation
26 and Ecology Ministries Summer Internship program to invest in future leaders for our churches and
27 faith communities. Natalie, our intern this past year described the program's impact, "I am
28 blessed that God provided me with opportunities to connect with those that I crossed paths with.
29 And, although I am sad that this once in a lifetime opportunity has come to a close, I leave feeling
30 more grounded, more joyful and with an even deeper connection to God."
31

32 **Engaging beyond our gate**

33 Our Compost Program has enabled us to build deeper relationships beyond our property. With
34 grants and volunteers from amazing partners including Global Ministries' EarthKeepers, Clinton's
35 UWF, The Methodist Foundation for Arkansas, NOMADS, and Clinton FUMC, we are now collecting
36 compost from Clinton and exploring ways to equip congregational ministry and community
37 engagement in new ways. We are excited to develop creation care and spiritual formation
38 ministries for churches to use. Thank you to all who continue to make our ministries possible.
39

Ozark Mission Project

40 YEAR ANNIVERSARY

Since 1986, Ozark Mission Project has remained faithful to its founding mission of bringing youth and adults together to serve communities across Arkansas. In the summer of 2026, we celebrate 40 years of faith, service, and community and we pause to reflect on the impact of this journey. In these 40 years OMP has become more than just a mission—it has grown into a multigenerational movement of service, discipleship, and love for our neighbor. Through it all, we see God’s faithfulness guiding and sustaining this ministry, touching countless lives and shaping generations in ways we never could have imagined.



2025 SUMMER IMPACT REPORT

Youth and Adult Community Builders: 835

Neighbors’ Homes Served: 141

Projects Completed: 286, including 155 accessibility improvements

Volunteer Hours: 21,252 Hours

Volunteers Engaged: 60 Leadership Volunteers, 200+ local church volunteers

Churches Involved: 44

Leadership Academy College Students: 13

The support from our donors is at the heart of countless special moments, bringing generations together during mission weeks. Parents serve alongside their children, three generations work together on projects, and youth follow in the footsteps of their parents who had served with OMP decades ago.

One adult Community Builder shared: “I thought OMP was rewarding when I went in the ‘80s and ‘90s. As an adult, I can honestly say my experience has been multiplied exponentially.”

As we celebrate 40 years of faithful service, we stand at a meaningful crossroads — honoring our legacy while stepping into a new season of growth, leadership, and possibility. This year we will serve in 10 communities across Arkansas, partnering with host churches to deepen community impact and make lasting connections.

2026 UPCOMING SUMMER MISSIONS

June 7-12: Bentonville, Shoal Creek Camp, Little Rock, Arkadelphia

June 21-26: Fayetteville, Paragould, Maumelle

July 12-17: North Little Rock, Cabot, Rogers

July 27-29: OMP 101 for 5th and 6th graders

Ozark Mission Project staff and the Board of Directors would like to thank the many churches, community partners, individuals, and families who support this ministry and make this impact possible. Together we are making an impact - one project, one family, one community, one generation at a time.

Jules Anderson

Executive Director, Ozark Mission Project

Philander Smith University

2026 Arkansas Annual Conference Report

On behalf of the Board of Trustees, faculty, staff, students, and alumni of Philander Smith University, I extend warm greetings to the 2026 Arkansas Annual Conference. Your prayers, advocacy, and faithful generosity continue to sustain our mission. Because of your partnership, we are not merely preserving a legacy; we are building a stronger future.



A Year of Stabilization, Investment, and Strategic Momentum

Now in our 149th year, Philander Smith University stands in a season defined not simply by resilience, but by visible transformation. The 2025–2026 academic year has been marked by historic capital investments, strengthened financial footing, academic expansion, and operational modernization.

Last year, we laid the groundwork; this year, tangible progress is evident.

This year, we are seeing tangible progress.

Guided by faith and disciplined stewardship, we remain anchored in the promise that God’s plans for this institution are for hope and a future.

Transformational Investments in Infrastructure

\$6 Million Residential Life Center (RLC) Renovation

We launched a \$6 million comprehensive renovation of the Residential Life Center (RLC) — a critical investment in student life and campus safety.

This renovation includes:

- Structural and mechanical system upgrades
- Modernized residential interiors
- Updated life-safety and accessibility systems
- Redesigned common spaces to strengthen the student community

This investment affirms our commitment to providing students with safe, modern, and dignified living environments that support academic success.

\$19 Million Transformational Gift

Philander Smith University received a \$19 million unrestricted gift from MacKenzie Scott, one of the largest single gifts in institutional history.

This transformative investment has strengthened:

- Institutional reserves and balance sheet stability
- Strategic debt reduction
- Student scholarships
- Long-term financial planning capacity

This gift reflects national confidence in Philander Smith University's mission and future.

\$7.1 Million Congressional Allocation & Nursing Program Expansion

Philander Smith University secured \$7.1 million in federal congressional appropriations to advance campus infrastructure and academic programming.

A major milestone within this allocation is the approval and expansion of our Nursing Program.

The funding supports:

- Development and expansion of nursing instructional space
- Procurement of advanced clinical simulation equipment
- Faculty recruitment and program development
- Infrastructure enhancements to meet accreditation standards

The approval of the Nursing Program represents a strategic academic expansion aligned with workforce demands across Arkansas and the region. As healthcare shortages persist nationwide, Philander Smith University is positioning itself to contribute to health equity, workforce development, and community well-being.

This investment allows us to prepare highly qualified, compassionate nurses who will serve not only Arkansas but communities across the nation.

Enterprise Modernization: Transition to SaaS Colleague

This year marked a major operational milestone with our transition to Ellucian’s Colleague SaaS platform, a cloud-based Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system.

This 18-month implementation strengthens our institutional infrastructure by:

- Integrating admissions, financial aid, registration, HR, and finance systems
- Improving data accuracy and reporting
- Enhancing compliance and audit readiness
- Providing expanded student self-service capabilities
- Increasing operational efficiency

This transition represents more than technology — it represents institutional discipline and modernization necessary for long-term sustainability.

Religious Life and Spiritual Formation

Our covenant relationship with the Arkansas Conference of the United Methodist Church remains central to the mission and identity of Philander Smith University. With the Conference’s support, Religious Life and Campus Ministry offer a vibrant and responsive ministry that meets the spiritual, emotional, and leadership needs of our students.

Because of the Arkansas Conference’s partnership and generosity, campus ministry at Philander is thriving. Students are actively participating in worship, engaging in meaningful conversations about faith and vocation, and finding a supportive community where they can grow spiritually as they navigate their college experience. This partnership has helped create a dynamic ministry that truly meets students where they are and walks alongside them as they discern their purpose and calling.

The impact of this partnership is felt in tangible and personal ways. Students have been welcomed

1 into the Bishop’s Episcopal Residence for meals and Bible study, creating opportunities for
2 meaningful fellowship and direct engagement with church leadership. During a recent gathering,
3 Bishop Laura Merrill, Rev. Natasha Murray, and Rev. Ulysses Washington cooked and served
4 pancakes for students, embodying the spirit of hospitality and mentorship that defines our
5 relationship. As one student shared, *“Participating in campus ministry has deepened my faith and
6 made Philander feel like home.”*

7
8 Under the leadership of Rev. Ronnie Miller-Yow, University Chaplain and Vice President for Mission,
9 Culture, and Religion, Religious Life and Campus Ministry continue to:

- 10
- 11 • Host weekly chapel services that foster spiritual reflection and have seen growing student
12 participation.
- 13 • Expand Young Proclaimers Chapel, offering students discerning a call to ministry opportunities
14 to explore preaching, leadership, and service.
- 15 • Strengthen partnerships with the Arkansas Conference of the United Methodist Church,
16 affiliated congregations, and other campus ministries across Arkansas.
- 17 • Develop sustainable programmatic and financial strategies for the Philander Forward Youth
18 Theological Institute, helping cultivate the next generation of church leaders.

19
20 Through these initiatives and the continued support of the Arkansas Conference, Philander Smith
21 University is cultivating a thriving campus ministry that nurtures students’ spiritual growth,
22 strengthens their sense of community, and prepares them to serve faithfully in the church and the
23 world. This partnership ensures that discipleship, worship, mission, and outreach remain vibrant
24 and transformative parts of the Philander experience.

25 26 **Enrollment and Student Success**

27 The 2025–2026 academic year emphasized enrollment stabilization and structured retention
28 growth:

- 29 • Continued partnership with Complete College America to refine student academic pathways
- 30 • Enhanced advising integration through ERP modernization
- 31 • Implementation of the Prison Education Program at Tucker and East Arkansas Regional Units
- 32 • Continued pursuit of TRiO funding to strengthen retention and graduation outcomes

33
34 Our academic expansion into nursing and prison education reflects our historic commitment to
35 access, opportunity, and transformation.

36 37 **Financial Stewardship and Advancement**

38 Institutional Advancement strengthened its infrastructure through:

- 39 • Optimization of Blackburn Raiser’s Edge
- 40 • Expanded alumni engagement and regional outreach
- 41 • Continued corporate partnerships, including Synchrony
- 42 • Transparent communication regarding institutional planning

43
44 We remain committed to converting alumni pride into philanthropic participation.

45 46 **Looking Ahead**

47 As we prepare for our 150th anniversary, our strategic focus remains clear:

- 48 1. Enrollment Growth with Retention Discipline
- 49 2. Infrastructure Modernization and Deferred Maintenance Reduction
- 50 3. Academic Expansion in High-Demand Fields such as Nursing

4. Long-Term Financial Sustainability and Revenue Diversification 1

This year’s milestones: \$6 million in residential renovation (Residential Life Center grand reopening scheduled for Fall 2027), 2

\$19 million in philanthropic investment (long-term strategic initiatives to launch in Q4 2026), 3

\$7.1 million in federal appropriations supporting nursing expansion (new Nursing Program cohort enrollment opening in Spring 2027), 4

and the transition to SaaS Colleague (full campus rollout by January 2026),are not endpoints. They are accelerators. 5

We are building stability. 6

We are expanding opportunities. 7

We are strengthening our foundation. 8

Philander Smith University cannot lose when faith leads, and stewardship follows. As we continue on this journey, I invite the members of the Arkansas Conference to partner with us in prayer for our students, to refer prospective scholars to our campus, and to consider a gift of support that will strengthen our mission. Your faithful engagement is key to sustaining our momentum and ensuring that faith remains at the center of all we do. 9

With continued partnership from the Arkansas Conference, we move forward — rooted in faith and rising in purpose. 10

Respectfully submitted,
Maurice D. Gipson, JD, PhD
President & CEO 11

Project Transformation 12

Project Transformation held its fourth summer of ministry in summer 2025. Project Transformation’s (PT’s) mission is to transform communities by engaging children, college-age young adults, and churches in purposeful relationships. PT does this in two ways. First, the program engages children in holistic development, strengthening their literacy, social-emotional skills, and spiritual growth through a summer day camp. At the same time, young adults are engaged in purposeful leadership and ministry as they lead children’s programming, live in an intentional Christian community, and focus on vocational discernment. Ultimately, PT becomes a tool to connect churches with their communities through hosting and supporting out-of-school-time programs. 13



At the end of 2024, Project Transformation Arkansas became a recipient of funding through the Lilly Endowment’s Faith and Service Initiative to Strengthen Young Adult Ministry, administered through Project Transformation National. This investment has strengthened our ability to deepen vocational discernment opportunities for young adults, expand leadership development, and build sustainable ministry models in Pine Bluff and Little Rock. Lilly funding allows PT Arkansas not only to serve children today, but to cultivate the next generation of Christian leaders for the Church and the world. 14

1 **Children**

2 For 8 weeks, children at PT took part in arts and crafts, daily recreation, Bible studies, and 40
3 minutes of reading one-to-one with volunteers. During this time, the children build positive
4 relationships with college-aged interns who encouraged them.

5
6 In 2025,

- 7 ● 70 children participated in summer programming
- 8 ● Over 1300 books were read and over 1100 books were given for home libraries
- 9 ● 93% of children in the program avoided summer reading loss
- 10 ● Over 4,500 meals and snacks were served

11
12 **College-Age Young Adults**

13 PT Arkansas engaged 13 college-aged young adults from 7 different colleges. The young adult
14 leaders were from communities across Arkansas. These young adults invested their time and
15 energy to support children in Pine Bluff and Little Rock, while also taking time to explore where
16 God is calling them. Young adults visited with area nonprofits and ministries: Methodist Family
17 Health, ARUMC Disaster Response, Neighbor to Neighbor of Jefferson County, the Ministry
18 Leadership Center, Global Missions Fellows, Memphis Teacher Residency, Garrett Evangelical
19 Theological Seminary, Methodist Foundation for Arkansas, Providence Park Homes, Mosaic
20 Templar Cultural Center, and Central High School National Historic Site. They lived in an intentional
21 Christian community at the Methodist Family Health in Little Rock and First Presbyterian Church of
22 Pine Bluff eating meals and worshipping together. At the end of the summer, young adults reported
23 increased knowledge about their gifts and the importance of exploring God's call in their lives.

24
25 **Churches**

26 The success of PT would not be possible without the investment and support of our partner and
27 host churches. Lakeside United Methodist Church in Pine Bluff and Oak Forest United Methodist
28 Church in Little Rock opened their doors to families in the community. Oak Forest hosted programs
29 for the first time! In partnership with their intern teams, these churches provided impactful
30 programming in their neighborhood. They each hosted a Family Fun Night to gather children and
31 their families at their churches for games and a meal as well as an end of summer celebration for
32 children, young adults, and volunteers.

33
34 Over 14 partnering churches and organizations provided meals for interns and volunteers to read
35 with children. Volunteers came from churches including Benton, Arkadelphia, Asbury- Little Rock,
36 Lakeside, Oak Forest, FUMC Little Rock, Pulaski Heights, St. James- Little Rock, St. James- Pine
37 Bluff, Monticello, Cabot, Grand Avenue Stuttgart, the Conference Staff, and others.

- 38
- 39 ● Over 170 volunteers read with children and provided meals for young adults
- 40 ● 550 volunteer hours served with the reading program valued at over \$16,000

41
42 Project Transformation is always looking for new partners to serve as volunteers, provide meals,
43 and learn about our programs. If your congregation or you as an individual would like to learn
44 more about how you can support this ministry, visit: projecttransformation.org/arkansas, email
45 smeadors@ptarkansas.org, or call 501-650-0565.

46
47 Rev. Sam Meadors
48 Executive Director, PT Arkansas

49
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Saint Paul School of Theology

Saint Paul School of Theology

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



A Year of Growth and Vitality

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

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

Living Our Strategic Vision

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

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

Looking Ahead

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

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

spst.edu

South Central Jurisdiction



1
2 A non-dualistic way of life resists the false comfort of
3 “either/or.” It refuses to reduce people,
4 ministry, or mission to simple categories—right/wrong,
5 insider/outsider, sacred/secular. Instead, it invites the
6 church into faithful discernment: holding complexity
7 with humility and listening for the Spirit.

8
9 In that sense, the non-dualistic life we lead is one of questions, not answers. This is not a rejection
10 of truth; it is a recognition that God is larger than our certainty, and that discipleship is often less
11 about arriving at conclusions and more about practicing attentiveness—learning to listen, to notice,
12 and to be formed.

13 The following gatherings, trainings, webinars, and conferences from this past year reflect this
14 posture. Across each setting, leaders and participants engaged not only in learning, but in
15 discernment—asking better questions, strengthening relationships, and deepening shared
16 purpose.

17 **Highlights from this season of connection and formation**

18 **Youth Leadership Gathering Oklahoma**

19 This gathering created space for emerging leaders to name both hope and complexity. The most
20 significant work was not the delivery of “answers,” but the cultivation of trust—where our young
21 people could ask:
22

- 23 • What does faithful leadership look like in a changing world?
- 24 • How do we belong to one another across differences?
- 25 • What is the church called to be and do at this moment?

26 **United Methodist Volunteers in Mission Connect Event at the Wespeth Campus**

27 The Connect Missions event emphasized mission as a relationship rather than a transaction.
28 Participants explored questions central to mutuality and partnership, especially around the
29 updated relationship with Global Ministries and Higher Education & Ministries
30

- 31 • Are we approaching mission as “help,” or as shared formation?
- 32 • What does mutuality require of our planning and expectations?
- 33 • How do we measure impact without reducing people to outcomes?

34 **Introduction to UMVIM Webinar**

35 This webinar served as an entry point into the UMVIM vision and practices, inviting participants
36 into discernment around mission journeys:
37

- 38 • What makes a mission journey faithful—not only effective?
- 39 • How do we prepare teams spiritually, culturally, and practically?
- 40 • What does it mean to go with humility rather than heroism?

41 **Mission Volunteer Training in Arkansas**

42 This training is for those wishing to serve between two months and two years. It shares the same
43 theology of mission, with solidarity and mutuality, as experienced throughout United Methodist
44 Volunteers in Mission and Global Ministries. This mission journey deepens relational partnership
45 and strategic conversations between the Church and community:
46
47
48
49
50

• What does “do no harm” look like in real contexts?	1
• How can we “do good” in different seasons of our lives?	2
	3
All Things in Common SCJ Leadership Event in El Paso & Lydia Patterson Institute	4
This gathering, alongside the witness of Lydia Patterson Institute, offered a compelling picture of shared life across boundaries. Leaders engaged questions that do not yield a quick resolution, but shape faithful community:	5
	6
	7
	8
• What do we owe to one another across geography, culture, and conference lines?	9
• How do we lead when resources are uneven, and needs are urgent?	10
• What does it mean to hold “common life” without erasing differences?	11
	12
Lydia Patterson Institute’s mission and hospitality continue to invite the church into deeper solidarity and a more expansive imagination for belonging.	13
	14
	15
“What’s My Job?” Webinar for Lay Leadership	16
This webinar helped lay leaders clarify their roles in their local church. responsibilities, and shared ministry. The conversation centered on vocation as both personal and communal:	17
	18
	19
• Is leadership primarily a task list, or a calling?	20
• How do we lead without over functioning—or withdrawing?	21
• What does shared ministry look like in busy, complex congregational life?	22
	23
Archives Webinar on Heritage Landmarks	24
The Heritage Landmarks webinar emphasized that memory is not nostalgia; it is formation. Participants explored:	25
	26
	27
• What stories have we preserved—and which have we neglected?	28
• How do landmarks teach us to honor the past without idolizing it?	29
• What does it mean to inherit tradition while remaining responsible for change?	30
	31
Church & Society Conference held at Southern Methodist University	32
The Church & Society conference placed faith in conversation with public life, where simplistic answers often fail. Participants engaged in questions that are both theological and practical:	33
	34
	35
• How do we pursue justice without losing compassion?	36
• How do we speak with conviction without weaponizing certainty?	37
• What does faithful witness look like in a polarized world?	38
	39
Co-Leading a Workshop at the United Women in Faith’s Assembly	40
Co-leading a workshop at the United Women in Faith Assembly that highlighted the strength of being stronger together in mission. The work focused on cultivating practices that sustain faithful action:	41
	42
	43
	44
• Listening for what the Spirit is doing among the people called Methodist	45
• Naming the questions that keep communities honest	46
• Building courage for action without pretending we can control outcomes	47
A life of questions is not a life without direction. It is a life that trusts God enough to keep listening.	48
In a culture that rewards quick certainty, the church can offer a different witness: a community	49
	50

1 willing to stay present, to hold complexity, and to keep asking the kind of questions that make
2 room for grace.

3
4 The non-dualistic life we lead is one of questions, not answers—and in that posture, we find not
5 confusion, but deeper communion and more faithful discipleship.

6
7 **Will YOU**

- 8 - join with UMVIM in training 100 young people to lead mission journeys?
- 9 -continue to partner with Lydia Patterson Institute to ask the questions of where the intersection of
10 faith, social justice, community, integrity, and respect intersect?
- 11 -prepare to welcome thousands of students to the South Central Jurisdiction at Discipleship
12 Ministries' Youth 2027 event?

13
14 Connect with us at [SCJUMC.ORG](https://www.scjumc.org)

15
16 Peace,
17 Eddie Erwin
18 Executive Director
19 South Central Jurisdiction

20
21
22 **Southern Methodist University**

23 Southern Methodist University (SMU) has served as a
24 nonsectarian institution of higher learning since its founding
25 in 1911. Guided by a mission to expand knowledge through
26 research and teaching, SMU educates students with
27 ambition and integrity, advances discovery that matters,
28 and serves as a catalyst for positive impact in Dallas, Texas,
29 and beyond.



SMU

30
31 With continued Methodist representation on the Board of Trustees and a longstanding commitment
32 to welcoming students of all faiths, SMU honors its Wesleyan heritage while advancing as a
33 nationally recognized private research university. Consistent with this heritage and tradition, SMU
34 submits this report to the Arkansas Annual Conference.

35
36 **Institutional momentum and leadership transition**

37 I was honored to begin my service as President of SMU on June 1, 2025. My first seven months
38 have been focused on listening, learning, and building relationships with students, faculty, staff,
39 alumni, trustees, and civic and community partners.

40
41 Even after a few short months, I can clearly see the distinctive qualities that define SMU and draw
42 people to this community: academic excellence, a vibrant campus culture, deeply engaged alumni,
43 and an unusually attractive position as a private research university rooted in one of the nation's
44 most dynamic metropolitan regions. This combination, reinforced by a shared sense of purpose
45 grounded in SMU's mission and values, fuels our momentum to expand SMU's reach and influence
46 and help shape the future of higher education.

47
48 During this period, we welcomed outstanding new academic leadership to SMU. Rachel Davis
49 Mersey joined the University as Executive Vice President and Provost, bringing deep experience in

50

academic leadership, a strong commitment to faculty excellence and student success, and a collaborative approach that is well aligned with SMU. We also welcomed Bryan P. Stone as the Leighton K. Farrell Dean of Perkins School of Theology, whose leadership reflects a deep commitment to theological education, the life of the Church, and the formation of faithful leaders. In addition to Drs. Mersey and Stone, several experienced leaders stepped into key leadership roles at SMU: Janan Jayawickramarajah, dean of the Dedman School of Humanities and Social Sciences; Todd Milbourn, dean of the Edwin L. Cox School of Business; Michael Harris, interim dean of the Simmons School of Education and Human Development; and Damon Evans, director of Athletics.

Strategic planning and institutional priorities

This fall, we launched a comprehensive, University-wide strategic planning process to guide SMU through its next phase of growth. The process is intentionally inclusive, drawing input (to date) from nearly 9,000 community members, including faculty, staff, students, alumni, parents, trustees, employers and the broader Dallas community.

The strategic plan will strengthen academic distinction and student success through transformative teaching and exceptional experiences; expanded interdisciplinary research and creative scholarship that matters; and the preparation of well-rounded, principled leaders who will make an impact in Dallas and far beyond. We expect to complete the plan in Spring 2026, providing a clear roadmap for aligning priorities, resources, and philanthropic support for the next decade.

Students, faculty, and staff

SMU continues to attract academically accomplished and diverse students from across the nation and the world. For the 2025-26 academic year, the University enrolled approximately 12,500 undergraduate and graduate students representing all 50 states and more than 90 countries. A majority of undergraduates come from outside Texas, reflecting SMU’s growing national profile.

Our faculty members, graduate students, and undergraduates are advancing research and creative work that addresses complex challenges in areas such as energy, health, security, education, public policy, and the arts – often in collaboration with industry, government, and nonprofit partners. This work strengthens SMU’s academic reputation while contributing meaningfully to the economic and civic vitality of the Dallas–Fort Worth region.

Research, philanthropy, and national standing

During the past year, the University successfully completed its most recent comprehensive campaign, SMU Ignited: Boldly Shaping Tomorrow, three years ahead of schedule, raising \$1.64 billion in private support. The campaign strengthened the University’s academic foundation through investments in students, faculty, academic programs, research, and facilities, and positioned SMU for its next phase of growth and impact.

In 2025, SMU was designated a Research One (R1) institution by the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education. This designation reflects sustained growth in research activity, faculty scholarship, and external funding, as well as the collective efforts of faculty, staff, students, alumni, and supporters. Achieving R1 status marks an important step along the University’s trajectory to academic prominence and affirms SMU’s commitment to research that serves society and advances knowledge.

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1 SMU continues to receive strong national recognition for academic quality, student outcomes, and
2 research activity, reinforcing the University’s standing among leading private research institutions.

3
4 **Perkins School of Theology**

5 Perkins School of Theology remains central to SMU’s identity and mission, advancing theological
6 education that is both deeply rooted in the Wesleyan tradition and responsive to the needs of the
7 Church and the world. In 2025 and 2026, Perkins expanded access to theological education and
8 strengthened institutional collaboration through several strategic initiatives.

9
10 Perkins formalized a three-year partnership with Methodist Theological University in Seoul to
11 support student and faculty exchanges and collaborative global research. The School also
12 launched an accelerated program with McMurry University, enabling qualified students to begin
13 Master of Divinity coursework during their final undergraduate year, reducing both time to degree
14 and cost. In addition, Perkins established a teach-out agreement with Memphis Theological
15 Seminary, allowing enrolled students to complete their degrees at Perkins with full credit transfer,
16 academic support, and tuition scholarships.

17
18 These efforts – along with many activities not spelled out here – reflect Perkins’ continued
19 commitment to academic excellence, faithful leadership formation, and service to the United
20 Methodist community through expanded reach and impact.

21
22 We remain deeply grateful for Perkins School of Theology’s enduring contributions to theological
23 education and the life of the Church. As we move forward in this new chapter of leadership and
24 planning, we do so with gratitude for the past and confidence in the future – focused on preparing
25 students to lead lives of purpose, expanding knowledge that matters, and serving communities
26 with integrity and care.

27
28 Sincerely yours,

29
30 Jay C. Hartzell

31
32 **Southern Methodist University - Perkins School of Theology**

33 Perkins School of Theology celebrates our vital
34 connections with the Arkansas Annual Conference of
35 The United Methodist Church. Through theological
36 education, ministerial formation, and vocational
37 discernment, Perkins continues to serve the church by
38 supporting persons called to faithful leadership in a changing church and society.



39 Nine (9) students affiliated with the Arkansas Annual Conference are currently enrolled at Perkins,
40 in our Master of Divinity degree program and during the 2025-26 academic year.

41
42 **Enrollment Update**

43 Enrollment at Perkins for the 2025–2026 academic year totaled 274 students. Of the 73 incoming
44 students, 44 enrolled in the hybrid/online degree program, representing 27 states.

45
46 **Leadership & Faculty Updates**

47 In October 2025, Dr. Bryan P. Stone was formally installed as the Leighton K. Farrell Endowed
48 Dean of Perkins School of Theology. Dean Stone is an elder in full connection in the New England
49 Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church, further strengthening Perkins’ leadership
50 connection and service to the denomination.

Perkins announced several faculty appointments and promotions supporting academic leadership, ministerial formation, and program development. Rev. Dr. Pamela White was appointed Director of the Intern Program and Assistant Dean for Contextual Education. Rev. Dr. Emily Nelms Chastain was promoted to assistant professor of Christian History and Methodist Studies. Dr. James K. Lee was promoted to Professor of Early Christianity, and Dr. Marcell Silva Steuernagel to Associate Professor of Church Music. Dr. Ashley Boggan was appointed Affiliate Assistant Research Professor of Methodist Studies.

In addition, Rev. Dr. Kate Hanch was appointed Director of the Baptist House of Studies. Dr. Rebekah Miles, a member of the Arkansas Annual Conference, was named to the Albert C. Outler Chair of Wesley Studies, reflecting Perkins' continued investment in academic and ecclesial leadership in the Methodist-Wesleyan tradition.

Faculty Awards & Recognition

During 2025, Perkins faculty received national and international recognition for their scholarship, leadership, and service to the church. At the American Theological Society—one of the oldest and most selective theological societies in North America—faculty were recognized through elected membership, scholarly presentations, and leadership roles. Dr. Frederick Aquino was elected to membership in the Society, Dr. Karen Baker-Fletcher presented scholarly research, and Dr. Ruben L. F. Habito delivered the Society's Presidential Address.

Perkins faculty also received competitive research grants and distinguished honors. Rev. Dr. Jaime Clark-Soles received a Louisville Institute Grant for Researchers, Dr. Jack Levison received a grant renewal from the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, and Rev. Dr. Alyce McKenzie was honored with the Academy of Homiletics' 2025 Lifetime Achievement Award.

Perkins faculty also contributed to public theological discourse through national media and artistic recognition. Dean Bryan P. Stone was featured in national and regional media reflecting on faith, fear, and the theology of horror cinema, drawing on his recent scholarship exploring the intersections of theology, culture, and film. Rev. Dr. Harold Recinos, Professor of Church and Society, was nominated for the Pulitzer Prize in Poetry for the third time, recognizing his ongoing contributions to faith-informed literary and theological work.

Growth & Opportunities

Perkins entered a new partnership with Methodist Theological University in Seoul, Korea, effective August 2025, to advance global theological education through academic collaboration and exchange. An accelerated degree program was established with McMurry University in December 2025, expanding pathways for students pursuing theological education. A teach-out agreement with Memphis Theological Seminary became effective January 31, 2026, ensuring continuity, academic integrity, and support for students affected by the seminary's closure.

The 2025 Fall Convocation, held November 10–11, convened clergy, laity, scholars, and students for theological reflection and continuing education. Perkins also hosted the 39th Annual Perkins School of Youth and Children's Ministry, continuing its longstanding commitment to equipping leaders who serve children, youth, and families. In January 2026, 29 youth and children's ministry leaders received training with the Arkansas Conference's financial support.

On March 20–21, 2026, Perkins hosted the Perkins Summit for Faith and Learning at McFarlin Memorial United Methodist Church in Norman, Oklahoma. Offered in partnership with the Methodist Foundation of Arkansas, the event provided accessible, in-person theological

1 education for clergy and lay leaders. The Foundation also supported scholarships for a second
2 cohort of the Certificate in Spiritual Direction at Mount Eagle Retreat in Arkansas, as well as
3 scholarships for United Methodists in Arkansas to participate in the Introduction to Fresh
4 Expressions webinar, part of the Perkins Certificate in Fresh Expressions. Bishop Merrill was a
5 featured speaker at the May 2026 Convocation.

6
7 **Grants, Funding, or Resource Development**

8 In October 2025, renovations to Kirby Parlor, now “Kirby Commons,” enhanced shared learning,
9 gathering, and community spaces at Perkins, supporting the school’s academic and programmatic
10 life.

11 The Eula Mae and John Baugh Foundation awarded \$1.8 million in funding to support the Perkins
12 Baptist House of Studies, strengthening scholarships and program sustainability and continuing
13 Perkins’ commitment to ecumenical theological education.

14 Gifts totaling \$3 million were donated by the Permanent Endowment Fund of Galveston Moody
15 Memorial UMC and the Houston Methodist Hospital and Foundation to endow a new “The
16 Reverend Charles R. Millikan, D.Min. Endowed Chair in Spiritual Care” to advance Perkins’ ability to
17 train healthcare chaplains throughout the region. The faculty will undertake a search for this new
18 professor in the coming year.

19
20
21 **Retirements & Legacy Contributions**

22 In 2026, Perkins will celebrate the retirements of five members of the Perkins community whose
23 contributions have left a lasting impact. Dr. Bruce Marshall, Lehman Professor of Christian Doctrine;
24 Rev. Dr. Alyce McKenzie, Professor of Homiletics; Christopher S. Anderson, Associate Professor of
25 Sacred Music; Pam Goolsby, Building and Events Manager; and Dr. John Martin, Director of
26 Development, will retire after years of dedicated service to teaching, scholarship, and the life of the
27 Perkins community.

28
29 Perkins School of Theology remains grateful for the partnership of the Arkansas Annual
30 Conference and for the shared work of forming leaders who serve the church and world with faith,
31 wisdom, and love. We thank the Conference for its continued support, collaboration, and
32 commitment to theological education.

33
34 Grace and peace,

35
36 Bryan P. Stone
37 Leighton K. Farrell Endowed Dean
38 Perkins School of Theology

39
40 **United Theological Seminary**

41
42
43 Since 1871, United Theological Seminary has
44 prepared faithful and fruitful Christian leaders
45 who make disciples of Jesus Christ. In the
46 2024-25 fiscal year, the seminary served 642

47 graduate students, 275 doctoral and 375 masters,* reflecting approximately 30 percent
48 enrollment growth since 2021 and placing United among the largest United Methodist seminaries
49 in the United States.



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

Academics

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

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

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

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

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

Finances

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

Looking Ahead

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

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

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

United Theological Seminary
Dr. Kent Millard, President

Wesley Theological Seminary

1
2 As I conclude my tenure as president of Wesley
3 Theological Seminary (Wesley DC), I do so with
4 deep gratitude and confidence in the leadership
5 of Dr. Carla Works, the Seminary's 11th
6 President. Dr. Works, a distinguished New
7 Testament scholar, educator, and
8 church-centered theologian, brings wisdom,
9 clarity, and faithful vision to Wesley DC's next
10 chapter.
11



12 Rooted in Washington, DC, and connected globally, Wesley DC serves the United Methodist
13 Church and the wider Christian community by offering Master of Divinity, Master of Arts, and
14 Master of Theological Studies degrees through residential, hybrid, and fully online formats. The
15 Seminary maintains one of the nation's largest Doctor of Ministry programs, serving experienced
16 leaders from diverse ministry contexts. As the Course of Study school for the Northeast J
17 urisdiction, Wesley DC equips Local Pastors with flexible, high-quality preparation for ministry.
18 Through Wesley Pathways for Ministry, the Seminary also provides certificates and lifelong learning
19 opportunities that support vocational discernment and leadership development.
20

21 Wesley DC's centers and institutes extend this work into the life of the Church and the public
22 square. The Hub for (Re)imagining Ministry partners with congregations to engage new
23 generations. The Lewis Center for Church Leadership equips leaders through research and
24 leadership formation. The Henry Luce III Center for the Arts and Religion integrates theology and
25 creativity. The Center for Public Theology prepares leaders for faithful public witness, and the
26 Community Engagement Institute forms leaders for justice-centered, community-rooted ministry.
27

28 Wesley Theological Seminary. For the Church. For the world. For such a time as this.
29

30 Rev. Dr. David McAllister-Wilson, President
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ADDENDUM

Additional Reports and Materials

Nominations

Arkansas Conference Committees 2026

*Updated 5/12/2026

OFFICERS OF THE CONFERENCE (elected quadrennially)

Conference Treasurer (¶619)	Todd Burris (lay) tburris@arumc.org
Conference Statistician (¶603.7)	Melissa Sanders (lay) msanders@arumc.org
Conference Secretary (¶603.7)	LaToya Shepherd (clergy) lshepherd@arumc.org (2024)
Conference Chancellor (¶603.8)	Michelle Ator (lay) mator@fridayfirm.com (2020)
Conference Lay Leader (¶607)	Kathy Conley (lay) kathy.conley@arumc.org (2020)

ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW COMMITTEE ¶ 635

Maxine Allen (clergy), mallen@arumc.org (2026)

Candace Barron (clergy) (2026)

Bill Cato (clergy) (2019)

Alternates:

Jeff Hampton (clergy) (2023)

Angie Gage (clergy) (2023)

Jim Polk (clergy) (2026)

ARCHIVES AND HISTORY (COMMISSION ON) ¶ 641.1

Chairperson: Tom Rollie Mullins (clergy), rollie.mullins@arumc.org (2024)

Central: Brenda Norwood Henson (lay) (2023)

Northeast: TBA

Northwest: Kerri Bradford (lay) (2022)

South: Mary Jo Tucker (lay) (2024)

South: Barrie Hardin (lay) (2024)

UM Historical Society of Arkansas Chairperson: Bonda Moyer (clergy)

UM Museum of Arkansas Committee Chairperson: TBD

Michael McMurray (lay) (2023)

UM Museum of Arkansas Committee Member: Carl Miller (lay)

UM Historical Society of Arkansas Member: TBS

Conference Archivist: Ellen Bruce (lay)

CAMP AND RETREAT MINISTRIES (CONFERENCE) (Non-Disciplinary) SR 402.3

Conference Camp and Retreat Ministries Coordinator: Julie Smith (lay), smithfam@ccc-cable.net (2024)

Director of Connectional Ministries: Interim, Judy Rudd (clergy) (2026)

Conference Director of Children's Ministries or representative: Lori Canada (lay)

Conference Director of Youth Ministries or representative: Brittany R. Watson (clergy) (2025)

Conference Council on Youth Ministries Coordinator or designee: Zach Schrick (lay)

Conference Young Adult Ministries Chair: Andrew Orr (clergy)

Campus Ministry Representatives: Virginia Brown (clergy)

Campus Ministry Representative: Michelle Amos (clergy)

Camp Tanako Director: Matthew Gwinner (lay)

Mount Eagle Retreat Center Director: Katelyn Hiatt (lay)

Shoal Creek Camp Representative: Renee Henson (lay)

CHANCELLORS (CONFERENCE) ¶ 602.10, 603.8

Conference Chancellor: Michelle Ator (lay), mator@fridayfirm.com

District Chancellors:

*Version 5/6/2026

Central: Keith Coker (clergy)
Northeast: Barrett Moore (lay)
Northwest: Dalton Person (lay)
South: Paul Keith (lay)

CHILDREN’S MINISTRIES (COUNCIL ON) SR 402.2

Coordinator: Brittany Watson (clergy), ARUMC Age Level Discipleship Coordinator, brittany.watson@arumc.org

District Council Representatives:

Central: Crystal Taylor (lay) (2021)
Central: Lori Canada (lay) (2026)
Central: Tamira Valley (clergy) (2021)
Northeast: Christi Crawford (lay) (2021)
Northeast: Carissa Tarkington (clergy) (2020)
Northeast: Kyra Anthony (lay) (2026)
Northwest: Page Phillips (lay) (2020)
Northwest: Ashley McNeal (lay) (2021)
Northwest: Katie Emery (lay) (2026)
South: Shelly Burgess (lay) (2021)
South: Rochelle Gray (lay) (2025)
South: Kelli Watson (lay) (2026)

Advisors to Council:

Safe Sanctuary: Alison Huskey (lay)
New Children's Minister Mentor: Pam Lentz (lay)
Childcare Ministry Advocate: Kris Mickna (lay) (2021)
Camp Tanako Representative: TBS

CHURCH AND SOCIETY (CONFERENCE BOARD OF) ¶ 628

Chairperson: Betsy Singleton Snyder (clergy), betsy.snyder@arumc.org (2022; 2026)

Central: Harold Hughes (lay) (2023)
Northeast: Kelly Giese (clergy) (2025)
Northwest: Brenda Gullett (lay) (2025)
South: Gwendolyn Daniels (lay) (2026)
Peace with Justice Coordinator: Josh Bland (clergy) (2025)
Creation and Care Task Force: Kelly Giese (clergy) (2025)

At-Large:

Randy Seale (clergy) (2024)
Melissa Simpson (lay) (2026)
Tucker Henderson (lay) (2026)
Conference UWF Representative: Carolyn Hudson (lay) (2026)
Colleen Caldwell (lay) (2025)
Matt Daniels (clergy) (2025)
Mary Stewart (clergy) (2025)

COMMUNICATIONS (COMMISSION ON) ¶ 646

Chair: Sara Bayles Charlton (clergy), sara.bayles@arumc.org (2019)

Central: Melanie Churchill (lay) (2026)
Northeast: Sarah Ellzey (clergy) (2023)
Northwest: Lori Krie (lay) (2023)
South: Hannah Diffie (lay) (2025)

At-large:

Tracey Ritchey (lay) (2023)
Holly Hall (lay) (2025)
Corey Read (clergy) (2025)

Ex-officio:

Conference Director of Communication: TBD
Local Church Liaison: TBD

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DISABILITY CONCERNS (COMMITTEE ON) ¶ 653

Chair: Doni Martin (lay), fredonimartin@gmail.com (2023)
Melissa Bowen (clergy) (2020)
Gretchen Diffie (lay) (2021)
Tyler O'Dell (lay) (2026)
Trinette Barnes (clergy) (2021)
Shelley Lee (lay) (2021)
Sonya Murphy (lay) (2026)
Bettye Johnson (lay) (2026)
Cale McGillvary (clergy) (2026)

DISCIPLESHIP (BOARD OF) ¶ 629, 645

Chairperson: Bill Sardin (clergy), bill.sardin@arumc.org (2018; 2021 chair)
Small Membership Church Coordinator: Diane Wright (lay) (2020)
At Large Representatives:
Darnell Rice (clergy) (2023)
Jeanne Williams (clergy) (2023)
Zeke Allen (clergy) (2023)
Bill Waddell (lay) (2025)
Cindy Henry (clergy) (2025)
Walt Garrett (clergy) (2025)
Caitin Spears (lay) (2025)
James Sawyer (lay) (2026)
Timothy Rushing (clergy) (2026)
Alyssa Kuebler (clergy) (2026)
Extended Cabinet Rep. & DCM: Interim, Judy Rudd (clergy) (2026)

EPISCOPACY (COMMITTEE ON) ¶ 636, 637

Lay member of the Jurisdictional Episcopacy Committee: Karon Mann, karon57@comcast.net (2012)
Clergy member of the Jurisdictional Episcopacy Committee: Mark Norman, mark.norman@arumc.org (2016)
Conference Lay Leader: Kathy Conley (2020)
Conference Associate Lay Leader: Karen Henery (2026)
Dean of Appointive Cabinet: Zach Roberts (clergy) (2025)
Laywomen:
Ann Averitt (2024)
Harrietta Lindsey (2025)
Laymen:
Michael Bynum (2023)
Robert McCallum (2025)
Clergy:
Pam Estes (2024)
Nathan Kilbourne (2024)
Todd-Paul Taulbee (2024)
At-large:
Sara Andrews (clergy) (2024)
Meredith Gadberry (lay) (2025)
Kay Brogdon (lay) (2025)
Bishop Appointees:
Caty Parker (lay) (2023)
Danita Waller-Paige (clergy) (2023)
Maybelline Strong (lay) (2025)

ECUMENICAL AND INTERRELIGIOUS CONCERNS COMMITTEE: ¶ 642 (Task force)

Chair: Michael Bolin (clergy), michael.bolin.arumc.org (2022)
At-Large Members:
Kayte Chambers (clergy) (2025)
Miranda Hornsby (clergy) (2025)

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Justin Ledbetter (clergy) (2025)
Jeff Quick (lay) (2025)
Keith Coker (clergy) (2026)
Melanie Tubbs (clergy) (2026)

EQUITABLE COMPENSATION (COMMISSION ON) ¶ 624

Chairperson: Ronnie Miller-Yow (clergy), pastoryow@gmail.com (2024)
Central Clergy: Jessica Durand (clergy) (2026)
Central Lay: TBA
Northeast Clergy: Jeremy Hopper (2025)
Northeast Lay: Fred Martin (2024)
Northwest Clergy: Jana Green
Northwest Lay: Doug Stumbaugh (2024)
South Clergy: Andrew Orr (2023)
South Lay: Julie Smith (2022)
Arkansas Representative to the National Board of Equitable Compensation: Danita Waller-Paige (clergy) (ELC Chair, 2024)
Chairperson Board of Ordained Ministry: Mark Norman (clergy) (2024)
Cabinet Representative: Zach Roberts (clergy)
Assistant to the Bishop: Judy Rudd (clergy)
Conference Administrative Office Assistant: Audrea Stephens (lay) (2024)

ETHNIC LOCAL CHURCH CONCERNS (COMMITTEE ON) ¶ 631

Chairperson: Danita Waller-Paige (clergy), danita.paige@arumc.org (2024)
Central: Lonzell Blackmon (lay) (2024)
Northeast: Charles Coleman (lay) (2026)
Northwest: Nathan Ramirez (lay) (2024)
South: Ellis Floyd (clergy) (2023)
Con. Comm. Religion & Race (ex-officio): Brenda Gullett (lay)
Conference Staff (ex-officio): Natasha Murray (clergy)

NATIVE AMERICAN MINISTRY (COMMITTEE ON): (SUBCOMMITTEE OF COMMITTEE ON ETHNIC LOCAL CHURCH CONCERNS) ¶ 654

Chair: Dan Read (Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma) (clergy), dan.read@arumc.org (1)
ELC Committee Rep: TBS
Commission on Race and Religion Rep: TBS
Kelly Blome (clergy) (2025)
J. Harris Moore (lay) (2025)
Jacob Lynn (clergy) (2025)

FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION (COUNCIL ON) ¶ 611 to 618

President: Sandy Smith (lay), nurse4EM@gmail.com (2023; 2024 VP; 2026 P)
Vice-president: TBD
Secretary: David Hunt (lay) (2024; 2024 Sec)
Clergy:
Judy Hall (2024)
Jennie Williams (2024)
Jamie Alexander (2024)
Aaron Miller (2026)
Michael Roberts (2024)
Tommy Halsell (2024)
Rashim Merriwether (2024)
Betty Scull (2026)
Laity:
Terry Wynne (2024)

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Phyllis Rogers (2024)
John Gibson (2024)
Larry Hatley (2020, ad-interim)
Joe Archer (2023)
Russ Hannah (2026)

Ex-officio members of the Council (without vote) shall be:

Presiding Bishop: Laura Merrill (clergy)
Conference Treasurer: Todd Burris (lay)
Assistant to the Bishop: Judy Rudd (clergy)
Director of Connectional Ministries Interim, Judy Rudd (clergy) (2026)
Conference Coordinator on Stewardship: Bart Gray (lay)
Conference Financial Controller: Melissa Sanders (lay)
MFA: J. Wayne Clark (clergy)
Cabinet Representative: Zach Roberts (clergy) (2026)

AUDIT REVIEW COMMITTEE ¶ 617.4

This committee will be determined by CFA

GLOBAL MINISTRIES (BOARD OF) ¶ 632

Chairperson: Hammett Evans (clergy), hammett.evans@arumc.org (2022)
Conference Secretary Global Ministries: Lindsey Russell (clergy) (2024)
Central District Secretary: Carolyn Schumacher (lay) (2024)
Northeast District Secretary: Charlotte Knox (clergy) (2026)
Northwest District Secretary: Paula Irwin (lay) (2024)
South District Secretary: Betty Claire Peacock (lay) (2024)
Conference UWF Coordinator Mission Ed. & Interp.: Karen Malone (lay)

The Board designates the following:

Interim Conference Coordinator for Volunteers in Mission and Disaster Response: Roy Lee (lay)
Missionary Personnel Coordinator: Brenda Norwood Henson (lay)
Hispanic Ministries Advocate: Lupita Chavarria-Garcia (clergy)
Conference Advocate for the Poor (Rural): Brad Moore (clergy) (2025)
Conference Advocate for the Poor (Urban): Paul Atkins (clergy) (2025)
Earthkeeper: Angie Gage (clergy) (2023)
Abundant Health: Laurie Barber (lay) (2025)
At-Large reps:
Heather Rose (clergy)
John Michael (clergy)
Parish and Community Development Coordinator: TBD
Conference Liaison and DCM:-Interim, Judy Rudd (clergy) (2026)

HIGHER EDUCATION AND CAMPUS MINISTRY (BOARD OF) ¶ 633

Chairperson: Jana Green (clergy), jana.green@arumc.org (2024)

District Reps:

Central: Courtney Teeter (lay) (2024)
Central: Chris Wright (clergy) (2020)
Northeast: Blake Schrepfer (lay) (2023)
Northeast: Jonathan Griesse (clergy) (2020)
Northwest: Abbey Maynard (clergy) (2024)
Northwest: Ember Davis (lay) (2024)
South: Tiffany Powell (lay) (2024)
South: TBA

Wesley Foundation Reps:

Arkansas State U: Samantha Black Menley (lay)
Arkansas Tech U: Ernie Enchelmayer (lay)
Henderson/OBU: Brent Black (lay)

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Southern AR U: Ryan Bachuss (clergy)
U of A Wesley College Ministry, Fayetteville: Julie Thibodaux (lay) (2023)
U of A, Little Rock: Sara Bayles-Charlton (clergy)
U of A Fort Smith: Michael Mings (lay)
U of A, Monticello: Brad Elrod (clergy)
U of A, Pine Bluff: Bonita Hatley (lay)
U of Central Arkansas: Jan Davis (lay)
Hendrix College Rep: JP Lyon (lay)
Philander Smith University Rep: Robert Nichols (lay)
Lyon College Rep: Jerome Jolly (clergy)

Ex-Officio Campus Ministers:

Arkansas State Univ: Dennis Ellzey (clergy)
Arkansas Tech Univ: Corey Read (clergy)
Henderson State/OBU: Michelle Amos (clergy) (2024)
Southern AR Univ: Timothy Rushing (clergy)
U of A Wesley College Ministry-Fayetteville: Virginia Brown (clergy)
Univ. of A at Monticello: Kavan Dodson (clergy)
Univ. of A at Pine Bluff: Danita Waller-Paige (clergy)
Univ. of Central Arkansas: TBD
Hendrix College: Ellen Alston (clergy)
Philander Smith: Ronnie Miller-Yow (clergy)

Ex-Officio:

Director of Age Level Discipleship: Brittany Watson (clergy)
Director of Connectional Ministries: Interim, Judy Rudd (clergy) (2026)
Cabinet Representative: Roy Beth Kelley (clergy) (2026)

CORR/COSROW Representative: Bettye Johnson (lay)

JOINT COMMITTEE ON INCAPACITY ¶ 357, 652

Chairperson: JJ Galloway (clergy), jgalloway@arumc.org
Secretary and BOM Rep: Chosen by the BOM
Conference Board Pension and Health Benefits Rep: Roy Smith (clergy)
Cabinet Representative: Natasha Murray (clergy)
Conference Benefits Officer (ex-officio): Wendy Brunson Daniels (lay)

LAIITY (BOARD OF) ¶ 630.3

Chairperson: Kathy Conley, kathy.conley@arumc.org (2020-2024)
Associate Chair: Karen Henery (2026)
Conference Director of Lay Servant Ministries: Teresa Bolin (2023)
Assoc. Conference Dir. of Lay Servant Ministries: Karen Anderson (2019-2020)
Conference Asst. Director for Certified Lay Ministry: James "Jim" Silvi (2022;2026)

District Lay Leaders:

Central: Karen Henery (2025)
Assistant Lay Leaders: James Sawyer (2025)
Northeast: David Malone (2023)
Northwest: Carole Baker (2022; 2026)
South: Becky Simmons (2023)

At-Large: Cathy Blackwood (2022; 2026)

At-Large:

Bebe Walton (2025)
Virginia Porta (2025)
Nancy Meredith (2025)
Cabinet Representative: Natasha Murray (clergy)

LAY LEADER (CONFERENCE) ¶ 607.9

Conference Lay Leader: Kathy Conley, kathy.conley@arumc.org (2020-2024)
Associate Chair: Karen Henery (2026)

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LAY SERVANT MINISTRIES (CONFERENCE DIRECTOR OF) ¶ 630.6(d)
Director: Teresa Bolin (lay), teresa.bolin@arumc.org (2023)
Associate Conference Director: Karen Anderson (lay) (2019-2020)
Conference Assistant Director for Certified Lay Ministry: James "Jim" Silvi (lay)
Assistant to the Bishop: Judy Rudd (clergy)
Director of Connectional Ministries: Interim, Judy Rudd (clergy) (2026)

NOMINATING COMMITTEE (CONFERENCE) SR301
Chair: Susan Ledbetter (clergy), susan.ledbetter@arumc.org (2024)
District Reps:
Central Clergy: Hammett Evans (2021 ad interim)
Central Lay: Don Riggan (2025)
Northeast Clergy: George Odell (2024)
Northeast Lay: Evie Jones (2024)
Northwest Clergy: Steve Poarch (2018-2020) (2026)
Northwest Lay: Amy Rose McGovern (2026)
South Clergy: Matt Daniels (2025)
South Lay: TBA
At-Large:
Harold Hughes (lay) (2025)
UC Washington (clergy) (2025)
Ex-officio with vote:
The Bishop: Laura Merrill (clergy)
Conference Lay Leader: Kathy Conley (2016-2020)
Conference Associate Lay Leader: Karen Henery (2026)
President of CCYM: Riley Pearson (lay) (2026)
Chairperson ELC Committee: Danita Waller-Paige (clergy) (2024)
Ex-officio without vote:
Assistant to the Bishop: Judy Rudd (clergy)
Director of Connectional Ministries: Interim, Judy Rudd (clergy) (2026)

ORDAINED MINISTRY (BOARD OF) ¶ 634
Chair: Mark Norman (Elder), mark.norman@arumc.org (2024)
Vice-Chair: Bryan Diffie (Elder) (2024)
Executive Registrar: Lauren Delano Grosskopf (Elder) (2024)

Class of 2016:
Will Choate (Elder) (2016)
Heather Clawitter (Elder) (2017)
Ben Crismon (Elder) (2016)
Keith Dodson (Elder) (2017)
Lynn Kilbourne (Elder) (2016)
Susan Ledbetter (Elder) (2016)
Edna Hargraves (Elder) (2025)
David Moseley (Ret Elder) (2024)
Teresa Holt (Ret Deacon) (2016)
Samantha Meadors (Deacon) (2016)
Don Bacon (Lay) (2016)
Dawn Spragg (Deacon) (2025)
Betty Scull (Lay/Ret LP) (2024)

Class of 2020:
Mark Norman (Elder) (2021)
J.J. Galloway (Elder) (2020)
Rob Holifield (Elder) (2021)
Bryan Diffie (Elder) (2020)

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Reggie Russell (Elder) (2022)	6
Yvonne Glien (Lay) (2025)	7
Terry Gosnell (Elder) (2024)	8
Dane Womack (Elder) (2024)	9
Jay Clark (LP) (2024)	10
Melissa Maskell (LP) (2024)	11
Paula Ihms (Lay) (2019)	12
Jo Stanfield (Lay) (ad interim 2021)	13
Sarah Argue (Lay) (2024)	14
Class of 2024:	15
Zeke Allen (Elder) (2027)	16
Chase Green (Elder) (2027)	17
Jacob Lynn (Elder) (2024)	18
Michael Roberts (Elder) (2024)	19
Michael Bolin (Elder) (2024)	20
Lauren DeLano (Elder) (2024)	21
Melanie Tubbs (Elder) (2024)	22
Blake Bradford (Elder)(2024)	23
Toby Austin (Assoc Member) (2024)	24
Gretchen Simmons (Lay) (2025)	25
Brenda Purifoy (Lay) (2023)	26
Bonnie Adcox (Lay) (2023)	27
Kevin Barrington (Lay) (2023)	28
Ex-Officio:	29
Cabinet Representative: DeeDee Autry (Elder)	30
Assistant to the Bishop: Judy Rudd (Elder)	31
Chair, Order of Elders: Katie Pearce (Elder)	32
Chair, Fellowship of Local Pastors and Associate Members: Peaches Smith (LP) (2024)	33
Chair, Order of Deacons: Katye Chambers (Deacon)	34
Chair, Ministerial Assessment(w/o vote): Patti Butler (Elder) (2023)	35
Dean of Course of Study: Michelle Morris (Elder)	36
Secretary/Treasurer: Amy Shores (lay) (2026)	37
COMMITTEE ON INVESTIGATION ¶ 2703	38
Chair (elected by the committee): Tony Griffin (clergy), tony.griffin@arumc.org (2024)	39
Clergy:	40
CE McAdoo (2026)	41
JJ Whitney (2026)	42
Tony Griffin (2019)	43
Barbara Douglas (2019)	44
Lay:	45
Brad Moore (2019)	46
John Crawford (2019)	47
Mary Lewis Dassinger (2019)	48
Alternate Members:	49
Clergy:	50
Robin Moore (2023)	
David Hoffman (2023)	
David Fleming (2023)	
Lay:	
Donna Flenniken (2021)	
Terry Gregory (2025)	
Betty Cook (2025)	
Tracey Ritchey (2025)	
Bart Gray (2025)	

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PENSIONS AND HEALTH BENEFITS (CONFERENCE BOARD OF) ¶ 638, 1501 to 1505

Chairperson: Roy Smith (clergy), roy.smith@arumc.org (2024)

Clergy:

- Ron Hayes (2023)
- Corey Read (2024)
- Todd-Paul Taulbee (2024)
- Roy Smith (2022;2026)

Laymen:

- TBA
- Dick Dodson (2023)
- Baker Kurrus (2023)
- Pat Kenady (2025)

Laywomen:

- Ginny McMurray (2023)
- Melissa Young (2025)
- Nickole Ellis (2026)

Sylvia Borchert (2023)

Cabinet Representative: DeeDee Autry (clergy)

Conference Benefits Officer: Wendy Brunson Daniels (lay)

Conference Treasurer: Todd Burris (lay)

RELIGION AND RACE (CONFERENCE COMMISSION ON) ¶ 643

Chairperson: Bettye L. Johnson (lay), bettyeljohnson@att.net (2025)

- Central: Bettye L. Johnson (lay) (2025)
- Northeast: Dr. Kelvey Matthews (lay) (2024)
- Northwest: Chelsea Hodge (lay) (2024)
- South: Larry Hatley (lay) (2020)

At-Large: Brenda Norwood Henson (lay) (2025)

At-Large: David McCormick (lay)

Cabinet Representative: Natasha Murray (clergy)

REVIEW AND RESEARCH (COMMITTEE ON) (Non-Disciplinary) SR402.5

Chairperson: Terry Gosnell (clergy), terry.gosnell@arumc.org (2024)

- Central: Melanie Churchill (lay) (2026)
- Northeast: TBA
- Northwest: Mark Cloninger (clergy) (2024)
- South: Carol Mendenhall (lay) (2025)

THE CONFERENCE SECRETARY ¶ 606

Conference Secretary: Latoya Shepherd (clergy), conference.secretary@arumc.org

SAFE GATHERINGS COMMITTEE

Administrator: Alison Huskey (lay), alison.huskey@arumc.org

- Age-Level Discipleship Coordinator: Brittany Watson (clergy)
- Ann Ferris (clergy)
- Doni Martin (lay)
- Zach Schrick (lay)
- Peaches Smith (clergy)
- Kris Mickna (lay)
- Carole Baker (lay)

STATISTICIAN (CONFERENCE) ¶ 603.7 / THE CONFERENCE TREASURER ¶ 619

Conference Treasurer: Todd Burris (lay), tburris@arumc.org

Statistician: Melissa Sanders (lay), msanders@arumc.org

STATUS AND ROLE OF WOMEN (CONFERENCE COMMISSION ON) ¶ 644-

Chairperson: Sarah Argue (lay), sarah.argue@gmail.com (2024)

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Central: Jeanne Williams (clergy) (2024)
Northeast: TBA
Northwest: Regena Fox Mason (clergy) (2021 ad interim)
South: Amanda Smith (clergy) (2024)
Representative from the UWF: Neva Johnson (lay)
Board of Laity: Kathy Conley (lay)
Representative from the General Commission: Mark Norman (clergy)
Cabinet Representative: DeeDee Autry (clergy)
Clergy: Patti Butler (clergy) (2025)
Laywoman: Bonita Hatley (lay) (2025)
Layman: Michael Robinson (lay) (2025)

TRUSTEES (CONFERENCE BOARD OF) ¶ 2512 to 2516

Chairperson/President: TBD by Board of Trustees

Vice-Chair: Stark Ligon (lay) (2024)

Class of 2027

Tom Baxley (lay) (2019)

Cindy Switzer (lay) (2019)

Emily Walter (lay) (2019)

Class of 2028

Sara Pair (clergy) (2024)

Charles Donaldson (lay) (2024)

Stark Ligon (lay) (2024) (Vice Chair/Vice President)

Class of 2029

Tandy Hanson (clergy) (2024)

Deidre Jo "Dede" Roberts (clergy) (2025)

LeAnne P. Burch (lay) (2025)

Class of 2030

Jeff Hampton (clergy) (2026)

H.T. Moore (lay) (2026)

Linda Powell (lay) (2026)

Ex-officio: Conference Treasurer: Todd Burris (lay)

Secretary: Audrea Stephens (lay)

Cabinet Representative: Roy Beth Kelley (clergy)

YOUNG ADULT MINISTRIES (CONFERENCE COUNCIL ON) ¶ 650

Coordinator: Andrew Orr (clergy), benjamin.orr@arumc.org (2024)

Central: Georgia Henson (lay) (2026)

Northeast: Arden Fraiser (lay) (2026)

Northwest: Lydia Sullinger (clergy) (2026)

South: Tucker Henderson (lay) (2026)

YOUTH MINISTRIES (CONFERENCE COUNCIL ON) ¶ 649

Coordinator: Zach Schrick (lay), zschrick@conwayfumc.org

Chair: Riley Pearson (lay)

Vice Chair: Ada Buchanan (lay)

Secretary: TBD

Chaplain: Quaid Hairston (lay)

At-Large Representative: Carter Hogan (lay)

YSF Chair: Isaiah Smittle (lay)

UNITED WOMEN IN FAITH LEADERSHIP TEAM (CONFERENCE)

President: Maybelline Strong, Maybellinestrong@att.net

Vice-President: Betty Cook

Secretary: Mary Williams

Treasurer: Betty Baxter

Committee on Nominations Chair: Jamie Bird

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Communications Coordinator: Beth Cobb

Mission Coordinators:

Spiritual Growth: Brenda Gullett
Membership, Nurture and Outreach: Neva Johnson
Education and Interpretation: Karen Malone
Social Action: LaVerne Paige
Resource Coord/Lending Librarian: Gretchen Diffie

Committee on Nominations:

2026

Robin Williams
Jo Webber

2027

Tina Marie Boyles
Judy Mattox

2028

LaDonna Busby
Jo Morrison

2029

Tracey Ritchey
Jennifer Walker

Central District President: Marleene Calvin
Northeast District President: Terry Gregory
Northwest District President: Cindy Miller
South District President: Becky Simmons
Dean, Arkansas Conference Mission U: Carolyn Schumacher
Mission U Assistant Dean: Sandra Parham Turner
Program Advisory Group UWF: Cathy Blackwood; Paulina Webber
South Central Jurisdiction Leadership Team Nominations Committee: Shelley Lee
Extended Cabinet representative: TBD

UNITED METHODIST MEN ¶ 648

President: Clay McCastlain (lay), jclaymccastlain@gmail.com

Vice-President: TBA

Secretary: TBA

Treasurer: Todd Burris (lay)

District Representatives:

Central: TBA
Northeast: Riley Pearson (lay) (2026)
Northwest: David Phillips (lay) (2026)
South: TBA
Extended Cabinet representative: TBA

BISHOP'S CONFERENCE SESSION PLANNING TASK GROUP (For information, No vote required) SR 402.4

Chairperson: Bishop Laura Merrill (clergy), bishop.merrill@arumc.org

Vice-Chairperson: Judy Rudd (clergy)

Admin: Danielle Adkisson (lay)

Annual Conference Secretary: LaToya Shepherd (clergy)

Worship Co-Coordinator: Sara Andrews (clergy) (2026)

Worship Co-Coordinator: Alyssa Kuebler (clergy) (2026)

Age-Level Discipleship Coordinator: Brittany Watson (clergy)

Director of Communications: TBD

Conference Treasurer: Todd Burris (lay)

Technical Director: Patrick Shownes (lay)

Host District Superintendent: Natasha Murray (clergy)

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Host District Administrator: TBD
Annual Conference Publications Editor: Lisa Byrd (lay) (2025)

At-large:

Melissa Sanders (lay)
Danita Waller-Paige (clergy)
Maggie Brown (lay)

BLACK CHURCH INITIATIVE TASK GROUP - A TOOLKIT FOR VITALITY (For information, no vote required)

Cultural Outreach Coordinator/Chair: Ulysses Washington (clergy), ulysses.washington@arumc.org

Bishop: Laura Merrill (Bishop)

Assistant to the Bishop: Judy Rudd (clergy) (2025)

Cabinet Rep: Natasha Murray (clergy) (2025)

At-large:

LaToya Shepherd (clergy) (2025)
Betty Scull (lay) (2025)
Bettye Johnson (lay) (2025)
Charles Donaldson (lay) (2025)
Craig Williams (lay) (2025)
Darnell Rice (clergy) (2025)
Gretchen Simmons (lay) (2025)
Michael Smith (lay) (2025)
Trisha Manns (lay) (2025)
Yolanda Roby (lay) (2025)

CAMP TANAKO BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Michelle Amos (2025)
Donnie Betts (2025 - 2nd term)
Stephanie Brown (2025)
Lori Canada (2025)
Kelly Curran (Chairperson), blairkelly89@yahoo.com (2025 - 2nd term)
Hammett Evans (Vice-Chairperson) (2024 - 2nd term)
Whitfield Logan (2024)
Nancy Meredith (2023)
John Schallhorn (2024)
Peaches Smith (2025)

Ex-officio:

Judy Rudd (Acting Director of Connectional Ministries)
Matthew Gwinner (Interim Director)
Brittany Richardson Watson (Age Level Discipleship Coordinator)
Julie Smith (Chairperson, Camping & Retreat Ministries)

Mid-Year Appointments to Camp Tanako Board to be Ratified:

Mason Cozart (2026)
Michael McMurray (2026)
Don Riggan (2026)
Bud Reeves (2026)

DISTRICT COMMITTEES

CENTRAL DISTRICT

Central District Board of Church Location and Building

Tiffany Simmons Cooper (lay) (2027)

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Pat Kenady (lay) (2027)
Sheila Jones (clergy) (2027)
Maybelline Strong (lay) (2028)
Bart Gray (lay) (2028)
Norma Gillerson (clergy) (2028)
Virginia Porta (lay) (2029)
Lascelles Lyn-Cook (lay) (2029)
Terry Burruss (clergy) (2029)
Ex-Officio:
Natasha Murray, District Superintendent
Keith Coker, District Chancellor
Karen Henery, District Lay Leader

Central District Committee on Ministry
Natasha Murray, District Superintendent
Reggie Russell, BOM representative (clergy)
Karen Henery, District Lay Leader
James Sawyer, Associate District Lay Leader
Savannah Ellis, Associate District Lay Leader
Nathan Kilbourne (clergy)
Todd Vick (clergy)
Roy Smith (clergy)
Mary Jane Cole (clergy)
Sara Bayles (clergy)
Lana Gartner (clergy)
Jeffrey Hampton (clergy)
Linda Powell (lay)
Jonnie Nix (lay)
Ginny McMurray (lay)
Brenda Henson (lay)
Shelia Jones (clergy)
Melvin Moss (clergy)
Michelle Whitfield (clergy)
Claire Newbill (clergy)
Bill Sardin (clergy)

NORTHEAST DISTRICT

Northeast District Board of Church Location and Building
Lori Treat (lay) (2027)
Kenneth May (lay) (2027)
Jeremy Hopper (clergy) (2027)
Crystal Jolly (lay) (2028)
Van Parker (lay) (2028)
Kelly Giese (clergy) (2028)
Glenda Hanson (lay) (2029)
Charles Glover (lay) (2029)
Dane Womack (clergy) (2029)
Zach Roberts, District Superintendent
David Malone, District Lay Leader

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Barrett Moore, District Chancellor	6
Northeast District Committee on Ministry	7
Zach Roberts, District Superintendent	8
Dane Womack, BOM Representative (clergy)	9
David Malone, District Lay Leader	10
Sarah Ellzey (clergy)	11
Tandy Hanson (clergy)	12
John Fleming (clergy)	13
Jesse James (clergy)	14
Alicia Finch-McCastlain (clergy)	15
Kathy Conley (lay)	16
Teresa Bolin (lay)	17
Kay Brogdon (lay)	18
Debby Bodenhamer (lay)	19
Paul Bube (lay)	20
Keith Coker (clergy)	21
Tom Frase (clergy)	22
Jonathan Griesse (clergy)	23
Chris Todd (clergy)	24
Voice (no vote): LaDonna Busby, Registrar	25

NORTHWEST DISTRICT

	26
Northwest District Board of Church Location and Building	27
Betsy Phillips (lay) (2027)	28
Doug Stumbaugh (lay) (2027)	29
Daniel Thueson (clergy) (2027)	30
Sara Bechdoldt (lay) (2028)	31
Dell Holt (lay) (2028)	32
Alyssa Kuebler (clergy) (2028)	33
Cathy Blackwood (lay) (2029)	34
Joseph Rexwinkle (lay) (2029)	35
Lyn Poplin (clergy) (2029)	36
Ex-Officio:	37
Roy Beth Kelley, District Superintendent	38
Carole Baker, District Lay Leader	39
Dalton Person, District Chancellor	40

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Northwest District Committee on Ministry	42
Roy Beth Kelley, District Superintendent	43
Abbey Maynard, BOM Representative (clergy)	44
Carole Baker, District Lay Leader	45
Steve Poarch (clergy)	46
Brenda Wideman (clergy)	47
Mark Cloninger (clergy)	48
Jennie Williams (clergy)	49
Florine Johnson (lay)	50
Liz Lusk (lay)	
Cindy Marsh (lay)	
Paula Ihms (lay)	

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Joanne Peterson (lay)
Karen Shank (lay)
Missy Kincaid (lay)
Jana Green (clergy)
Rob Holifield (clergy)
Cindy Bright (clergy)
Michael Mattox (clergy)
Brad Moore (clergy)
Allen Crum (clergy)
Paul Seay (clergy)

SOUTH DISTRICT

South District Board of Church Location and Building

Betty Cook (lay) (2027)
Billy Hockaday (lay) (2027)
Pam Estes (clergy) (2027)
Deanna Gasnier (lay) (2028)
Clay Sexton (lay) (2028)
Aaron Miller (clergy) (2028)
Amber Stewart (lay) (2029)
Aidan Watson (lay) (2029)
Kenny Lee (clergy) (2029)
Ex-Officio:
DeeDee Autry, District Superintendent
Becky Simmons, District Lay Leader
Paul Keith, District Chancellor

South District Committee on Ministry

DeeDee Autry, District Superintendent
Toby Austin, BOM Representative (clergy)
Becky Simmons, District Lay Leader
Bryan Diffe (clergy)
Sara Pair (clergy)
Edna Morgan (clergy)
Sam Meaders (clergy)
Tim Rushing (clergy)
Kenny Lee (clergy)
Julie Smith (lay)
Ellen Horseman (lay)
Brenda Purifoy (lay)
Connie Castleberry (lay)
Deanna McCormack (clergy)
Amanda Smith (clergy)
Matt Daniels (clergy)
Jaimie Alexander (clergy)
Todd-Paul Taulbee (clergy)
Ryan Bachuss (clergy)

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Notes



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