

the
2023 AWFUMC
BOOK OF REPORTS



Alabama-West Florida
Annual Conference

Southeastern Jurisdiction

Welcome! We welcome you to the 2023 Annual Conference Session of the Alabama-West Florida Conference. The lay session and clergy sessions as well as all business sessions will be held in person June 11-14, 2023 on the campus of the University of South Alabama in Mobile, Alabama.

From the Pension and Health Benefits Office

Health screenings will be available for active and retired Clergy enrolled in the Conference active and MedSupp health insurance plans. The screening is a fasting screening and will be held Tuesday, June 13th from 7:00 am until 12:00 pm. The screening is not mandatory, but clergy are encouraged to take advantage of the screening. Others not enrolled in the AWF health insurance plan are welcome to complete a health screening on a walk-in basis. Payment is required at the time of screening.

Participants will be able to schedule an on-site appointment for the Annual Conference screening or visit their primary physician.

All active and retired clergy enrolled in the Conference health insurance plan who complete their health screening at Annual Conference will be entered into a drawing to win a two-night stay at the Grand Hotel in Mobile, Alabama.

Registration for the fasting health screening will be completed through a separate link which will be posted on the conference website once available.

For questions, please contact BeLinda Carnegie, Conference Benefits Officer, at the Pension and Health Benefits Office by calling (334) 356-1063 or by email (belinda @awfumc.org).

From the *Journal* Editor

The 2023 *Journal* will be available for digital download from the conference website or hard copy purchase from Amazon. Notice of availability and links for ordering will be announced from the conference office when the *Journal* becomes available.

From the Conference Secretary

All members of annual conference are encouraged to become familiar with all conference standing rules included in this *Book of Reports*. Specifically Standing Rule 15 and the section entitled *Administrative Procedures of the Annual Conference*. If you have questions, please contact the conference secretary, Rev. Ashley Davis at (334) 356-8014.

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2023 Annual Conference Working Agenda
The Alabama-West Florida Conference of the United Methodist Church
June 11-14, 2023
Theme: “When They Prayed” Acts 4:31
The Mitchell Center, University of South Alabama, Mobile, Alabama

Sunday, June 11

When they prayed... like Naomi

When we pray blessings on others, God redeems. Ruth 1:8

2:30 p.m. Display Set Up

3:30 p.m. Doors Open and Registration Opens
Registration will reopen for 30 minutes following Opening Worship

Fellowship of Local Pastors – USA Wesley Foundation

4:00 p.m. Choir Rehearsal – Mitchell Center Arena

6:00 p.m. Opening Worship
 Sermon: Bishop David Graves
 Offering: New Ministry Initiatives

8:00 p.m. Laity Session – Christ UMC Sanctuary
 Clergy Session – Mitchell Center Arena

8:30 p.m. Registration Closes

Monday, June 12

When they prayed... like Nehemiah

When we acknowledge our shortcomings, God rebuilds. Nehemiah 1:5

7:45 a.m. Registration Opens

8:30 a.m. OPENING WORSHIP
 Sermon: Rev. Richard Williams

Teller Meeting immediately following worship

9:15 a.m. CONFERENCE BUSINESS SESSION
 Gathering Music – Jarvis Wilson and Rev. Darrin Isaac
 Hymn – *And Are We Yet Alive*

Welcome from the Host District Superintendent –
Rev. Dr. Mike Pearson
Prayer – Carolyn Davis, Locust Bluff UMC

Monitoring Explanation – Rev. Ashley Davis

Parliamentary Review Video

Practice Vote

Opening Business and Organization of the Conference
Setting the “bar” of the Conference
Election of secretarial staff
Approval of the 2022 Conference Journal
Adoption of the 2023 Conference Working Agenda
Presentation of the 2023 Consent Agenda

Committee on Standing Rules (to lie on the table overnight) –
Rev. Dr. Kathy Knight

Committee on Resolutions and Petitions (to lie on the table
overnight) – Rev. Christina Shaver

Committee on Nominations – Rev. Ashley Davis

Break

11:00 a.m. ORDER OF THE DAY – Memorial Service
Remembering those who passed since the 2022 Annual
Conference Session
Sermon: Rev. Christina Shaver

12:00 p.m. Memorial Luncheon
Lunch Break

2:00 p.m. CONFERENCE BUSINESS SESSION
Gathering Music – Jarvis Wilson and Rev. Darrin Isaac
Prayer – Bill Richardson, Montgomery First UMC

Episcopacy Committee – Rev. Dr. Cory Smith

Board of Ordained Ministry – Rev. Emily Kincaid
Recognition of Commissioning and Ordination classes
Recognition of First-Time Licensed Local Pastors
Recognition of Licensed Local Pastors who completed
Course of Study
Recognition of Clergy in Extension Ministries and
Appointments Beyond the Local Church

Recognition of Retiring Clergy

- 4:30 p.m. ORDER OF THE DAY: Ordinands and Commissionees Depart
for Pre-Service Preparations
Registration Closes
- 7:00 p.m. Service of Ordination and Commissioning –
Dauphin Way United Methodist Church
Sermon: President J. Cameron West, Huntingdon College
Offering: Ministerial Education Fund

Tuesday, June 13*When they prayed... like Mary*

When we rejoice and give thanks, God reveals. Luke 1:46-56

- 7:00 a.m. Biometric Health Screenings – Mitchell Center, Room 1106
- 7:45 a.m. Registration Opens
- 8:30 a.m. OPENING WORSHIP
Sermon: Rev. Emily Kincaid
- Teller Meeting immediately following worship*
- 9:15 a.m. CONFERENCE BUSINESS SESSION
Gathering Music – Jarvis Wilson and Rev. Darrin Isaac
Opening Prayer – Randy Lovelady, Church Street UMC
- Report of the *Journal* Committee
- 10:00 a.m. ORDER OF THE DAY: Connectional Ministries Report (video)
Commission on the Status and Role of Women –
Rev. Kelli Hitchman-Craig and Rev. Chelsea Brown
Embrace Kids – Dr. Blake Horne
Grant Writing Update – Kristi McClellan
Blue Lake United Methodist Assembly
Tanzania Partnership
- 10:30 a.m. *Action* on Standing Rules – Rev. Dr. Kathy Knight
- Action* on Resolutions and Petitions – Rev. Christina Shaver
- 12:00 p.m. Conference Announcements and Lunch Break
Biometric Health Screenings Close

2:00 p.m. CONFERENCE BUSINESS SESSION
Gathering Music – Jarvis Wilson and Rev. Darrin Isaac
Prayer – Linda Walker, Ivy Creek UMC

Task Force on the Future Structure of the AWFUMC –
Rev. Dr. Jeremy Pridgeon

Task Force on Church Planting and Revitalization –
Rev. Dr. Geoffrey Lentz

Coalition for Disrupting and Dismantling Racism –
Rev. Jackie Slaughter

Board of Pension and Health Benefits –
Rev. Allison Posell, Chair
Action Item: Past Service Rate
Action Item: Funding Plan
Action Item: Post Retirement Medical Effect on
Withdrawn Pastors

Board Trustees –Rev. Dr. Olivia Poole

Report of the Cabinet – Rev. Dr. Jeff Wilson
Change in Charge Lines
Property Resolutions

Where shall the 2024 Session be held?

5:00 p.m. Dinner Break

7:00 p.m. CONFERENCE BUSINESS SESSION
Gathering Music – Jarvis Wilson and Rev. Darrin Isaac
Prayer – Ricky Messick, Millbrook UMC

Wednesday, June 14

When they prayed... like Peter

When we pray boldly, God revives. Acts 9:40

8:30 a.m. OPENING WORSHIP
Sermon: Rev. Dr. Nathan Attwood

Teller Meeting immediately following worship

9:15 a.m.

CONFERENCE BUSINESS SESSION

Gathering Music – Jarvis Wilson and Rev. Darrin Isaac

Prayer – Mattie Baker, Metropolitan UMC

Report of the *Journal* Committee

Equitable Compensation – Suzanne Jones

Action Item: Setting of Minimum Salary

ORDER OF THE DAY: Council on Finance and Administration –
George Mingledorff*Action Item:* 2024 Conference Budget*Action Item:* Setting of District Superintendent SalaryAnnouncement of Health Screening Drawing Winner –
Rev. Allison Posell

Break

11:00 a.m.

ORDER OF THE DAY

Gathering Music – Jarvis Wilson and Rev. Darrin Isaac

Hymn –

Episcopal Address: Bishop David Graves

Fixing of the 2023-2024 Appointments

Sending Forth Service

Adjournment *Sine Die*

The Standing Rules

with the Recommendations of the Committee to Proposed Changes

[All paragraph references are to the 2016 *Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church* except as otherwise noted, and these numbers are printed in bold.]

INTRODUCTION

The Alabama-West Florida Conference of The United Methodist Church shall be organized and structured according to the mandates of the latest edition of *The Book of Discipline*, and shall act in all respects in harmony with the policy of The United Methodist Church. In keeping with those standards, this conference commits itself to the elimination of discrimination (see ¶604.1). The following Standing Rules are adopted by the Alabama-West Florida Conference for its own governance and to fit its specific setting for mission and ministry. The Alabama-West Florida Conference shall follow Roberts Rules of Order except where superseded by explicit rules in *The Book of Discipline* or in these Standing Rules.

1. These Standing Rules shall be implemented, applied or amended as follows:
 - A. These rules shall be effective at the end of the annual conference at which they are passed. All rules remain in effect until they are rescinded or amended by a two-thirds vote of those present and voting on the next day after the proposed amendment has been presented in writing.
 - B. Any proposed changes in the Standing Rules should be received in writing by the chairperson of the Committee on Standing Rules no later than February 1.
 - C. Any of these rules, except Standing Rule (SR) ID, may be suspended by a two-thirds vote of those present and voting at annual conference.
 - D. A change in the number of districts may not be made later than the first business session of the annual conference.

OFFICERS OF THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE

2. The conference secretary and the *Journal* editor (nominated by the Conference Committee on Nominations, see SR 5B) and the treasurer/statistician and the conference registrar (nominated by the Council on Finance and Administration) shall be elected at the first session of the annual conference following the general conference, with tenure of office to begin on December 1, following their election, and to serve for the succeeding quadrennium. (¶603.7 and ¶619)

COMMITTEES RELATING TO THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE

3. There shall be a Committee on Standing Rules, composed of the conference secretary, the director of Connectional Ministries (see SR SA), the

conference treasurer, the Journal editor and five at-large members including the chairperson. This committee shall be nominated by the Committee on Nominations (see SR 5B), shall include both lay and clergy, and shall be elected by the annual conference. Additional nominations may be made from the floor.

4. There shall be a Committee on Resolutions and Petitions, composed of four clergy and four laypersons, nominated by the Committee on Nominations, which shall consider all petitions addressed to the general, jurisdictional, and annual conferences. After consideration, the committee shall submit the petitions, with its written recommendation and the rationale for each recommendation, to the annual conference for action. Resolutions shall be submitted to the committee by February 15, except in cases where it can be demonstrated by the author of a late petition that the situation which gave rise to making the petition was not apparent until after the deadline for petitions. The committee shall provide copies of all resolutions submitted by February 15 to all voting members present at the conference session. The maker of the late resolution shall supply these copies of his/her resolution if submitted after February 15. No resolution will be received on the last day of the session.
5. A. The leadership, missional and administrative structures of the Alabama-West Florida Conference shall come together at a “common table” or organization known as the “Connecting Our Resources and Empowerment” Team or CORE Team. The means of electing and appointing representatives connected to the CORE Team, which includes boards, committees, councils, commissions and divisions of the Leadership Team, the Mission Team, and the Administrative Team, are spelled out in these Standing Rules (also see SR 26 and following).
- B. There shall be a Committee on Nominations, composed of: the resident bishop, who shall be the chairperson; the conference lay leader; the conference secretary, who shall be the secretary of this committee; the director of connectional ministries; the conference treasurer; the conference presidents of United Methodist Men (UMM) and of United Women in Faith (UWF); a United Methodist youth; the eight district lay leaders; the eight district superintendents; the Conference Office program staff; and three at-large members chosen by the bishop with attention given to the need for inclusive representation. This committee shall nominate persons quadrennially to the CORE Team, conference boards, commissions, committees, councils, etc., as listed in these Standing Rules and as needed by other conference institutions (per the bishop’s discretion). Nominations shall be consistent with the most recent *Book of Discipline*, with attention given to inclusiveness, diversity and expertise. The committee shall submit its nominations as early as possible in the annual conference

session. Additional nominations may be made from the floor.

6. There shall be a Committee on Courtesies and Introductions, composed of three lay and two clergy members, which shall be responsible for presentation of visitors to the conference, and for a report in the closing session expressing appreciation to persons and groups who have rendered special services in the program.
7. There shall be a Committee on the *Journal*, appointed quadrennially by the bishop, composed of two members, who shall examine the minutes of daily sessions for accuracy and report the findings to the conference.
8. The Council on Finance and Administration (CFA) shall handle expenses of the conference session. There shall be a Conference Administration Fund, the amount to be fixed annually by the Council on Finance and Administration, with assessments for the fund to be allocated annually to individual pastoral charges on the apportioned formula basis. When the Annual Conference makes lodging and/or meals available, CFA will establish reasonable fees for members and other guests; any meals offered at reduced or no charge will be funded by the Annual Conference Administration Fund. Instructions for reservations and payment shall be provided by the conference registrar no later than the time online reservations for annual conference become active.
9. The Annual Conference Session Planning Committee:
 - A. There shall be an Annual Conference Session Planning Committee, composed of the presiding bishop who shall serve as chairperson, the host district superintendent, the conference secretary, the *Journal* editor who shall serve as secretary of the committee, the conference director of communications, the assistant to the bishop and director of ministerial services, the conference registrar, the conference treasurer, the chairperson of the Conference Division of Worship, the director of connectional ministries, the conference lay Leader, the host district lay leader, the conference president of United Women in Faith, the conference president of United Methodist Men, the chairperson of the Committee on Ethnic Local Church Concerns (§632), a United Methodist youth, and a United Methodist young adult.
 - B. The Annual Conference Session Planning Committee shall arrange tentatively the program of the annual conference session, and shall submit the program to the opening session for possible amendment and adoption as its agenda. The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper shall be included in the program.
 - C. A period of recognition of retiring clergy shall be held during the

conference session, with a suitable program arranged by the Board of Ordained Ministry.

- D. A memorial service commemorating each clergy person or “surviving spouse” or diaconal minister who died since the last annual conference shall be arranged by the Annual Conference Planning Committee and the Division Chair of Worship in conjunction with the Commission on Archives and History. The Commission shall also provide a memoir of the deceased for publication in the *Journal*.

ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES OF THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE

10. The rules of order of the preceding general conference shall govern parliamentary procedure in this conference in all matters not covered by the standing rules. In order to be recognized to address the conference, each person must identify him/herself as to name and the capacity in which he/she is entitled to speak to the session.
11. Reports and Resolutions:
- A. All reports and resolutions shall be consistent with the Guidelines for Reports; and shall be placed on the conference agenda by the conference secretary in the order designated by the Annual Conference Session Planning Committee. Proposed resolutions and changes to the conference standing rules shall lie on the conference secretary’s desk for at least one business session before being acted upon by the conference.
- B. By a two-thirds vote of those present and voting an agenda item may be taken up out of order for consideration.
- C. All amendments to reports of boards and agencies as printed in the *Book of Reports* and all motions arising from the floor of the conference shall be made in writing to the conference secretary.
- D. At the annual conference session, no materials (handouts, etc.) shall be placed on the pews or seats when the conference is in recess, unless a prior majority vote approves an exception to this rule.
12. In order to expedite the business of the conference, the Consent Agenda Committee, composed of the secretary of the annual conference, the chairperson of the Committee on Standing Rules, the director of connectional ministries, and the Journal editor, in consultation with agencies or individuals presenting reports, recommendations or resolutions, may present in the *Book of Reports* a written list of items which shall be known as the Consent Agenda. Items on the Consent Agenda shall be considered as adopted by consent of the annual conference. An individual item may be

removed from the Consent Agenda by a written request signed by twelve lay and/or clergy members of the annual conference and presented to the conference secretary prior to the first business session. When a matter has been removed from the Consent Agenda, it shall be placed into the regular agenda at an appropriate time.

13. Election of General and Jurisdictional Delegations:

- A. Delegates to the general and jurisdictional conferences shall be elected at the annual conference session, ***or during a specially convened session, respectively, of the lay members to Annual Conference &/or an executive session of the clergy***, in the calendar year preceding the quadrennial General Conference according to stipulations in ¶502.3, ¶502.4 and ¶515 respectively of the *Book of Discipline*. In compliance with the *2016 Book of Discipline* ¶35, all eligible clergy shall be listed on the ballot for General and Jurisdictional Elections. ***They Lay and clergy delegates*** shall serve in all sessions of these conferences held during the quadrennium. In addition to those delegates funded by the general and jurisdictional conferences, the Alabama-West Florida Conference shall pay the expenses of ~~only one more~~ ***two alternate delegates, both*** lay and clergy, to the general and jurisdictional conferences at the rate paid to the delegates.
- B. In the election of delegates, the presiding bishop shall appoint four teams of tellers (two clergy teams and two lay teams), each team consisting of one representative from each district, one of whom shall serve as head teller. ***The use of personal electronic devices and messaging apps during the election of delegates to General and Jurisdictional Conference is expressly prohibited.***
- C. In the election of these delegates, the ballots shall be furnished to the conference by the conference secretary at the time of voting. No vote shall be valid unless cast on the paper or electronic ballot designated by the presiding bishop. ***Once balloting has begun, it shall proceed without interruption by any business coming before the annual conference until all delegates have been elected.***
- D. One year prior to an electing annual conference, the Board of Laity shall make plans and policies regarding the lay elections and give guidance to laity regarding the process of caucusing, nominating and electing the lay delegation. Following the opening session of the electing annual conference, the laity, in their orientation session, will give opportunity for any persons seeking election (whose name has not been put in nomination in advance) to provide a single printed profile sheet for distribution.

Election of Clergy Delegates: in compliance with the 2016 Book of Discipline ¶35, all eligible clergy shall be included in the election process for General and Jurisdictional Elections. Clergy delegates shall be elected by the drawing of lots.

Once assembled, the qualified clergy electors shall unite in offering prayers to God, calling upon Divine Providence for the election of clergy delegates and alternates to the General and Jurisdictional Conferences. The presiding officer of the executive session of the clergy shall enlist representative clergy electors who will each draw a single lot from a basket containing the names of all clergy members in full connection. In turn, each representative elector shall pray aloud before the body prior to drawing a lot naming the next elected clergy delegate, until such time as the full number of delegates and a minimum of four alternates are elected. The presiding officer shall call upon the most senior elder in full connection present as the first representative elector. The most senior deacon in full connection present shall be the second. The balloting shall be concluded by the last member elected to full connection membership from the provisional elders and from the provisional deacons.

In the event that additional representative electors are required to carry out the balloting process, the presiding officer may call upon any qualified electors present. To the extent that it is practicable, provisional and associate members of the annual conference, as well as qualified licensed local pastors shall also be employed as representative electors in partnership with the elders and deacons as the executive session of the clergy calls upon the Lord to elect its delegates, and alternates, to the General and Jurisdictional Conferences.

For the election of clergy delegates, the presiding bishop shall appoint at least two teams of clergy tellers with each team consisting of one representative from each district, one of whom shall serve as head teller.

In advance of the executive session of the clergy, each team of clergy tellers shall confer with the Conference Secretary and the Director of Ministerial Services to ensure that the names of all qualified members in full connection are recorded on individual lots to be used for the balloting process. Prior to the commencement of balloting, the teller teams will certify that the names of all clergy members in full connection are properly before the body for the purpose of election.

During the election, a team of clergy tellers will stand as witnesses beside each representative elector to validate the election of each clergy delegate whom the Lord shall choose.

Any elected delegate who is present for the session and chooses to decline, shall immediately inform the presiding officer. In such cases the representative elector will be instructed by the presiding officer to return the lot into the basket and then draw again the name of a member in full connection.

- E. A general code of ethical standards will be demonstrated by every candidate, lay and clergy. Every individual's right to exercise his/her voting or political expression should be consistent with the *Social Principles of The United Methodist Church*.
- F. Endorsements of candidates will be made only by individuals and/or local churches, or the district electing caucus. *All candidates shall demonstrate moral and spiritual behavior that is consistent Philippians 2:1-5 which states, "If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, 2 then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. 3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. 4 Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. 5 Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus..."*

Recommendations of the Standing Rules Committee to Proposed Changes:

- 13. A. The proposed change suggests that the Annual Conference pay the expenses of two alternate delegates to General and Jurisdictional Conference, instead of for one.

Recommendation: The Standing Rules Committee recommends approval of this proposed change because the second alternate should not have to incur personally these expenses.

- 13. B. The proposed change would prohibit the use of personal electronic devices and messaging apps during the elections of General and Jurisdictional Conference delegates.

Recommendation: The Standing Rules Committee understands the concern underlying this proposal, but questions how it can be enforced. Since the Committee does not support drafting rules for which there is no objective enforcement mechanism, the Committee does not recommend adoption of this proposed change.

- 13. C. This proposed change suggests that once balloting for General and Jurisdictional delegates has begun, no other business can come before the Annual Conference until the balloting has finished.**

Recommendation: The Standing Rules Committee recommends that this proposed change not be adopted. The proposed change interferes with the resident bishop's discretion to make the best use of the time of the Annual Conference and may interrupt the holding of the Order of the Day events at their published times. Therefore, it is not functional.

- 13. D. This proposed change suggests that clergy delegates to General and Jurisdictional Conference be elected by the drawing of lots.**

Recommendation: The Standing Rules Committee recommends that this proposed change not be approved. While such a proposal might work in an idealistic world, the election of delegates by drawing lots is not practicable in the context of the Alabama-West Florida Conference's customary practice of electing clergy delegates.

- 13. E. This proposed change suggests that once the balloting process for lay delegates for General and Jurisdictional Conference has begun, that no other business be held.**

Recommendation: The Standing Rules Committee recommends that this proposed change not be adopted. It interferes with the resident bishop's discretion to make the best use of the time of the Annual Conference and may interfere with holding the Order of the Day events at their published times. Therefore, it is not functional.

- 13. F. This proposed change seeks to require all candidates for General and Jurisdictional Conference delegates meet the moral standards in Philippians 2:1-5.**

Recommendation: The Standing Rules Committee recommends that this proposed change not be adopted on grounds that Judicial Council Decision 1403 held that the Annual Conference is without authority to impose requirements on General Conference delegates that are not included in the *Discipline of The United Methodist Church* and on grounds that the Committee questions how adopting of such a proposed standard could be enforced. Since the Committee does not support drafting rules for which there is no objective enforcement mechanism, the Committee does not recommend adoption of this proposed change.

14. Annual Conference Lay Members:

- A. Lay members to the annual conference shall be elected yearly in the charge conferences. One youth member to the annual conference (age 12-17) (expenses to be paid by their district) and one young adult member (age 18-30) shall be selected from each district. The conference secretary (if lay), the conference lay leader, the director of conference lay servant ministries, the conference president of United Women in Faith, the conference president of United Methodist Men, a United Methodist youth, the conference secretary of Global Ministries (if lay), a United Methodist young adult, active deaconesses and home missionaries under episcopal appointment within the bounds of the annual conference, district lay leaders, and diaconal ministers, shall be lay members to the annual conference. (For churches with more than one clergyperson under appointment, see ¶32 of the *Book of Discipline*.)
- B. In compliance with the disciplinary requirement (¶32) to keep lay representation in the annual conference session equal to that of clergy, the conference secretary shall ascertain whether the upcoming session will be in balance with respect to lay and clergy membership as of January 1 each year. If additional lay members are needed, the conference secretary shall add them using the following guidelines:
1. The first eight shall be the district presidents of United Women in Faith. In the event that fewer than eight are needed, the secretary shall make the determination on the basis of the last reported church membership totals of the districts, moving from the largest downward in scale.
 2. The second eight shall be the district presidents of the United Methodist Men. In the event that fewer than eight are needed, the secretary shall make the determination on the basis of the last reported church membership totals of the districts, moving from the largest downward in scale.
 3. Next, the secretary shall name an additional youth and young adult from each district. In the event that fewer than sixteen are needed, the secretary shall make the determination on the basis of the last reported church membership totals of the districts, moving from the largest downward in scale.
 4. Next the secretary shall name full-time lay workers on the professional staff of the Conference Office.
 5. Next the secretary shall name the lay members of the Conference Board of Ordained Ministry.
 6. Next the secretary shall name lay members of the general and jurisdictional delegations (including alternates) in the order of their election.

7. Next the secretary shall name lay persons who are chairpersons of CORE Team boards, commissions, councils, etc., in the order listed in the CORE organizational document, and the at-large members of the CORE Team.
8. Next the secretary shall name lay members of the Council on Finance and Administration.
9. The remainder shall be at-large members divided among the eight districts and elected at the district conferences. In the event that there is a remainder of less than eight, the secretary shall make the determination on the basis of the last reported church membership totals of the districts, moving from the largest downward in scale.
10. If a person is selected by the above process who is already a member of annual conference as the delegate from his/her church/charge, he or she may serve in the new capacity and thus empower the church's alternate delegate to attend as the voting representative of the charge. The district superintendent and district lay leader of each district may assist in this process in conjunction with their district's orientation session in preparation for the annual conference.

15. The Conference *Journal* and *Book of Reports*:

The publication and distribution of The Annual Conference *Journal* and the *Book of Reports* shall be supervised by the Editorial Committee, chaired by the *Journal* editor and composed of the conference secretary, the director of ministerial services, the treasurer/statistician, and the director of connectional ministries. The *Journal* editor shall be responsible for preparation of the *Book of Reports* and its distribution either in printed or electronic form to all eligible persons. Materials and reports to be included in the *Book of Reports* shall be in the hands of the *Journal* editor NO LATER THAN the last Monday in February. The *Book of Reports* shall contain instructions for ordering the *Journal*. The Council on Finance and Administration shall determine the cost of each *Journal* including mailing. All names, addresses, reports, resolutions, and/or other materials to be included in the *Journal* of the Alabama-West Florida Conference shall be in the hands of the conference secretary no later than ten working days after the close of annual conference.

16. Board Memberships and Trusteeships:

- A. With the exception of the Board of Ordained Ministry, no person may serve on more than one quadrennial agency of this conference at the same time. Except as provided by the *Book of Discipline*, one's term on a quadrennial agency shall not exceed eight years within any twelve consecutive years. Elected membership on non-quadrennial agencies is limited to no more than eight of any twelve consecutive years, with the exception of the Board of Laity. For the sake of administrative and program continuity, this standing rule shall not apply where existing constitutions require the

retiring chair to continue to serve for a period not to exceed two years.

The quadrennial agencies are: the Conference Board of Global Ministries, the Board of Discipleship, the Board of Church and Society, the Board of Congregational Development, the Town and Country Commission, the Board of Higher Education and Campus Ministry, the Committee on Ethnic Local Church Concerns (§632), the Board of Ordained Ministry, the Commission on Equitable Compensation, the Board of Pension and Health Benefits, the Council on Finance and Administration, The Committee on the Status and Role of Women, and the at-large members on the CORE Team.

- B. Persons may be enlisted to assist boards and agencies for specific task force responsibilities.
- C. No person shall serve on more than one board of trustees or board of directors of institutions or agencies related to this annual conference at the same time. Nothing in this rule shall be construed to mean that persons may not serve concurrently on boards of trustees or directors and as members of quadrennial boards and agencies or ex-officio trustees or directors, where disciplinary provisions apply.
- D. Persons who fail to attend and participate in the meetings and programs expected of their elected position for one year without legitimate excuse shall be replaced. The person chosen by the Committee on Nominations to fill the unexpired term may also be elected to serve an additional quadrennium.
- E. No person shall serve more than nine consecutive years (three terms) as a trustee of any agency or institution related to this annual conference, nor shall this person be eligible for election again to that board for three years.

17. Organizational stipulations for boards and agencies:

- A. All conference program boards, commissions, divisions, and committees, except as provided by the *Book of Discipline*, shall begin their tenure immediately upon election at annual conference.
- B. Every year the Conference Committee on Nominations shall complete its work four weeks before the date set for the regular conference session, in order to inform nominees of their selection and anticipated confirmation.

18. There shall be eight districts in this annual conference.

19. A district conference shall be held annually in each district of this annual conference, with its program year starting in. The voting membership of the

district conference shall be made up of the following leaders in the local churches within the district: the Lay Leader, Lay member(s) to Annual Conference, Church Council (governing body) Chair, SPRC Chair, Finance Chair, Trustee Chair, and the youth president or youth representative. The district committee voting membership shall also include these district leadership positions: District Lay Leader, District UMM president, District UWF president, District Trustees president, District Committee on Ministry Chair, District Committee on Superintendency Chair, District Committee of Church Location and Building Chair, any youth or young adult district lay representatives for the district, and all other elected members of the district leadership team. All appointed clergy in the district and clergy who have their charge conference in the district are also voting members of the district conference.

20. Each district shall have a District Committee on Nominations composed of the district superintendent as chairperson, and with a membership of three clergy and four lay persons, elected annually. No member may serve for more than three consecutive years with the exception of the district superintendent. The District Committee on Nominations may submit to the district conference the names of one clergy and one lay person for election for each district work area and age-level ministry, and such other persons as are needed for membership to the District Council on Ministries or District CORE Team. Persons to be nominated shall be consulted by their district superintendent prior to the submission of their names. The District Committee on Nominations may fill vacancies with replacements to take office immediately. Such persons shall be confirmed at the next meeting of the district conference (§659.1).
21. Neither a district superintendent nor a paid staff person of the annual conference shall serve as an elected member on a quadrennial board, commission, or committee, except as specifically provided by the *Book of Discipline*. Vacancies occurring by appointment of members of boards, divisions, commissions, and committees to the district superintendency shall be filled by the conference session when such appointments are made.
22. In the allocation of askings on the formula basis, the financial strength of the church shall NOT include monies expended for the following items:
 - A. Principal and interest on capital indebtedness
 - B. Buildings and capital improvements
 - C. General Advance Specials and World Service Special Gifts
 - D. Conference Advance Specials
 - E. Remittances by United Women in Faith to the conference treasurer
 - F. Remittances to any authorized conference capital fund campaign
 - G. Remittances to the Birmingham-Southern College Scholarship Fund

and/or capital gifts

- H. Remittances to Huntingdon College Scholarship Fund and/or capital gifts
- I. Children's Home White Christmas Offering and Homes for the Aging/
Fountain of Love offering
- J. Special Day Offerings of the General Church: (One Great Hour of
Sharing, etc.)
- K. All apportioned funds from the General Church, the conference and the
districts
- L. Benevolences paid directly by the local church
- M. Direct billing for pension and health benefits
- N. External grant funds received and/or disbursed for any specific project
or purpose.***
- O. The cost of property insurance.***

Recommendations of the Standing Rules Committee to Proposed Changes:

22. The proposed changes to this Standing Rules relate to the items that may be excluded from the calculations of financial strength of local churches when determining their share of apportionments.

N. Recommendation: The Standing Rules Committee does not recommend proposed change "N" as written because it is superfluous. Grant monies currently are not included in the calculations showing financial strength for purposes of assessing apportionments.

O. Recommendation: The Standing Rules Committee does not recommend proposed change "O." The financial ability to pay property insurance premiums is part of a church's financial strength and should be included when determining each church's share of apportionments.

23. The treasurer of the annual conference shall make the final settlement regarding apportionments, and disburse all funds to the annual conference boards, commissions and committees or treasurers after the close of the fiscal year, following the guidelines of zero-based budgeting.

24. There shall be a Clergy Effectiveness Team which shall be a resource to the bishop and cabinet to assist clergy who are having significant difficulty with effectiveness in ministry. To assist the Bishop in carrying out the responsibilities of ¶334.3 and ¶359.1b, the team will meet with the referred clergy person to identify concerns and design collaboratively a corrective plan of action for a return to more effective ministry.

- A. Membership: There shall be eight members who shall be appointed by the Executive Committee of the Board of Ordained Ministry. The members of the team shall not be members of the Conference Board of Ordained Ministry. The majority of the team shall be clergy and at least one member shall be a layperson. In addition, the director of the Office of Ministerial Services and a district superintendent appointed by the bishop shall be ex-officio members without vote. In the event the district superintendent of the referred clergy person is an ex-officio member of the team, that district superintendent shall recuse himself or herself, and the bishop shall appoint another district superintendent to sit on the team for that case only. In the event any member of the team is appointed to or attends the same local church as the referred clergy person, that member of the team shall recuse himself or herself, and the bishop shall appoint another clergy person or layperson to sit on the team for that case only.
- B. Terms of Service: The team membership shall be divided into two classes of four years each. To promote continuity, four of the initial members shall be elected for two-year terms, and four of the initial members shall be elected to four-year terms. Notwithstanding conference rules of longevity regarding total length of service in an elected position, members shall not be appointed to serve two consecutive terms on the team.
- C. Officers: The team shall elect a chair and a secretary every two years.
- D. Referrals: The bishop and the cabinet shall refer to the team those clergy who are experiencing a pattern of diminished effectiveness in their ministry. The team shall meet with the referred clergy person and his/ her district superintendent, and shall develop a plan to enable and support the restoration of effectiveness. The team shall continue to meet with the referred clergy person until such time as he or she has established a pattern of effectiveness, or, in the opinion of the majority of the members of the team, until the team determines that the referred clergy person is not making sufficient progress. The team shall report its conclusions to the bishop and cabinet.
- E. Method: The team, the referred clergy person, and his/her district superintendent together shall develop a plan for the attainment of agreed upon goals that will demonstrate renewed effectiveness for ministry. The work of the team may include psychological testing, spiritual direction, coaching, health screening, random or directed drug testing, retreats, counseling, mentoring, educational opportunities, or other programs as needed to assist the clergy person in attaining effectiveness in ministry. A letter detailing the agreed upon goals and plan of work shall be sent to the referred clergy person from the Office of Ministerial Services immediately

following the meeting in which the plan is developed. Progress shall be demonstrated and documented at each meeting.

F. Meetings: The team shall meet at least two times per year and the chair shall give reasonable notice of the meeting dates to all members as well as to the bishop and cabinet.

G. Financial Support: The team shall determine its financial needs in order to be effective and shall submit any request for funding to the Office of Ministerial Services to be included in its budget.

25. Pastors in all classifications (licensed local pastors, provisional members, associate members and members in full connection, including those receiving Equitable Compensation grants) shall receive annual paid vacation with the church/charge being responsible for pulpit supply. Good vacation time benefits ministry. Since pastors are on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week, time away (when the parish is “vacated”) can bring renewal and refreshment for the tasks at hand.

Time devoted to continuing education or spiritual formation shall not be considered vacation time. At least one day per week should be considered personal time, apart from vacation.

It is further expected that pastors who are in the first year of an appointment need to show sensitivity concerning the scheduling of their vacations. It is recommended that pastors in their first year refrain from taking vacation during the first month of their new assignment. Also, please be sensitive to extenuating circumstances that might arise from unforeseen moves. It is also recommended that first-year vacation be distributed across the year and not taken all at once. On the other hand, it is recognized that pastors and their families having just moved, with all the stress moving can bring, certainly are entitled to, and should take, some vacation time during the first summer.

It should be emphasized that clergy who move from one church to another within the United Methodist connection should not be expected to “earn” vacation in each new place as new employees. The situation is analogous to a branch-manager of a company being sent to another branch within the company.

Finally, continuing education for pastors is a requirement of the denomination (§350) and time should be allowed for fulfilling this requirement. Continuing education is not to be considered vacation time. A clergy member’s continuing education and spiritual growth program shall include professional formation leaves at least one week each year and may include at least one month during one year of every quadrennium (§350.2).

These policies should be applied with utmost cooperation and sensitivity between pastors and congregations, considering both the needs of the local churches and of pastors' families. If there appears to be a problem in this regard, It Is Imperative that the pastor, the Staff/Pastor Parish Relations Committee, and the district superintendent meet to seek a solution.

The church pays the cost of providing pulpit supply during vacation period. Vacation days not used in any single appointment year are lost and do not accrue, nor shall the charge be obligated to pay additional compensation for any such unused days.

Guidelines for vacation periods shall be based on the credited years of service as indicated in the service record published annually in the Alabama-West Florida Conference Journal. Vacation shall be calculated based on the conference year July 1 - June 30.

Full- time pastors in all classifications shall receive the following minimum annual paid vacation with the church/charge responsible for pulpit supply:

- 1-3 years = 2 weeks, including 2 Sundays
- 4-7 years = 3 weeks, including 3 Sundays
- 8-10 years = 4 weeks, including 4 Sundays
- 11 or more years = 5 weeks, including 5 Sundays

Part-time pastors in all classifications shall receive a minimum of two weeks of annual paid vacation, including two Sundays, with the church/charge responsible for pulpit supply.

BOARDS AND AGENCIES OF THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE

26. There shall be a Conference CORE Team, as outlined in the "Plan of Organization for the Alabama-West Florida Conference." Policies or procedures for the CORE Team shall be guided by the most current *Book of Discipline*. The "Plan of Organization for the Alabama-West Florida Conference" shall be available on the conference website. Other offices, program boards, commissions, etc., as required by the *Discipline* but not a part of the CORE Team, are also authorized. Also see SR 5.
27. There shall be a Golden Cross fund and offering to aid medical needs of conference members/pastors. The chair of Golden Cross shall be nominated by, and shall report to, the CORE Team Division of Missions.
28. There shall be a Conference Policies and Personnel Committee appointed by the Bishop and approved by the CORE Team. The Committee shall establish uniform and equitable policies and procedures in the employment of Conference staff. It shall be the goal of our annual conference that all

conference and district offices maintain reasonably consistent and inclusive policies regarding personnel, as is appropriate to each locale.

29. There shall be a Board of Ordained Ministry as provided by the **Book of Discipline** (§635).
- A. The elected chair of each District Committee on Ordained Ministry shall serve, ex officio, as a member of the Conference Board of Ordained Ministry.*
- B. In the exercise of its rights under Discipline §635 2(m) the executive session of the clergy members in full connection shall vote separately and severally on all persons being presented for:*
- a. Annual election as a local pastor*
 - b. Election to associate membership*
 - c. Election to provisional membership*
 - d. Election to full conference membership, (including transfer) in such a manner as to ascertain that each person so presented has individually received the required vote of the full connection clergy in executive session.*
- C. In no way shall this standing rule prohibit the use of a combined ballot, for purposes of efficiency, so long as the persons under consideration, and all results of the balloting, remain distinct and are recorded as several and separate items in the record of the executive session.*

Recommendations of the Standing Rules Committee to Proposed Changes:

29. The proposed changes to the Standing Rules relating to the Board of Ordained ministry include requiring: a) each Chair of the District Committee on Ordained Ministry be an ex officio member of the Conference Board of Ordained Ministry; and b) separate votes upon the presentment of each person approved by the Board of Ordained Ministry to become local pastors, associate members, provisional members, and members in full connection during the clergy session of Annual Conference.

Recommendation: The Standing Rules Committee does not recommend these proposed changes because they would interfere with the resident bishop's and the Conference Board of Ordained Ministry's respective authority and responsibilities under the Discipline of The United Methodist Church relating to candidates for ministry. We trust that the resident bishop and the Conference Board of Ordained Ministry will engage in the necessary due diligence in prayerfully making the decisions required by the Discipline on these matters.

30. There shall be a Board of Laity, as described in the *Book of Discipline* (§631), which shall be composed of the conference lay leader, the district lay leaders, the conference president of United Women in Faith (UWF), and one additional representative from the UWF, the conference president of United Methodist Men (UMM) and one additional representative from the UMM, the conference scouting coordinator and one additional representative from scouting, the conference director of Lay Servant Ministries (LSM), and one additional officer of LSM. The first elected lay delegate to general conference is a member of the Board of Laity as well. The conference committee on nominations will nominate to the Board of Laity additional at-large members to include two laymen, two laywomen, two young adults, two youth (if the Conference Youth or Young Adults reform as a group their two representatives would be selected from within those groups). Additionally, the following shall serve as ex-officio with voice but no vote: the presiding bishop, one cabinet representative, and the director of connectional ministries.
31. The conference lay leader shall be nominated by the Conference Board of Laity and elected by the annual conference at the time of quadrennial reorganization. Additional nominations may be made from the floor. The conference lay leader may serve no more than two succeeding quadrennia as the conference lay leader. All other officers within the Board of Laity shall be elected by the board. Vacancies in the office of conference lay leader shall be filled by nomination from the board in the interim, and confirmed at the following annual conference.
32. There shall be a Commission on Equitable Compensation as provided by the *Book of Discipline* (§625), composed of twelve members, six lay and six clergy, at least one clergy and one lay being from churches with fewer than 200 members. In addition, one superintendent named by the cabinet and a staff person from the fiscal office shall be members.
33. There shall be a Commission on Archives and History as provided by the *Book of Discipline* (§641). Eight members shall be elected by the annual conference at the beginning of each quadrennium for a term of four years. Ex-officio members with vote shall include a representative from Huntingdon College, the conference historian (unless receiving compensation), the president of the AWFC Historical Society, the resident bishop, and the conference secretary. The Archivist shall be an ex-officio member without vote. A chairperson, vice-chairperson, and recording secretary/financial secretary, shall be elected by the commission.
34. There shall be a Board of Pension and Health Benefits as provided by the *Book of Discipline* (§639), composed of eighteen members elected to 8-year

terms, arranged in four-year classes to include representatives of both lay and clergy of both sexes. The Joint Committee on Clergy Medical Leave shall be constituted as provided by the *Book of Discipline* (§652), with efforts made to be inclusive.

35. There shall be an Assembly Grounds Board of Trustees, constituted as authorized by a Corporation Charter from the State of Alabama, record of which can be found on page 112 of the 1958 *Journal* of our Annual Conference, and all amendments thereto. The current Articles of Incorporation and bylaws shall be available on the conference website.
36. There shall be a Council on Finance and Administration as provided by the *Book of Discipline* (§611), composed of eight lay, five clergy members, and the ex-officio members as specified in §612. Unless the following are otherwise reimbursed, the CFA shall pay from the Conference administrative budget the reasonable and relevant expenses (as set or approved by CFA) of: the conference secretary's office; expenses of the Council on Finance and Administration; all expenses of printing, honoraria, and incidental expenses connected with annual conference sessions; expenses of cabinet meetings; expenses of all conference agencies and special committees not participating in the conference benevolence budget; room and board at annual conference of agencies and special committees meeting with the Council on Finance and Administration for the purpose of making budget requests; honoraria of the conference secretary and assistant secretaries for annual conference, the registrar and assistants, the *Journal* editor; all expenses incurred by the *Journal* Editor in preparing/printing the *Book of Reports* and the conference *Journal*.
37. There shall be an Episcopal Residence Committee as provided by the *Book of Discipline* (§638), composed of the chairperson of the Committee on Episcopacy, the president of the Annual Conference Board of Trustees, the president of the Conference Council on Finance and Administration, and two at-large representatives selected by the bishop. Efforts shall be made to keep membership inclusive, and at least two members of this committee shall be women.

Resolutions and Petitions

A Resolution Encouraging AWF's Leaders to be Committed to the Future of The United Methodist Church

A Resolution Encouraging AWF's Leaders to be Committed to the Future of The United Methodist Church

WHEREAS, a number of United Methodist Churches in the Alabama-West Florida Conference are choosing to leave the United Methodist Church using paragraph 2553 which spells out a unique process for disaffiliation.

WHEREAS, a number of persons are choosing to leave the United Methodist Church because their local church is disaffiliating or through their own personal choice.

WHEREAS, we grieve the loss of every church and every person who opts to leave the Alabama-West Florida Conference of the United Methodist Church, and we wish them well and pray that their future will be fruitful.

WHEREAS, we appreciate and recognize that many of the churches, pastors, leaders and members departing have offered the very best of their prayers, presence, gifts, service, and witness, and we thank them for the difference they have made for the Kingdom of God.

WHEREAS, in this transitory time where the future of the United Methodist Church is being reshaped and reformed, it is important that those who are committed to the United Methodist Church are in the position to help shape its future.

WHEREAS, clergy and lay leaders whose call to discipleship is aligned with The United Methodist Church are currently prevented from fulfilling those calls by the continued leadership of those who have made private decisions and/or public declarations to leave The United Methodist Church.

THEREFORE LET IT BE RESOLVED that those who are not committed to the United Methodist Church and have decided to disaffiliate, withdraw their conference membership, or leave the United Methodist Church are requested to resign from any leadership position at the District or Conference level, whether elected or appointed, so that those who would like to stay United Methodist would be able to step into those leadership positions and help guide the United Methodist Church's bright future.

Respectfully submitted by:

Rev. Dr. Geoffrey Lentz, FUMC Pensacola, FL

Rev. Emily Kincaid, FUMC Pensacola, FL

Rev. Mark Stewart, Retired, Triune United Methodist Church, Triune, TN

Rev. Dr. Olivia Poole, St. Luke United Methodist Church,

Rev. Sara Shaver, First United Methodist Church, Brewton, AL
 John Eugene Lammers, Fairhope United Methodist Church, Fairhope, AL
 Rev. Gordon Charles Kendall, Retired
 Rev. Bill Curtin, Foley United Methodist Church, Foley, AL
 Jen Thurow, Auburn United Methodist Church, Auburn, AL
 Micheal Ard, First United Methodist Church, Monroeville, AL
 Rev. Dr. Rick Branch, First United Methodist Church, Pensacola, FL
 Rev. Michael von Keyserling, First United Methodist Church, Sneads, FL
 Rev. Alan Gantzhorn, First United Methodist Church, Eufaula, AL
 Rev. Dr. James Ralph Wooten, First United Methodist Church and South Clarke Charge, Jackson, AL
 Rev. Andy Gartman, First United Methodist Church, Atmore, AL
 Lisbeth Ash, First United Methodist Church Sneads, FL
 Nathan Dickson
 Rev. Kathy Fisher, Whitfield Memorial United Methodist Church, Montgomery, AL
 Rev. Dana P. Brady, St. Luke United Methodist Church, Pensacola, FL
 Anne G. Searcy, First United Methodist Church, Montgomery, AL
 Rev. Tammy McMillan, Stapleton United Methodist Church, Stapleton, AL
 Gayle Thomas, First United Methodist Church, Dothan, AL; Dothan District Lay Leader
 Bill Ellis, First United Methodist Church, Montgomery, AL
 Beverly Ellis, First United Methodist Church, Montgomery, AL
 Tom Turley, First United Methodist Church, Montgomery, AL
 Laura Young Palmer, Auburn United Methodist Church, Auburn, AL
 Rev. Diane B. Everette, Church Street United Methodist Church, Selma, AL
 Donell L. Seager, First United Methodist Church, Pensacola, FL
 Paula M Turley, First United Methodist Church, Montgomery, AL
 Dr. Holly Morales, Chatom United Methodist Church, Chatom, AL
 Bradley Moody, First United Methodist Church Montgomery, AL
 Rev. Pam Barnhardt, First United Methodist Church, Monroeville, AL
 Denise McLeod, Cokesbury United Methodist Church, Pensacola, FL
 Sarah McWilliams, First United Methodist Church, Montgomery, AL
 Rev. Ed Glaize, Boone United Methodist Church, Boone, NC
 Paul E. Grisham, Auburn United Methodist Church, Auburn, AL
 Larry Fillmer, Auburn United Methodist Church, Auburn, AL
 Lynne Thrower, First United Methodist Church, Montgomery, AL
 Marcia Wheat, Aldersgate United Methodist Church, Montgomery, AL
 Chris J. Beam, St. Paul United Methodist Church
 Samuel Stanfield, First United Methodist Church, Dothan, AL
 Martin H. Thompson, III, First United Methodist Church Pensacola, FL
 Rev. Dr. Hunter Pugh, Brantley Charge, Brantley, AL
 Daniel Asher Carmichael, Spanish Fort United Methodist Church, Spanish Fort, AL
 Patti Gibson, Auburn United Methodist Church, Auburn, AL
 Karla Jan Jackson, First United Methodist Church, Dothan, AL
 Rev. Rebecca W. Rutherford, Restoration United Methodist Church, Cottondale, FL
 Bernadette Hackett, Port St. Joe United Methodist Church, Port St. Joe, FL
 Steve Wheat, Aldersgate United Methodist Church, Montgomery, AL
 Rev. Leonard H. Shults, Retired
 Sandra Carmichael, Spanish Fort United Methodist Church, Spanish Fort, AL
 Susan Cooper, First United Methodist Church, Montgomery, AL
 James M. Young, Trinity United Methodist Church, Fort Walton Beach, FL
 Rev. Robert McMillan, Stapleton United Methodist Church, Stapleton, AL
 John R. Wible, First United Methodist Church, Montgomery, AL
 Sue H. McInnish, First United Methodist Church, Montgomery, AL
 Sandra Hoffman, Perdido Bay United Methodist Church, Perdido Key, FL
 Ann Scott, AWFC
 Steven Christensen, Fairhope United Methodist Church, Fairhope, AL
 Patricia Burgess, Alaqua United Methodist Church
 Eleanor Upchurch Lucas, First United Methodist Church, Montgomery, AL

Joscelyne Cutchens, First United Methodist Church, Montgomery, AL
 Rev. Fred Eugene Ziegler, Jr., Retired, First United Methodist Church, Montgomery, AL
 Rev. Jeremy Steele, University of South Alabama Wesley Foundation
 Pat Luna, Point Washington United Methodist Church, Santa Rosa Beach, FL
 Rev. Dr. Jay Cooper, First United Methodist Church, Montgomery, AL
 Rev. Mark Lilly, Open Door United Methodist Church, Pace, FL
 Suzan Christensen, Fairhope United Methodist Church, Fairhope, AL
 Betty Fields Copeland, First United Methodist Church, Montgomery, AL
 Aimee Beauchamp Steineker, First United Methodist Church, Montgomery, AL
 Troy Cutchens, First United Methodist Church, Montgomery, AL
 Joe Davis, Auburn United Methodist Church, Auburn, AL
 Lynne Burford, First United Methodist Church, Montgomery, AL
 Elisabeth Fletcher Lubin, First United Methodist Church, Montgomery, AL
 Rev. Amy Persons, Point Washington United Methodist Church, Santa Rosa Beach, FL
 Robin Pass, First United Methodist Church, Montgomery, AL
 Michelle Condon, First United Methodist Church, Montgomery, AL
 Rev. Cory Smith, Auburn United Methodist Church, Auburn, AL
 Kim Ford, Auburn United Methodist Church, Auburn, AL
 Cathie Wilbourne, First United Methodist Church, Eufaula, AL
 Erma Cook Head, First United Methodist Church, Montgomery, AL
 Rev. Sheila Bates, Impact Church
 Kailey Elizabeth Smith, Lottie United Methodist Church, Perdido United Methodist Church
 Rev. Dr. Lance Moore, Foley United Methodist Church
 Darrin Isaac, Point Washington United Methodist Church, Santa Rosa Beach, FL
 Steven H. Christensen, Fairhope United Methodist Church, Fairhope, AL
 Ronald A. Head, First United Methodist Church, Montgomery, AL
 Barbara Helms, Auburn United Methodist Church, Auburn, AL
 Susan Davis, First United Methodist Church, Montgomery, AL
 Gretchen McCorquodale, First United Methodist Church, Jackson, AL
 Gaines McCorquodale, First United Methodist Church, Jackson, AL
 Sherry H. Lina, First United Methodist Church, Montgomery, AL
 Janet Wooten, First United Methodist Church, Jackson, AL
 Katherine Blanton, First United Methodist Church, Montgomery, AL
 Julie Terrell, Mt. Zion United Methodist Church East, Andalusia, AL
 Kevin Blanton, First United Methodist Church, Montgomery, AL
 Mary S. Dunn, First United Methodist Church, Montgomery, AL
 Sue Loftis, First United Methodist Church, Montgomery, AL
 Megan Burton, Auburn United Methodist Church, Auburn, AL
 Erin Bevis, Thomasville United Methodist Church, Thomasville, AL
 Danna Strickland, First United Methodist Church, Montgomery, AL
 Betty Eddins, First United Methodist Church, DeFuniak Springs, FL
 Julia Hastings Azar, First United Methodist Church, Montgomery, AL
 Kylie McLeod, Cokesbury United Methodist Church, Pensacola, FL
 Rev. Jim DuFriend, Retired, Creel Chapel United Methodist Church, Jackson, AL
 Brad Norris, First United Methodist Church, Montgomery, AL
 Sam Parkes, Mary Esther United Methodist Church, Mary Esther, FL
 Linda N. Eley, First United Methodist Church, Montgomery, AL
 William S. Eley II, First United Methodist Church, Montgomery, AL
 Rev. Dave Marnell, Jubilee Shores United Methodist Church, Fairhope, AL
 Rev. Kelli Hitchman-Craig, Auburn United Methodist Church, Auburn, AL
 John Sechrist, Auburn United Methodist Church, Auburn, AL
 Rev. Matthew Jordan, Wesley Chapel United Methodist Church, Enterprise, AL
 Rev. Julie Hare, Auburn United Methodist Church, Auburn, AL
 Rev. Cheryl Stevenson, St. Paul Eutaw/Jackson Chapel/St. Matthew United Methodist Churches
 Chase McKoon, Trinity United Methodist Church, Phenix City, AL
 Mary Catherine Phillips, First United Methodist Church, Montgomery, AL
 Trent Ernest, St. Luke United Methodist Church, Enterprise, AL

Susan Crane Nunnely, Auburn United Methodist Church, Auburn, AL
 Rev. Cherie Meadows, Brewersville United Methodist Church, Brewersville, AL
 John I. Baxter, Dauphin Way United Methodist Church, Mobile, AL
 Kimi Oaks, Dauphin Way United Methodist Church, Mobile, AL
 Ellen Jane Cavin, Auburn United Methodist Church, Auburn, AL
 Allen Oaks, Dauphin Way United Methodist Church, Mobile, AL
 Rev. Sean Peters, First United Methodist Church, Dothan, AL
 Rev. Barbara Brewi, Mt. Zion East United Methodist Church, Andalusia, AL
 Rev. Dr. Darren M. McClellan, Fairhope United Methodist Church, Fairhope, AL
 Sonny Dawsey, Auburn United Methodist Church, Auburn, AL
 Rev. Cheryl Bray Sirotta, First United Methodist Church, Pensacola, FL
 Mary Tyler Ashe, First United Methodist Church, Montgomery, AL
 Rev. George Damon Nolin, Retired
 Ronnie Poole, First United Methodist Church, Montgomery, AL
 Linda Poole, First United Methodist Church, Montgomery, AL
 Debbie Bracewell, First United Methodist Church, Enterprise, AL
 Jana Whealdon, Auburn United Methodist Church, Auburn, AL
 Tara Sinco, First United Methodist Church, Montgomery, AL
 Starling Grisham, Auburn United Methodist Church, Auburn, AL
 Rev. Nancy A Pugh, Whitfield United Methodist Church, Montgomery, AL
 Rev. Christopher D. Walker, Frisco City United Methodist Church, Frisco City, AL
 Thomas Claude Tankersley, First United Methodist Church, Montgomery, AL
 Elizabeth Couey Smithart, First United Methodist Church, Union Springs, AL
 Jane Marion Eckman Dunkelberger, Auburn United Methodist Church, Auburn, AL
 Linda R McLemore, First United Methodist Church, Montgomery, AL
 Diane L. Buckner, First United Methodist Church, Montgomery, AL
 Carole Bishop Lee, First United Methodist Church, Dothan, AL
 Janis Johnson, First United Methodist Church, Bonifay, FL
 Jean S. Tribble, Aldersgate United Methodist Church, Montgomery, AL
 Rev. Lynn Smilie Nesbitt, First United Methodist Church, Dothan, AL
 Betty Stone, Dauphin Way United Methodist Church, Mobile, AL
 James R, Dahlman, Gulf Shores United Methodist Church, Gulf Shores, AL
 Florine Leath, Auburn United Methodist Church, Auburn, AL
 Rev. Jack Allen, Providence United Methodist Church, Spanish Fort, AL
 Rev. Janet K. Lee, Century United Methodist Church, Pike Road, AL
 Rev. R. Neil McDavid, Retired
 Judith B. Canteley, Aldersgate United Methodist Church, Montgomery, AL
 Mona LaBranche, St. Luke United Methodist Church, Pensacola, FL
 Katherine Lai Alford, Trinity United Methodist Church, Fort Walton Beach, FL
 Jill Lowma, First United Methodist Church, Clanton, AL
 Rev. Dr. Mark LaBranche, Retired
 Reverend Curtis R. Smith, Retired
 Jeb Hunt, First United Methodist Church, Pensacola, FL
 Dr. Tamara A. Marsh, Port St. Joe United Methodist Church, Port St. Joe, FL
 Georgia Beaty, Auburn United Methodist Church, Auburn, AL
 Karen K. Thompson, First United Methodist Church, Pensacola, FL
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A Resolution Affirming the Doctrinal Standards of the United Methodist Church

WHEREAS during this time of upheaval in the United Methodist Church over disaffiliation there have been assertions that those remaining in the United Methodist Church plan to change the doctrinal standards of the United Methodist Church, and

WHEREAS these assertions are false. There have been no attempts to modify or change the doctrinal standards of the United Methodist Church. The historic doctrinal statements, contained in *The Book of Discipline* and listed in the Articles of Religion are foundational to our faith.

WHEREAS “the church is a community of all true believers under the Lordship of Christ,” and

WHEREAS “the church of Jesus Christ exists in and for the world, and its very dividedness is a hindrance to its mission in that world,” and

WHEREAS, the United Methodist Church and its predecessors has held in common its Articles of Religion since 1784;

WHEREAS, “The General Conference shall not revoke, alter, or change our Articles of Religion or establish any new standards or rules of doctrine contrary to our present existing and established standards of doctrine,”

THEREFORE be it resolved that the Alabama-West Florida Conference does hereby reaffirm our commitment to uphold the historic Articles of Religion and Doctrinal Standards included in our *Book of Discipline*, including the following:

1. “With Christians of other communions we confess belief in the Triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This confession embraces the biblical witness to God’s activity in creation, encompasses God’s gracious self-involvement in the dramas of history, and anticipates the consummation of God’s reign.”
2. “We hold in common with all Christians a faith in the mystery of salvation in and through Jesus Christ.”
3. “We share the Christian belief that God’s redemptive love is realized in human life by the activity of the Holy Spirit, both in personal experience and in the community of believers. This community is the church, which the Spirit has brought into existence for the healing of the nations.”
4. “We understand ourselves to be part of Christ’s universal church when by adoration, proclamation, and service we become conformed to Christ. We are initiated and incorporated into this community of faith by baptism,

¹ *Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church, 2016, Preamble to the Constitution.*

² *Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church, 2016, Preamble to the Constitution.*

³ *Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church, 2016, ¶17 Article I.*

⁴ *Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church, 2016, ¶102*

receiving the promise of the Spirit that re-creates and transforms us. Through the regular celebration of Holy Communion, we participate in the risen presence of Jesus Christ and are thereby nourished for faithful discipleship.”

5. “With other Christians we recognize that the reign of God is both a present and future reality. The church is called to be that place where the first signs of the reign of God are identified and acknowledged in the world.”
6. “We share with many Christian communions a recognition of the authority of Scripture in matters of faith, the confession that our justification as sinners is by grace through faith, and the sober realization that the church is in need of continual reformation and renewal.”
7. “Article V: Of the Sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures for Salvation: The Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation; so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man...” Scripture is primary, revealing the Word of God “so far as it is necessary for our salvation.”
8. “With other Christians, we declare the essential oneness of the church in Christ Jesus. This rich heritage of shared Christian belief finds expression in our hymnody and liturgies. Our unity is affirmed in the historic creeds as we confess one holy, catholic, and apostolic church.”

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Alabama-West Florida Conference does hereby reaffirm our commitment to the faith contained in the Apostles’ Creed, which many of our churches confess each time they gather for worship:

“I believe in God, the Father Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth;

And in Jesus Christ his only Son, our Lord;
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, dead, and buried;
the third day he rose from the dead;
he ascended into heaven,
and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty;
from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,

⁵ *Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church, 2016, ¶102.*

⁶ *Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church, 2016, ¶102.*

⁷ *Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church, 2016, ¶102.*

⁸ *Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church, 2016, ¶102.*

⁹ *Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church, 2016, ¶102.*

¹⁰ *Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church, 2016, ¶104.*

¹¹ *Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church, 2016, ¶105.*

¹² *Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church, 2016, ¶102.*

the communion of saints,
 the forgiveness of sins,
 the resurrection of the body,
 and the life everlasting. Amen.”

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 Debbie Bracewell, First United Methodist Church, Enterprise, AL
 Jana Whealdon, Auburn United Methodist Church, Auburn, AL
 Tara Sinco, First United Methodist Church, Montgomery, AL
 Starling Grisham, Auburn United Methodist Church, Auburn, AL
 Rev. Nancy A Pugh, Whitfield United Methodist Church, Montgomery, AL
 Rev. Christopher D. Walker, Frisco City United Methodist Church, Frisco City, AL
 Thomas Claude Tankersley, First United Methodist Church, Montgomery, AL
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 Jane Marion Eckman Dunkelberger, Auburn United Methodist Church, Auburn, AL
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 Diane L. Buckner, First United Methodist Church, Montgomery, AL
 Carole Bishop Lee, First United Methodist Church, Dothan, AL
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A Resolution on Supporting Bishop Graves' Letter "This is Not a Business Deal"

WHEREAS some members of our annual conference have put pressure on their local churches to disaffiliate from the United Methodist Church for reasons unrelated to the disagreement over full inclusion of LGBTQ persons in the life of the church, and

WHEREAS it is the responsibility of the members of the annual conference and its leaders to ensure that the disaffiliation process, put into place by the General Conference 2019 and our conference board of trustees, is carried out with integrity and grace, and

WHEREAS we, the undersigned, have observed that many local churches have been misled about the disaffiliation process and have been presented with information about the process, and about The United Methodist Church and its leadership that is factually incorrect, defamatory, and completely unrelated to the only valid reason a church would be eligible for disaffiliation, and

WHEREAS our Bishop has clearly stated in his letter to the Annual Conference on January 10, 2023 that, "If this is a business deal for you, then I ask you to please do some soul searching and reflect on your motivations,"

THEREFORE be it resolved that the Alabama-West Florida Conference affirms Bishop Graves' leadership on this matter and denounces the actions of any individual who seeks to lead or pressure a local church into disaffiliation for any reason, other than that given in ¶ 2553, "for reasons of conscience regarding a change in the requirements and provisions of the *Book of Discipline* related to the practice of homosexuality or the ordination or marriage of self avowed practicing homosexuals as resolved and adopted by the 2019 General Conference, or the actions or inactions of its annual conference related to these issues which follow."

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 Rev. Cheryl Bray Sirota, First United Methodist Church, Pensacola, FL
 Mary Tyler Ashe, First United Methodist Church, Montgomery, AL
 Rev. George Damon Nolin, Retired
 Ronnie Poole, First United Methodist Church, Montgomery, AL
 Linda Poole, First United Methodist Church, Montgomery, AL
 Debbie Bracewell, First United Methodist Church, Enterprise, AL
 Jana Whealdon, Auburn United Methodist Church, Auburn, AL

Tara Sinco, First United Methodist Church, Montgomery, AL
 Starling Grisham, Auburn United Methodist Church, Auburn, AL
 Rev. Nancy A Pugh, Whitfield United Methodist Church, Montgomery, AL
 Rev. Christopher D. Walker, Frisco City United Methodist Church, Frisco City, AL
 Thomas Claude Tankersley, First United Methodist Church, Montgomery, AL
 Elizabeth Couey Smithart, First United Methodist Church, Union Springs, AL
 Jane Marion Eckman Dunkelberger, Auburn United Methodist Church, Auburn, AL
 Linda R McLemore, First United Methodist Church, Montgomery, AL
 Diane L. Buckner, First United Methodist Church, Montgomery, AL
 Carole Bishop Lee, First United Methodist Church, Dothan, AL
 Janis Johnson, First United Methodist Church, Bonifay, FL
 Jean S. Tribble, Aldersgate United Methodist Church, Montgomery, AL
 Rev. Lynn Smilie Nesbitt, First United Methodist Church, Dothan, AL
 Betty Stone, Dauphin Way United Methodist Church, Mobile, AL
 James R, Dahlman, Gulf Shores United Methodist Church, Gulf Shores, AL
 Florine Leath, Auburn United Methodist Church, Auburn, AL
 Rev. Jack Allen, Providence United Methodist Church, Spanish Fort, AL
 Rev. Janet K. Lee, Century United Methodist Church, Pike Road, AL
 Rev. R. Neil McDavid, Retired
 Judith B. Cantey, Aldersgate United Methodist Church, Montgomery, AL
 Mona LaBranche, St. Luke United Methodist Church, Pensacola, FL
 Katherine Lai Alford, Trinity United Methodist Church, Fort Walton Beach, FL
 Jill Lowma, First United Methodist Church, Clanton, AL
 Rev. Dr. Mark LaBranche, Retired
 Gretchen McCorquodale, First United Methodist Church, Jackson, AL
 Reverend Curtis R. Smith, Retired
 Jeb Hunt, First United Methodist Church, Pensacola, FL
 Dr. Tamara A. Marsh, Port St. Joe United Methodist Church, Port St. Joe, FL
 Georgia Beaty, Auburn United Methodist Church, Auburn, AL
 Karen K. Thompson, First United Methodist Church, Pensacola, FL
 Charles Michael McInnish, First United Methodist Church, Montgomery, AL
 William Davis, First United Methodist Church, Montgomery, AL
 Carol Beede, Cokesbury United Methodist Church, Pensacola, FL
 Rev. Dr. Timothy R. Trent, Retired, First United Methodist Church, Andalusia, AL
 Steven C. Pearson, Fairhope United Methodist Church, Fairhope, AL
 Kristi McClellan, Fairhope United Methodist Church, Fairhope, AL
 Douglas Scally, Cokesbury United Methodist Church, Pensacola, FL
 Frances B Wilkinson, Cokesbury United Methodist Church, Pensacola, FL
 Shirley Bean, Cokesbury United Methodist Church, Pensacola, FL
 Susan Bess, First United Methodist Church, Montgomery, AL
 William Robbins Sims, Retired
 Addie Fuller Adams, Auburn United Methodist Church, Auburn, AL
 Chris McCain, First United Methodist Church, Prattville, AL
 Mina Colon, Cokesbury United Methodist Church, Pensacola, FL
 Rev. Ashley Wilkinson Meyer, Cokesbury United Methodist Church, Pensacola, FL
 Jim Roby, First United Methodist Church, Montgomery, AL
 Libba Roby, First United Methodist Church, Montgomery, AL
 Mary Sue Tilcock, Mt. Zion East United Methodist Church, Andalusia, AL
 William Steverson, Mt. Zion East United Methodist Church, Andalusia, AL
 Lesley Cooper, First United Methodist Church, Montgomery, AL
 James Robert Cooper Jr., First United Methodist Church, Montgomery, AL
 Rev. William E. Elwell, First United Methodist Church, Demopolis, AL
 Debbie Elwell, First United Methodist Church, Demopolis, AL
 Betty Helms, First United Methodist Church, Dothan, AL
 Rev. Cheryl Hinnen, Richards Memorial United Methodist Church, Pensacola, FL
 Rev. Dr. Ebb Hagan, Trinity United Methodist Church, Fort Walton Beach, FL
 Janelle Faulkner, First United Methodist Church, Montgomery, AL

Cynthia Wilson, First United Methodist Church, Montgomery, AL
Tom Sexton, First United Methodist Church, Montgomery, AL
Dave G. Borden, First United Methodist Church, Montgomery, AL
Geraldine Stiffler, Foley United Methodist Church, Foley, AL
Thomas Earl Harrison, First United Methodist Church, Dothan, AL
Jack Hinnen, Gadsden Street United Methodist Church, Pensacola, FL
Steve Mashburn, First United Methodist Church, Montgomery, AL
Clara J Ester, Toulminville-Warren Street United Methodist Church, Mobile, AL
Cynthia McDavid, Point Washington United Methodist Church, Santa Rosa Beach, FL
Rev. Spencer Turnipseed, Goshen Charge
Benjamin Ferris Oakley, Jr., Pine Grove United Methodist Church, Leroy, AL
Rev. Margaret Smith Perelli, Retired
Rev. Dr. Jason Thrower, First United Methodist Church, Ozark, AL
Rev. Melanie Sebastian Foust, First United Methodist Church, Ozark, AL
Carolyn Witten, Port St. Joe United Methodist, Port St. Joe, FL
Patsy Powell, Point Washington United Methodist Church, Santa Rosa Beach, FL
Dawn Wiggins Hare, First United Methodist Church, Monroeville, AL
John Hagood, First United Methodist Church, Montgomery, AL
Margaret Ann Griffin, Perdido Bay United Methodist Church, Perdido Bay, FL
Abigail Hagood, First United Methodist Church, Montgomery, AL
Ed Teifenberg, First United Methodist Church, Montgomery, AL
Rev. Chip Hale, Retired, St. Paul United Methodist Church, Gulf Breeze, FL

A Resolution on AWF New Thing Challenge

WHEREAS, in Isaiah 43:19 The Lord says, “See, I, the Lord, am doing a new thing.”

WHEREAS, in Revelation 21:5 Jesus says, “See, I am making all things new.”

WHEREAS, Christ is giving us a once-in-a-generation opportunity and calling us in this decisive moment in the history of The United Methodist Church to do new things that “make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.”

WHEREAS, the Alabama-West Florida Conference task force on church planting and revitalization was tasked by Bishop David Graves to make proposals to the Annual Conference toward Church revitalization.

WHEREAS, the Alabama-West Florida Conference, adopted a plan to start “new things” throughout the Conference using regional developers to jump-start new communities of faith, that provides opportunities to incorporate displaced committed United Methodist and welcome new professions of faith.

THEREFORE, be it resolved that the Alabama-West Florida Conference of The United Methodist Church join in God’s activity in Christ Jesus to make all things new by challenging each of its churches to be actively involved in doing a “new thing” in the next year. The goal of the “new thing” is to fulfill our mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. It can be any ministry, program or campaign that causes the congregation to listen more fully to their neighbors, meet the needs of their neighborhoods, and reach new groups of persons with the gospel. We invite the sharing of best practices by each congregation to help foster better evangelism across the Conference.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that each local congregation of the Alabama-West Florida Conference makes a special effort to intentionally welcome United Methodist members who are displaced from disaffiliating churches, inviting these new members into the full fellowship of faith.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that each local congregation of the Alabama-West Florida Conference find at least one way to help the new United Methodist church plants or fresh expressions in their region by offering space, mission funds, volunteers, spiritual support, and other resources.

Submitted by

The Alabama West Florida Conference Task Force on Church Planting and Revitalization

The Rev. Dr. Geoffrey Lentz, chair

The Rev. Dr. Jay Cooper

Deaconess Celeste Eubanks, Director of Connectional Ministries

The Rev. Richard Williams

The Rev. Christina Shaver

Pat Luna

The Rev. Bill Elwell

The Rev. Nathan Attwood

The Rev. Jean Tippit

Resolution for Education and Equity in the Legislative Process within the Alabama-West Florida Conference of the United Methodist Church

WHEREAS, the 2022 report from the Alabama-West Florida (AWF) Commission on the Status and Role of Women (COSROW) Monitoring Committee revealed evidence of gender, race, and age disparities among those participating in the legislative process from the floor of the 2022 AWF Annual Conference session.

WHEREAS, ¶ 4, Section IV and ¶ 140 of *The United Methodist Book of Discipline* charge the United Methodist Church, in all their work, to strive for inclusiveness. This task is both theological and practical in its nature. Our work as United Methodists must never “be structured so as to exclude any member or any constituent body of the Church because of race, color, national origin, status or economic condition” (¶4). Additionally, it mandates “involvement of all persons who meet the requirements of *The United Methodist Book of Discipline* in the membership and leadership of the Church at any level and in every place” (¶140).

WHEREAS, ¶ 604 of *The United Methodist Book of Discipline* outlines the work of the Annual Conference, which should pay special attention to the responsibility to carry out our work in such a way that discrimination is eliminated. It reads: “The annual conference, for its own government, may adopt rules and regulations not in conflict with the *Discipline* of The United Methodist Church, provided that in exercise of its powers, each annual conference shall act in all respects in harmony with the policy of The United Methodist Church with respect to elimination of discrimination.” (See also Judicial Council Decisions 43, 74, 141, 318, 367, 373, 432, 435, 476, 536, 584, 590, 592, 699, 876, 1198.)

WHEREAS, ¶ 2101, 2102, 2103.1, 2103.2, 2103.4, 2103.10 of the *Discipline* outline the work of COSROW, which includes a responsibility to “challenge The United Methodist Church, including its general agencies, institutions, and connectional structures, to a continuing commitment to the full and equal responsibility and participation of women in the total life and mission of the Church, sharing fully in the power and in the policy-making at all levels of the Church’s life” which includes “inclusiveness in the programmatic and administrative functioning of The United Methodist Church” (¶ 2102).

WHEREAS, the work of COSROW is intersectional in its nature and includes the sacred responsibility of “safeguarding representation and participation” for not just women, but also “racial and ethnic groups” (¶2103.1).

WHEREAS, the 2022 Monitoring Report of the AWF COSROW indicated non-inclusion of persons of color, women, and young people in our legislative process, thus denying involvement of these groups at every level while also blocking their ability to share fully in power and policy-making within the Church’s life. These findings sit in conflict with our disciplinary commitments

and responsibilities outlined in ¶4, 140, 604, 2101, 2102, 2103.

WHEREAS, we are people who have committed to uphold the *Discipline*, we must act to move towards alignment with and submission to the aforementioned paragraphs.

WHEREAS, the Committee would like to make clear that the non-inclusion in question is not a result of any negligence or malfeasance by the Presiding Bishop or other presiding officers. Gaps in inclusion were noted in actions from the floor of the Conference. Those who wrote legislation, spoke for or against a resolution, rose in favor/against nominations, and those who presented motions, amendments, questions, and points of order during work sessions were overwhelmingly male, white, and over 45 years of age.

WHEREAS, it is the opinion of the Committee that one of the major contributing factors surrounding our present lack of inclusion and involvement by lay persons, persons of color, women, and young people is a result of a lack of education and empowerment around parliamentary procedure and legislative process.

Be it resolved, that the Alabama-West Florida Conference implement intentional and easily accessible education about parliamentary procedure, legislative process, and Roberts' Rules of Order at the start of each Annual Conference. It is the recommendation of the Monitoring Committee Chair that the Conference Parliamentarian, or any other qualified individual, open the first in-person clergy and lay business session of the Annual Conference with a yearly education piece. The Committee requests that the Annual Conference makes any parliamentary procedure education sessions also available online. It is our belief that annual education will equip, empower, and inspire more delegates to participate in the legislative process, thus, bringing the Alabama-West Florida Annual Conference into compliance with our disciplinary standards of inclusion and access.

Sponsors of the Resolution:

Rev. Kelli Hitchman-Craig
AWF COSROW Monitoring Chair
Auburn UMC, Auburn, AL

Rev. Chelsey Brown
Co-Chair of AWF COSROW
Associate Pastor
First United Methodist Church of Port St. Joe, FL

Rev. Kristin Curtis Wright
Ashland Place UMC, Mobile, AL

Julia Norton
Auburn UMC

Dawn Wiggins Hare

Petitions

Suggested Title: Qualification for Ordination

Discipline ¶ 304.5

General Church Budget Implications: None

Context of Petition: Amend ¶ 304.5

5. In all votes regarding license, ordination, or conference membership, the requirements set forth herein are recommended as minimum requirements. Each person voting is expected to vote prayerfully based on personal judgment of the applicant's gifts, evidence of God's grace, and promise of future usefulness for the mission of the church. ~~The District Committee on Ordained Ministry and the Board of Ordained Ministry shall not approve or recommend any person for candidacy, licensing, commissioning, or ordination that does not meet the qualifications of ¶304.1-3, based on the full examination and thorough inquiry into the person's fitness by the committee and board (see Judicial Council Decisions 1343 and 1344). The bishop presiding in the clergy session shall rule any such unqualified candidate out of order and not eligible to be acted upon.~~

Rationale:

Amending ¶ 304.5 creates consistency with ¶ 304.4 which states "The United Methodist Church entrusts those persons who are in the ordained ministry with the primary responsibility for maintaining standards of education and preparation for ordination." The setting of minimum requirements by the General Conference contravenes ¶ 33, Article II of The Constitution of The United Methodist Church, which reads, "The annual conference is the basic body in the Church and as such shall have reserved to it the right to vote on... all matters relating to the character and conference relations of its clergy members, and on the ordination of clergy and other rights as have not been delegated to the General Conference under the Constitution..." The presiding bishop is not a member of the District Committee on Ministry in a district of an annual conference, nor is the bishop a member of the Conference Board of Ordained Ministry and by rendering a decision on a candidate recommended by either the District Committee on Ministry or the Conference Board of Ministry ultimately results in the presiding bishop usurping the rightful authority of the District Committee on Ministry and the Conference Board of Ministry, as well as the clergy session of the Annual Conference, as to determine candidates for licensing, ordination, or conference membership on behalf of the Annual Conference.

Date: February 15, 2023

Jeremy Pridgeon

Elder, Alabama-West Florida Conference

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Suggested Title: Organization of an Order*Discipline ¶ 308*

General Church Budget Implications: None

Global Implications: None

Context of Petition: Amend ¶ 308

The bishop chairperson shall convene and provide...

Rationale:

The petition allows for the chairperson of the Order of Elders and the Order of Deacons the power to convene their respective orders. While the resident bishop is an ordained elder, the resident bishop is not a member of the Annual Conference, but rather a member of their respective College of Bishops. This change enables the chairperson to gather the order at such times and places as is deemed necessary, within the purposes of an Order, as outlined in ¶307.

February 15, 2023

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Suggested Title: License for Pastoral Ministry*Discipline* ¶ 315.2c and 315.5

General Church Budget Implications: None

Global Implications: None

Context of Petition: Amend ¶ 315.2c and 315.5

315.2c The studies for the license as a local pastor as prescribed and supervised by the ~~Division of Ordained Ministry~~ Conference Board of Ordained Ministry or one-third of their work for a Master of Divinity degree at a school of theology ~~listed by the University Senate~~ approved by the Conference Board of Ordained Ministry.

315.5 Licensed or ordained clergy from other denominations who have training equivalent to the studies for license as a local pastor prescribed by the ~~Division of Ordained Ministry~~ Conference Board of Ordained Ministry, but do not meet the educational requirements for provisional membership in the annual conference.

Rationale:

The petition would allow for the Conference Board of Ministry to prescribe and supervise the studies for those seeking to be licensed for pastoral ministry in the respective annual conferences. The change would allow for a contextual approach to ministry, providing each annual conference with flexibility as it relates to the training of their clergy.

February 15, 2023

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Suggested Title: Categories for Local Pastor

Discipline ¶ 318.1c (i), 318.1c (ii), 318.1c (iii), 318.2d (ii), 318.2d (iii), 318.3, 318.4

General Church Budget Implications: None

Global Implications: None

Context of Petition: Amend ¶ 318.1c (i), 318.1c (ii), 318.1c (iii), 318.2d (i), 318.2d (ii), 318.2d (iii), 318.3, 318.4

318.1 (c) who, unless they have completed Course of Study or other approved theological education, shall ~~(i) complete four courses per year in a Course of Study school, or (ii) shall~~ (i) have made progress in the correspondence curriculum prescribed by the ~~General Board of Higher Education and Ministry~~ Conference Board of Ordained Ministry or ~~(iii)~~ (ii) be enrolled as a pre-theological or theological student in a college, university, or school of theology approved by the ~~University Senate~~ Conference Board of Ordained Ministry; (d) who, when they have completed the Course of Study or a Master of Divinity degree from a seminary ~~listed by the University Senate~~ approved by the Conference Board of Ministry, are involved in continuing education (¶ 351); (e) who shall not be enrolled as a full-time student in any school.

318.2d shall (i) ~~complete two courses per year in a Course of Study school, or (ii)~~ have made progress in the correspondence curriculum prescribed by the ~~General Board of Higher Education and Ministry~~ Conference Board of Ordained Ministry or ~~(iii)~~ (ii) be enrolled as a pre-theological or theological student in a college, university, or school of theology approved by the ~~University Senate~~ Conference Board of Ordained Ministry.

Rationale:

The petition would allow for the Conference Board of Ministry to prescribe and supervise the studies for those seeking to be licensed for pastoral ministry in the respective annual conferences. The change would allow for a contextual approach to ministry, providing each annual conference with flexibility as it relates to the training of their clergy.

February 15, 2023

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Suggested Title: Requirements for Election as Associate Members*Discipline* ¶ 322.1 (4) and (5)

General Church Budget Implications: None

Global Implications: None

Context of Petition: Amend ¶ 322.1 (4) and (5)

322.1 (4) completed the Course of Study in addition to the studies for license as a local pastor, up to one half of which may be taken by correspondence or online / distance learning courses, or received a Master of Divinity degree that ~~includes the basic graduate theological studies from a school of theology listed by the University Senate~~ is approved by the Conference Board of Ministry and (5) complete a minimum of sixty semester hours toward the Bachelor of Arts or an equivalent degree in a college or university ~~listed by the University Senate~~ approved by the Conference Board of Ministry.

Rationale:

The petition would allow for the Conference Board of Ministry to make a determination of whether to approve undergraduate coursework for those seeking election as Associate Members. The change would allow for a contextual approach to ministry, providing each annual conference with flexibility as it relates to the training and credentialing of their clergy.

February 15, 2023

Jeremy Pridgeon

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Suggested Title: Qualifications for Election to Provisional Membership*Discipline ¶ 324*

General Church Budget Implications: None

Global Implications: None

Context of Petition: Amend ¶ 324

324. Qualifications for Election to Provisional Membership – A person shall be eligible for election to provisional membership in the annual conference by vote of the clergy session on recommendation of its Board of Ministry after meeting the following qualifications.

1. **Candidacy Requirement:** Each candidate shall have been a certified candidate for provisional membership for at least one year and no more than twelve years.
2. **Service Requirements:** Each candidate shall have demonstrated his or her gifts for ministries of service and leadership to the satisfaction of the district committee on ordained ministry as a condition for provisional membership.
3. **Undergraduate Educational Requirements:** A candidate for provisional membership shall have completed a bachelor's degree from a college or university recognized by the University Senate Conference Board of Ordained Ministry. Exceptions to the undergraduate degree requirements may be made by the Conference Board of Ordained Ministry in consultation with the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, in some instances, for missional purposes, for persons who have a minimum of sixty semester hours of Bachelor of Arts credit and
 - a) ~~have been prevented from pursuit of the normal course of baccalaureate education;~~
 - b) ~~are members of a group whose cultural practices and training enhance insight and skills for effective ministry not available through conventional formal education, or~~
 - c) ~~have graduated with a bachelor's degree or its equivalent from a college not recognized by the University Senate and have completed one half of the studies of the Master of Divinity or equivalent first professional degree in a school of theology listed by the University Senate.~~
4. **Graduate Requirements Educational Recommendations**
 - a) Candidates for deacon or elder shall be recommended to have completed one-half of the basic graduate theological studies in the Christian faith. These courses may be included within or in addition to a seminary degree. These basic graduate theological studies ~~must~~ are recommended to include courses in Old Testament; New Testament; theology; church history; mission of the church in the world; evangelism; worship/liturgy; and United

Methodist doctrine, polity and history.

- b) a candidate for ordination as an elder shall are recommended to have completed one half of the studies toward a Master of Divinity degree or its equivalent, including one half of the basic graduate theological studies from a seminary listed by the University Senate approved by the Conference Board of Ministry.
 - c) a candidate for ordination as a deacon shall are recommended to have:
 - 1) completed one half of the studies of a master's degree from a United Methodist seminary or one listed by the University Senate one approved by the Conference Board of Ministry, or
 - 2) received a master's degree in the area of the specialized ministry in which the candidate will serve
 - 3) completed one half of the basic graduate theological studies, in a context which will provide formation as a United Methodist deacon in full connection within a cohesive program developed by the seminary and approved by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, documented by a record of completion from that school: approved by the Conference Board of Ministry.
5. ~~In some instances a candidate who is pursuing ordination to serve as a deacon in full connection may fulfill the academic requirements through the following professional certification alternate route:~~
- a) ~~shall have reached thirty-five years of age at the time to become a certified candidate;~~
 - b) ~~completed a bachelor's degree, received professional certification or license in the area of ministry in which the candidate will serve, have completed a minimum of eight semester hours of graduate credit or equivalent quarter hours in the area of specialization, and have been recommended by the conference Board of Ordained Ministry;~~
 - c) ~~have completed one-half of the basic graduate theological studies in the Christian faith. These courses may be included within or in addition to a seminary degree. These basic graduate theological studies must include courses in Old Testament; New Testament; theology; church history; mission of the church in the world; evangelism; worship/liturgy; and United Methodist doctrine, polity and history, in a context which will provide a cohesive program developed by the seminary and approved by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, documented by a record of completion from that school.~~
6. Local pastors may fulfill the requirements for provisional membership when they have:

a) reached forty years of age;

b) satisfied all requirements of Sections 1-3 and 7-14 of this paragraph.

c) completed the five-year Course of Study for ordained ministry, of which no more than one-half may be taken by correspondence or Internet; up to one-half of Course of Study may be online courses; and

d) an Advance Course of Study consisting of thirty-two semester hours of graduate theological study offered by a seminary recognized by the University Senate or its equivalent as determined by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry Conference Board of Ordained Ministry that shall include United Methodist history, doctrine and polity.

7. The Board of Ordained Ministry shall require an official transcript of credits from each school before recognizing any of the applicant's educational claims. In cases of doubt, the board may submit a transcript to the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry.

8. Conference Boards of Ordained Ministry are encouraged to be in consultation with the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry.

Rationale:

The petition would allow for the Conference Board of Ministry to determine the requirements for election to provisional membership in the respective annual conferences. The change would allow for a contextual approach to ministry, providing each annual conference with flexibility as it relates to the training and credentialing of their clergy.

February 15, 2023

Jeremy Pridgeon

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Suggested Title: Requirements for Ordination as a Deacon and Admission to Full Connection

Discipline ¶ 330 Requirements for Ordination as Deacon and Admission to Full Connection

General Church Budget Implications: None

Global Implications: None

Context of Petition: Amend ¶ 330, 330.1, 330.3 and 330.4

330 Provisional members who are applying for admission into full connection and who have been provisional members ~~for at least two years~~ following the completion of the educational requirements for ordination as ~~specified in 3~~ below may be admitted....

330.1 They shall have served under episcopal appointment in a ministry area of service. ~~for at least two full annual conference years.~~ Upon recommendation of the Board of Ordained Ministry, the annual conference may equate less than fulltime or nonsalaried service as meeting this qualification. Such equivalence is to be determined in light of the years of service involved, the quality of that service, the maturity of the applicant, and other relevant factors determined by the board. Supervision is to be: (a) by the district superintendent, and (b) by the Board of Ordained Ministry. The applicant's service must be evaluated by the Board of Ordained Ministry as effective according to written guidelines developed by the board and adopted by the clergy members in full connection. Laypersons directly involved in the applicant's servant ministry ~~shall~~ may be involved by the board in the annual evaluation.

330.3 They shall have met the following educational requirements: (a) graduation with a Bachelor of Arts or equivalent degree from a college or university ~~listed by the University Senate or its equivalent as determined by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry approved by the Conference Board of Ordained Ministry.~~ In unusual circumstances, exceptions to this requirement may be granted by the Conference Board of Ordained Ministry. ; ~~(b) graduation with a Master of Divinity degree or a master's degree from a graduate theological school recognized by the University Senate, or a master's degree in an area of specialized ministry;~~ (c) or are candidates over the age of 35 with professional certification or license in their area of ministry including a minimum of eight semester hours of graduate academic credit. Educational requirements in every case shall include the basic graduate theological studies of the Christian faith, as out lined in ¶324.4(a).

Rationale:

The petition would allow for the Conference Board of Ministry to determine the requirements for ordination as a deacon and for election to full connection in the respective annual conferences. The change would allow for a contextual

approach to ministry, providing each annual conference with flexibility as it relates to the training and credentialing of their clergy.

April 15, 2015

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**Suggested Title: Deacons and Provisional Deacons Appointed
Beyond the Local Church**

Discipline ¶ 331.4e

General Church Budget Implications: None

Global Implications: None

Context of Petition: Amend ¶ 331.4(e)

(e) If requested, The General Board of Higher Education and Ministry and the Division of Ordained Ministry, ~~in order to assist the Board of Ordained Ministry and cabinets, will provide guidelines for validating the appropriateness of appointment settings beyond the local church,~~ will be available for consultation with bishops, cabinets, and Boards of Ordained Ministry to assist in validating the appropriateness of appointment settings beyond the local church.

Rationale:

The petition allows for the Conference Board of Ordained Ministry, bishops, and cabinets to be able to consult with The General Board of Higher Education and Ministry and the Division of Ordained Ministry should the appropriateness of a ministry setting beyond the local church need to be validated.

April 15, 2015

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Suggested Title: Requirements for Admission to Full Connection and Ordination as an Elder

Discipline ¶ 335

General Church Budget Implications: None

Global Implications: None

Context of Petition: Amend ¶ 335

Provisional members who are candidates for full connection and ordination as elders have been provisional members ~~for at least two years~~ may be admitted into membership in full connection in an annual conference and approved for elder's ordination by two-thirds vote of the clergy members in full connection of the annual conference, upon recommendation by two-thirds vote of the Board of Ordained Ministry, after they have qualified as follows. They shall have: (1) served full-time under episcopal appointment ~~for at least two full annual conference years~~ following the completion of the educational requirements specified in (3) (b) below. Years of service in any ministry setting requiring the regular proclamation of the word, the administration of the sacraments, and the short or long-term ordering of the life of the community of faith may count toward fulfillment of this requirement. Such ministry settings may include campus ministry, college and university chaplaincy, overseas/mission work and other ministries so recognized by the ~~Division of Ordained Ministry of the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry~~ Conference Board of Ordained Ministry. Upon recommendation of the Board of Ordained Ministry, an annual conference may equate less than full-time to the requirement of full-time service.

~~Such equivalence is to be determined in light of the years of service involved, the quality of that service, the maturity of the applicant, and other relevant factors.~~ Supervision is to be (a) personally assumed or delegated by the district superintendent, and (b) assumed by a mentor assigned by the Board of Ordained Ministry. Their service shall be evaluated by the Board of Ordained Ministry as effective ~~according to written guidelines developed by the board and adopted by the clergy members in full connection.~~ In rare cases, the Board of Ordained Ministry may, by a two-thirds vote, approve years of service in an autonomous Methodist church as meeting this requirement if adequate supervision has been provided; (2) been previously elected as provisional members; (3) met the following educational requirements ~~(a) graduation with a Bachelor of Arts or equivalent degree from a college or university listed by the University Senate, or demonstrated competency equivalence through a process designed in consultation with the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry; (b) graduation with a Master of Divinity degree from a school of theology listed by the University Senate, or its equivalent as determined by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry; or (c) met the education requirements of ¶324.6 for local pastors, (d) educational requirements in every case shall include completion of the basic graduate theological studies of the Christian faith as outlined in ¶ 324.a as specified by the Conference Board of~~

Ordained Ministry, (4) satisfied the board regarding physical, mental, and emotional health; (5) prepared and preached at least one written sermon on a biblical passage specified by the Board of Ordained Ministry; (6) presented a detailed plan and outline for teaching a Bible study; (7) presented a project that demonstrates fruitfulness in carrying out the church's mission of "Making Disciples of Jesus Christ for the Transformation of the World"; (8) responded to a written or oral doctrinal examination administered by the Board of Ordained Ministry. The candidate should demonstrate the ability to communicate clearly in both oral and written form...

Rationale:

The petition would allow for the Conference Board of Ministry to determine the requirements for ordination as an elder and for election to full connection in the respective annual conferences. The change would allow for a contextual approach to ministry, providing each annual conference with flexibility as it relates to the training and credentialing of their clergy.

April 15, 2015

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Suggested Title: The Itinerant System*Discipline* ¶ 338.4

General Church Budget Implications: None

Global Implications: None

Context of Petition: Amend ¶ 338.4

Associate members, provisional members, or full members may be appointed to attend any school, college, or theological seminary ~~listed by the University Senate~~ approved by the Conference Board of Ministry, or participate in a program of clinical pastoral education in a setting accredited by the Association for Clinical Pastoral Education or another accrediting agency approved by ~~GBHEM~~ the Conference Board of Ministry.

Rationale:

The petition would allow for the Conference Board of Ministry to approve appointments to attend any school, college, or theological seminary or any program of clinical pastoral education. The change would allow for a contextual approach to ministry, providing each annual conference with flexibility as it relates to the training of their clergy.

April 15, 2015

Jeremy Pridgeon

Elder, Alabama-West Florida Conference

334-221-2658

jeremy@fumc-pc.org

**Suggested Title: Evaluation for Continuing Formation for
Full Members and Local Pastors**

Discipline ¶ 349.3

General Church Budget Implications: None

Context of Petition: Delete ¶ 349.3

Rationale:

Deletion of ¶ 349.3 removes from the The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church the eight year review, which consists of a six month evaluation process for full members and local pastors. This evaluation process was prescribed by the 2016 General Conference. The Discipline calls for each annual conference to develop and initiate a plan for such an assessment by January 1, 2020.

February 15, 2019

Jeremy Pridgeon

Elder, Alabama-West Florida Conference

334-221-2658

jeremy@fumc-pc.org

Suggested Title: Working with Ordained, Licensed, Consecrated, and Commissioned Personnel

Discipline ¶ 416.5

General Church Budget Implications: None

Context of Petition: Add the following to ¶ 416.5

5. To transfer, upon the request of the receiving bishop, after the recommendation of the Executive Committee of the Conference Board of Ministry and an affirmative vote of the clergy session, clergy member(s) of one annual conference to another, provided said member(s) agree to said transfer...

Rationale:

The petition requires approval of the request to transfer a clergyperson from another annual conference into provisional or full membership by the Executive Committee of the Conference Board of Ministry and the clergy session of the annual conference, keeping in line with ¶ 33 Article II of the *2012 Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church* which states, “The annual conference is the basic body in the church and as such shall have reserved to it the right to vote...on all matters relating to the character and conference relations of its clergy members, and on the ordination of clergy.”

February 15, 2023

Jeremy Pridgeon

Elder, Alabama-West Florida Conference

334-221-2658

jeremy@fumc-pc.org

**Suggested Title: Working with Ordained, Licensed, Consecrated,
and Commissioned Personnel**

Discipline ¶ 416.6

General Church Budget Implications: None

Context of Petition: Delete the following to ¶ 416.6

6. To appoint associate members, provisional members, or full members to attend any school, college, or theological seminary ~~listed by the University-Senate approved by the Conference Board of Ministry~~, or to participate in a program of clinical pastoral education in a setting accredited by the Association for Clinical Pastoral Education or another accrediting agency ~~approved by GBHEM~~. Such appointments are not to be considered as extension ministry appointments.

Rationale:

The petition would allow for the Conference Board of Ministry to approve appointments to attend any school, college, or theological seminary or any program of clinical pastoral education. The change would allow for a contextual approach to ministry, providing each annual conference with flexibility as it relates to the training of their clergy.

February 15, 2023

Jeremy Pridgeon

Elder, Alabama-West Florida Conference

334-221-2658

jeremy@fumc-pc.org

**Suggested Title: Evaluation for Continuing Formation for Full
Members and Local Pastors**

Discipline ¶ 349.3

General Church Budget Implications: None

Context of Petition: Delete ¶ 349.3

Rationale:

Deletion of ¶ 349.3 removes from the *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church* the eight year review, which consists of a six month evaluation process for full members and local pastors. This evaluation process was prescribed by the 2016 General Conference. The *Discipline* calls for each annual conference to develop and initiate a plan for such an assessment by January 1, 2020.

February 15, 2023

Jeremy Pridgeon

Elder, Alabama-West Florida Conference

334-221-2658

jeremy@fumc-pc.org

Suggested Title: Powers and Duties*Discipline* ¶ 543.8

General Church Budget Implications: None

Context of Petition: Amend ¶ 543.8

A central conference shall fix the boundaries of the annual conferences, provisional annual conferences, missionary conferences, and missions within its bounds, proposals for changes first have been submitted to the annual conferences concerned as prescribed in the *Discipline*. No annual conference shall be organized with fewer than ~~thirty-five~~ seventy-five clergy members except as an enabling act for the quadrennium, which shall not reduce the number below ~~twenty-five~~ fifty. Nor shall an annual conference be continued with fewer than ~~twenty-five~~ sixty members except as provided by an enabling act for the quadrennium.

Rationale:

The petition change will allow for a more just representation from the respective annual conferences in the distribution of General Conference delegates without requiring a constitutional amendment to the *Book of Discipline*. With the creation of provisional conferences, there is an overrepresentation of these conferences that are guaranteed two General Conference delegates and an equal underrepresentation of larger conferences.

February 15, 2023

Jeremy Pridgeon

Elder, Alabama-West Florida Conference

334-221-2658

jeremy@fumc-pc.org

Suggested Title: Powers and Duties*Discipline* ¶ 604.3

General Church Budget Implications: None

Global Implications: None

Context of Petition: Powers and Duties of An Annual Conference, Amend ¶ 604.3

The annual conference may admit into clergy membership ~~only those who have met all the disciplinary requirements for membership and only in the manner prescribed in the *Discipline*~~ those who receive an affirmative vote of the conference, keeping with the right of the Annual Conference to vote on all matters relating to the character and conference relations of its clergy members, and on the ordination of clergy and such other rights as have not been delegated to the General Conference under the Constitution (¶33 of the *Book of Discipline*.)

Rationale:

The petition allows for the annual conference to exercise its constitutional right to determine its clergy membership, enabling flexibility to the conference as it relates to its clergy.

February 15, 2023

Jeremy Pridgeon

Elder, Alabama-West Florida Conference

334-221-2658

jeremy@fumc-pc.org

Suggested Title: Theological Education

Discipline ¶ 1405.7

General Church Budget Implications: None

Global Implications: None

Context of Petition: Amend ¶ 1405.7

7. In consultation with Conference Boards of Ordained Ministry to develop and maintain the educational programs and standards and procedures for certification in professional ministerial careers and for ordination into the ordained ministry.

Rationale:

The petition would allow for the Conference Board of Ministry to be an active participant in the development and maintenance of standards and procedures that are required for certification in professional ministerial careers and for ordination into the ordained ministry. The change would allow for a contextual approach to ministry, providing each annual conference with flexibility as it relates to the training of their clergy, preserving the constitutional right of the annual conference to vote on all matters relating to the character and conference relations of its clergy members, and on the ordination of clergy as outlined in ¶33.

February 15, 2023

Jeremy Pridgeon

Elder, Alabama-West Florida Conference

334-221-2658

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Suggested Title: Theological Education*Discipline* ¶ 1421.3

General Church Budget Implications: None

Global Implications: None

Context of Petition: Amend ¶ 1421.3

3. The division shall: a) in consultation with Conference Boards of Ordained Ministry develop and maintain the educational programs and standards...

Rationale:

The petition would allow for the Conference Board of Ministry to be an active participant in the development and maintenance of standards and procedures that are required for ordination as deacons or elders, licensed as local pastors, and certified for specialized ministries in The United Methodist Church. The change would allow for a contextual approach to ministry, providing each annual conference with flexibility as it relates to the training of their clergy, preserving the constitutional right of the annual conference to vote on all matters relating to the character and conference relations of its clergy members, and on the ordination of clergy as outlined in ¶33.

February 15, 2023

Jeremy Pridgeon

Elder, Alabama-West Florida Conference

334-221-2658

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Suggested Title: Theological Education*Discipline* ¶ 1421.3c

General Church Budget Implications: None

Global Implications: None

Context of Petition: Amend ¶ 1421.3c

3. c) In consultation with Conference Boards of Ordained Ministry, develop ~~prescribe~~ a theological studies program which will include basic graduate theological studies for those preparing for ordination as a deacon, an advanced course of studies program for local pastors preparing for ordination as an elder, and a curriculum of studies for those seeking certification in areas of specialized ministry.

Rationale:

The petition would allow for the Conference Board of Ministry to be an active participant in the development of a theological studies program for those preparing for ordination as a deacon, an advanced course of studies program for local pastors preparing for ordination as an elder, and a curriculum of studies for those seeking certification in areas of specialized ministry. The change would allow for a contextual approach to ministry, providing each annual conference with flexibility as it relates to the training of their clergy, preserving the constitutional right of the annual conference to vote on all matters relating to the character and conference relations of its clergy members, and on the ordination of clergy as outlined in ¶33.

February 15, 2023

Jeremy Pridgeon

Elder, Alabama-West Florida Conference

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Suggested Title: Course of Study*Discipline* ¶ 1421.3(d)

General Church Budget Implications: None

Global Implications: None

Context of Petition: Course of Study, Amend ¶ 1421.3(d)

Prescribe a Course of Study for local pastors that include the studies for license for pastoral ministry and the Course of Study curriculum. ~~All work in the Course of Study shall be taking in programs approved by the Division of Ordained Ministry.~~ Upon approval of the conference Board of Ordained Ministry, a candidate may complete up to one-half of the work through online courses developed by the Division of Ordained Ministry.

Rationale:

The petition allows for Conference Board of Ministry to make determination around the educational needs of its clergy in the Annual Conference.

February 15, 2023

Jeremy Pridgeon

Elder, Alabama-West Florida Conference

334-221-2658

jeremy@fumc-pc.org

Suggested Title: Theological Education*Discipline* ¶ 1421.3d

General Church Budget Implications: None

Global Implications: None

Context of Petition: Amend ¶ 1421.3d

3. d) In consultation with Conference Boards of Ordained Ministry, develop ~~prescribe~~ a Course of Study for local pastors that include the studies for license for pastoral ministry and the Course of Study curriculum. ~~All work in the Course of Study shall be taken in programs approved by the Division of Ordained Ministry. Upon approval of the conference Board of Ordained Ministry, a candidate may complete up to one-half of the work through online courses developed by the Division of Ordained Ministry.~~

Rationale:

The petition would allow for the Conference Board of Ministry to be an active participant in the development of a Course of Study program for local pastors that includes the studies for license for pastoral ministry and the Course of Study curriculum. Conference Boards of Ordained Ministry will determine the amount of coursework that can be completed through online education. The change would allow for a contextual approach to ministry, providing each annual conference with flexibility as it relates to the training of their clergy, preserving the constitutional right of the annual conference to vote on all matters relating to the character and conference relations of its clergy members, and on the ordination of clergy as outlined in ¶33.

February 15, 2023

Jeremy Pridgeon

Elder, Alabama-West Florida Conference

334-221-2658

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Suggested Title: Limiting Episcopal Tenure

Discipline Paragraphs: ¶45, ¶47, ¶50, ¶408, ¶409, ¶411

General Church Budget Implications: None

Global Implications: Yes

Amend ¶ No. 45:

¶ 45. Article I.—There shall be a continuance of an episcopacy in The United Methodist Church of like plan, powers, privileges, and duties as now exist in The Methodist Church and in The Evangelical United Brethren Church in all those matters in which they agree and may be considered identical; and the differences between these historic episcopacies are deemed to be reconciled and harmonized by and in this Plan of Union and Constitution of The United Methodist Church and actions taken pursuant thereto so that a unified superintendency and episcopacy is hereby created and established of, in, and by those who now are and shall be bishops of The United Methodist Church; and the said episcopacy shall further have such powers, privileges, and duties as are herein set forth.

Amend ¶ No. 47:

¶ 47. Article III.—There shall be a Council of Bishops composed of all the bishops of The United Methodist Church. The council shall meet at least once a year and plan for the general oversight and promotion of the temporal and spiritual interests of the entire Church and for carrying into effect the rules, regulations, and responsibilities prescribed and enjoined by the General Conference. and in accord with the provisions set forth in this Plan of Union.

Amend ¶ No. 50:

¶ 50. Article VI.—The bishops, both active and retired, of The Evangelical United Brethren Church and of The Methodist Church at the time union is consummated shall be bishops of The United Methodist Church.

The bishops of The Methodist Church elected by the jurisdictions, the active bishops of The Evangelical United Brethren Church at the time of union, and bishops elected to the office by the jurisdictions of The United Methodist Church shall have life tenure: serve in the office for eight years. In rare circumstances of need, four years may be added by a majority vote of the jurisdictional conference committee on the episcopacy. Each bishop elected by a central conference of The Methodist Church shall have such tenure as the central conference electing him shall have determined.

The jurisdictional conference shall elect a standing committee on episcopacy to consist of one clergy and one lay delegate from each annual conference, on nomination of the annual conference delegation. The committee shall review the work of the bishops, pass on their character and official administration, and report to the jurisdictional conference its findings for such action as the conference may deem appropriate within its constitutional warrant of power. The committee shall recommend the assignments of the bishops to their respective residences for final action by the jurisdictional conference.

Amend ¶ No. 408:

¶ 408. Termination of Office—~~An elder~~ A retired elder who ~~is serving as a bishop up to the time of retirement~~ has served as a bishop shall have the status of a retired bishop.

Amend ¶ No. 409:

¶ 409. Status of Retired Bishops—~~A retired bishop is a bishop of the Church a retired elder in every respect and continues to function as a member of the Council of Bishops in accordance with the Constitution and other provisions of the Discipline.~~

1. ~~Retired bishops may participate in the Council of Bishops and its committees, but without vote. They may preside over sessions of an annual conference, provisional annual conference, or mission if requested to do so by the bishop assigned to that conference, or in the event of that bishop's incapacity, by the president of the College of Bishops to which the conference is related. Retired bishops elected by the Council of Bishops may serve as the executive secretary and the ecumenical officer of the Council. In emergency situations, where the resident bishop is unable to preside, the College of Bishops shall assign an effective or retired bishop to preside over the sessions of the annual conference (¶ 48). They may not make appointments or preside at the jurisdiction or central conference. However, when a retired bishop is appointed by the Council of Bishops to a vacant episcopal area or parts of an area under the provisions of ¶¶ 409.3, 410.1, or 410.3, that bishop may function as a bishop in the effective relationship.⁷~~

2. A retired bishop ~~may be considered~~ is a member of an annual conference, ~~without~~ with vote, for purposes of appointment to a local charge within the said conference.

3. A bishop retired under ¶ 408.1, .2 above may be appointed by the Council of Bishops upon recommendation of the involved College of Bishops to presidential responsibility for temporary service in an area in the case of death, resignation, disability, or procedure involving a resident bishop (¶ 2703.1). This appointment

shall not continue beyond the next jurisdictional or central conference. A retired bishop serving in this capacity is a member without vote of an annual conference.
~~4. Colleges of Bishops are encouraged to work with prospective retirees and institutions across the connection on possible retirement assignments (e.g., bishop-in-residence), particularly assignments expressive of the office's residential, presidential, and missional nature.~~

Amend ¶ No. 411:

~~¶ 411. Expiration of Terms—In a central conference where term episcopacy prevails, b~~ Bishops whose term of office expires prior to the time of compulsory retirement because of age and who are not reelected by the central conference shall be returned to membership as traveling elders in the annual conference (or its successor) of which they ceased to be a member when elected bishop. Their term of office shall expire at the close of the central or jurisdictional conference at which their successor is elected, and they shall therefore be entitled to participate as a bishop in the consecration of the successor. The credentials of office as bishop shall be submitted to the secretary of the central conference, who shall make thereon the notation that the bishop has honorably completed the term of service for which elected and has ceased to be a bishop of The United Methodist Church.

Rationale:

Now is the time to make significant adjustments to our polity. Limiting episcopal tenure allows for a nimbler polity, creates the possibility of leadership rotation, and potentially links the episcopacy closer to the local church, which is “the most significant arena through which disciple-making occurs” (BOD 2019, ¶ 201).

The mission of the Church belongs to God who seeks to redeem the world. The work of this mission is a shared responsibility. “All Christians are called through their baptism to this ministry of servanthood in the world to the glory of God and for human fulfillment” (United Methodist Book of Discipline 2019, ¶ 126). The Church embodies the grace of Christ, using gifts of God’s Spirit and experiences with God’s Spirit to be agents of hope and new life.

To accomplish this work, the United Methodist Church sets aside persons to play roles within the mission of God according to their “gifts, evidence of God’s grace, and promise of future usefulness” (BOD 2019, ¶ 301.2). Those set aside become a part of the Order of Deacons or the Order of Elders. Bishops are elders in the United Methodist Church, consecrated to an office for which their gifts have been affirmed. The episcopacy is, therefore, not another order,

an understanding that traces back to John Wesley. Rather, the episcopacy is an office that is served by those who have been ordained to be traveling elders. Life tenure need not be a feature of United Methodist polity. It could be argued that life tenure for the office of the episcopacy creates a de facto separate order which structurally is less connected to the local church. Limiting episcopal tenure will better align United Methodist polity with our United Methodist theology of ministry and mission.

Date: March 31,2023

Signature of the Petitioner: Brian V. Miller

Identification of the Petitioner: Elder, Alabama-West Florida Annual Conference

Phone: (251) 454-2878

City, State, Province, Country: Montgomery, Alabama, United States

E-mail Address: brianvmiller@gmail.com

2023 Committee on Nominations Report

*Boards and Officers under the Purview of
the Conference Committee on Nominations*

Names in bold are nominations to be considered this year.

ARCHIVES AND HISTORY (Commission on)

Chairperson: Rev. Joe Reams (16)

Vice Chairperson: Brad Norris (16)

Recording/Financial Secretary: Anthony Leigh

Archivist: Sharon Tucker

Members

Rev. Joe Reams (16), Nell Gilmer (16), Brad Norris (16), Dr. Anthony Leigh (16), Dr. Elijah Pugh (20), Eric Kidwell (22), **Ed Shirley (23)**

CHURCH AND SOCIETY (Board of)-Q

Chairperson:

Vice Chairperson:

Members

Rev. Andy Gartman (16), Carolyn Carr (16), Gerry Stiffler (16), Rev. Rick Branch (17), Valerie Vergilio (18), Rev. P.K. Early (19), Laurel Akin (19), **Brenda Alford (23), Joscelyn Cutchens (23)**

COMMISSION ON THE STATUS AND ROLE OF WOMEN

Chairpersons: Rev. Chelsey Brown

Members

Michael Ard, Dawn Hare, Rev. Lynn Smilie Nesbitt, Julia Norton, Rev. Christina Shaver, Rev. Chelsey Brown, Janis Johnson, Rev. Kelli Hitchman-Craig, Katy Wrona (22), Rev. Kristin Wright (22), Rev. Ashlee Brown (22), Judy Burnham (22), **Norma Lynch (23)**

CONGREGATIONAL DEVELOPMENT (Board of)-Q

Chairperson:

Secretary:

Treasurer:

Members

Rev. Sara Shaver (19), Sydney Fitts (19), Rev. Dan Baughman (19), Rev. Sean Peters (22), Rev. Dr. Kitsy Dixon (22), **Bill Ellwell (23), Chris McCain (23), Clara Ester (23), Nathan Attwood (23), Karen Siefert (23)**

Ex-officio-DCM, Director of New Ministries Strategies, Cabinet Rep-Rev. Dr. Mike Pearson

CORE (Connecting Our Resources and Empowerment) TEAM

At-Large Members:

Rev. David Morris (16), Rev. Elizabeth Hinton (21), Nathan Dickson (18), Cathy Givan (20), **Cathy Thigpen (23)**, **TBA (23)**, **Rob Young (23)**, **TBA**

DISCIPLESHIP (Board of)-Q

Chairperson:

Secretary:

Members

Division of Education (¶630.2)

Division of Evangelism (¶630.3)

Rev. Darrin Isaac (23), Division of Worship (¶630.4)

Rev. Dr. Sam Parkes (16), Division of Stewardship (¶630.5)

Elizabeth Whatley (18), Division of Spiritual Formation (¶630.6)

At-large: Bernadette Hackett (20), Judy Burnham (21), **Jenny Medley (23)**,**Jason Thrower (23)**, **Woods Lisenby (23)**, **Jan Pringle (23)****EPISCOPACY (¶637, 2016 Book of Discipline) (Committee on)**

Chairperson: Alexis Tibbetts

Vice Chairperson: Secretary:

Elected Members

Gene Floore, Rev. Dr. Cory Smith (16), Alexis Tibbetts (16), Antonius Barnes (21), Rev. Dan Morris (16), Lori Roach (16), Marcie McNeal (18), Rev. Virginia Kagoro (20), Troy Cutchens (20), Dr. Bill Barrick (20), Rev. Richard Williams (21)

Bishop's AppointmentsShirley Woodie (20), Dr. Anthony Leigh (20), **Clara Ester (23)****EQUITABLE COMPENSATION (Committee on)-Q**

Chairperson:

Members

Clergy: Ryan Martin (18), Rev. Gail Baughman (19), Rev. Teresa Johnson (19), Rev. Geoffrey Kagoro (20)

Laity: John Barnett (13), Gloria McDonald (16), Kay Wingate (16), Steve Walker (21), Lois Jenkins (20)

ETHNIC LOCAL CHURCH CONCERNS-Q

Chairperson:

Members

Norman Tinsley (16), Division of Religion and Race (¶643)

Rev. Barbara Brewi (21), Division of Christian Unity and Interreligious Concerns (¶642)

Jackie Slaughter, Division of Strengthening the Black Church (23) (¶632)

TBA, Division of Native American Ministries (¶654)

Rev. Andres Doimeadios (16), Division of Hispanic-Latino Ministries (¶632)

TBA, Division of Asian Ministries (¶632)

At-Large Members

Dana Wallace (16), Rev. Pam Avery (22), **Shadreck Kagoro (23)**

FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION (Council on)-Q

President:

Vice-President:

Secretary:

Clergy: Rev. Mark Lilly (16), Rev. Ashley Meyer (19), Rev. Dana Brady (22), Rev. Dr. David Saliba (23), Rev. Dr. Jay Cooper (23)

Laity: Jody Enfinger (14), James Arrington (16), Frances Parker (16), Frank Jenkins (20), Juliet Milam (21), Mark Davidson (21), John Dew (22), Dwight Potter (22)

GLOBAL MINISTRIES (Board of)-Q

Chairperson: Rev. Kathy Fisher

Members

Jennifer Myrick (16), Rev. Joel Smith (16), Rev. Michael Lawler (16), Rev. Kathy Fisher (16), Jeb Hunt (20), Tom Tucker (20), Rev. Rebecca Rutherford (20), **Scott Hohn, (23), Harolyn Ezell (23)**

ex-officio-Katy Wrona, Conference Secretary Global Ministries

HIGHER EDUCATION and CAMPUS MINISTRY (Board of)-Q

Chairperson: Rev. Levi Gardner

Treasurer: Kay Whaley

Members: Rev. Levi Gardner (16), Kay Whaley (16), Rob Thomas (16), Carol Nicholson Foster (16), Frank Moore (16), James Arrington (20), Judy Burnham (21), Rev. Scott Grantland (21), Rev. Diane Everett (21), Linda Green (22), Rev. Jack Hinnen (22), **Kelli Hitchman-Craig (23), Dr. Joyce Coleman Johnson (23), TBA**

LAITY (Conference Board of)

Conference Lay Leader- Gene Floore

Lay Women: Barbara Boland, Katy Wrona

Lay Men: Frank Jenkins, David Bowen (22)

Young Adults: Sheldon Martin, Pat Bagby (22)

Youth: Nathaniel Sherbine (23), Caden Earnest (23)

Director of Lay Servant Ministry-Bob Kaye

Conference Scouting Coordinator-

MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE ON INVESTIGATION (nominated by Bishop, elected by AC)

Clergy Members: Rev. Dr. Cory Smith (19), Rev. Reba Wiley (16)), Rev. Danielle May (18), **Bill Elwell (23)**

Lay Members: Bob Colclough (16), Caroline Hinds (16), Lee McPherson (17)

Clergy Alternates: Rev. Pam Barnhardt (16), Rev. Dan Morris (19), **Rev. John Woodrow (23)**

Lay Alternates: Patti Bodenhamer (20), Roman Shaul (20), Vanessa Shoots (20), **Frank Jenkins (23)**

NOMINATIONS (Committee on)

At large members: Rev. Dr. Levi Gardner (20), **Rev. Nathan Attwood (23)**, Dr. Joyce Coleman Johnson (22)

ORDAINED MINISTRY (Board of)

Jennifer Abt (2020), Pam Avery (2023), Dave Barkalow (2012), Dan Baughman (2016), Jason Borders (2018), Sterling Boykin (2016), Brad Bradford (2023), Buchli (2016), Jeroy Carroll (2023), Celeste Eubanks (2016), Diane Everette (2021) Fisher (2012), Alan Gantzhorn (2021), Sarah Goolsby (2016), Julie Hare (2020), Janis Johnson (2020), Kathy Jorgensen (2012), Geoffrey Kagoro (2017), Emily Kincaid (2012), Jennifer Lancaster (2023), Lentz (14), Darren McClellan (2023), Brian Miller (2012), David Morris (2020), Laura Parker (2020), Amy Persons (2016), Michael Precht (2012), Hunter Pugh (2021), Melba Richardson (2020), Paula Roane (2016), Jackie Slaughter (2020), Lee Thigpen (2012), Jason Thrower (2020), Gillian Walters (2016), Steve Warren (2012), Robin Wilson (2023), Claire Windham (2020), Ralph Wooten (2012), Kristen Wright (2021), Richard Williams (2022)

PENSION AND HEALTH BENEFITS (Board of)-Q

Chairperson: Rev. Allison Posell

Vice Chairperson: Jim Hamilton

Secretary:

Term to Expire in 2024:

Clergy: Rev. Amy Persons (16), Rev. Steve Reneau, (16), Rev. Lucas Tribble (22)

Laity: Jim Hamilton (10), Carrie Porter (22), Sue McInnish (22)

Term to Expire in 2028:

Clergy: Rev. Allison Posell (20), Rev. Jim Sanders (23), Melanie Faust (23)

Laity: Natalie Bell (22), Bill Bond (22), Judy Brock (22), Barbara Brown (20),

Luke Coley (23), Melissa Mikul (20), **Bobby Trott (23)**, Jeff White (20), **Greg Wise (23)**

POLICIES AND PERSONNEL COMMITTEE (CONFERENCE)

Chairperson: Andrea McCain

Members: Shirley Woodie, Donell Seager, Lynn Beshear, Andrea McCain, Denise McLeod, Andrew Baird

RESOLUTIONS and PETITIONS (Committee on)

Chairperson: Rev. Christina Shaver

Vice Chairperson: Bill Richardson

Secretary: Rev. Ashley Meyer

Members

Clergy: Rev. Christina Shaver (16), Rev. Dr. Geoffrey Lentz (16), Rev. Ashley Meyer (16), **Rev. Dr. Hunter Pugh (23)**

Laity: Bill Richardson (16), Christy Crow (16), Mable Lawrence (20), **TBA**

STANDING RULES (Committee on Standing Rules)

Chairperson: Rev. Dr. Kathy Knight

Vice Chairperson:

Secretary

At-Large Members: Rev. Lynn Smilie Nesbitt (16), Rev. Dr. Kathy Knight (16), Geneva Hogan (20), David Bowen (21), Rev. Micah Wright (23)

TOWN AND COUNTRY COMMISSION

Chairperson:

Members

Rev. Linda Smith (20), Rev. Victoria Scofield (20), Bill Doutsch (20), Gayle Thomas (20), Rev. Barbara Brewi (21), **Rev. Mike Von Keyserling (23), Janet Wooten (23), Richard Lucas (23), Brian Dale (23)**

TRUSTEES (§2512, 2016 Book of Discipline) (Board of)

President:

Vice President: Christy Crow

Secretary:

Term Expiring 2024: Pat Luna, **Kirke Adams (23), Rev. Bill Curtin (23)**

Term Expiring 2025: Rev. Sterling Boykin, Christy Crow, John Daniel (21)

Term Expiring 2026: Rev. Emily Kincaid (21), Betty Stone, **Gene Lammers (23)**

Term Expiring 2027: Rev. Gillian Walters, Memphis Vaughn, Pam Percy

Proposal for Conference Regional Developers

The Alabama West Florida Conference

Task Force on Church Planting and Revitalization

The AWF Task Force on Church Planting and Revitalization recommends to the cabinet the adoption of a new model for Congregational Development. The model would assign Regional Developers to a region or regions of the conference with responsibilities for starting new churches, fresh expressions, and strengthening existing churches with new members. The biggest need in planting new churches is finding leaders who can be agile, creative and collaborative, in this period of rapid change to design and implement a strategic plan in their mission field.

We propose that we start with one or two Developers, as soon as possible, in order to take advantage of the opportunities created by disaffiliating churches and searching for a church home. We propose several regional Developers for the Annual Conference. The Developers would be a direct report to the Director of Regional Development.

Mission Regions

Each of the mission regions would not necessarily follow district lines, but instead would be focused on where the greatest mission needs are. These needs are determined by three factors: demographic projection, lack of UMC presence, and special opportunities. Demographic projections can be taken from *MissionInsite* data or other resources, and used to help find growing areas. In regards to areas that lack a UMC presence, the task force is working on an asset map with the cabinet to determine these areas. Finally, the Developers need to be agile enough to see where God is opening up an opportunity, knowing that the Holy Spirit moves in surprising ways. Resources will be administered to the missions in each region that are having the most success and can reach sustainability the fastest. The goal is sustainable United Methodist faith communities that will make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

Director of Regional Development

The Regional Developers would report to a supervisor that assigns and manages their work, and then relates and connects it collaboratively to the Cabinet and Conference. This person would report to the DCM. They would be responsible to help the Annual Conference know how to utilize its resources to establish new churches and strengthen existing churches to make more disciples for Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. The Director would supervise the Regional Developers and help the Regional Developers strategize for their regions. The director needs to be very familiar with the *unique mission contexts*

of the AWF Annual Conference and have the ability to manage a dynamic team. There should be in-person monthly staff meetings with all the Developers and a weekly check-in.

Regional Developers

The Regional Developers could be either clergy or lay. North Alabama has chosen to hire several part-time people (at \$30,000) but we recommend that this not be predetermined to maximize the right person or persons for the work. If someone hired is part-time, she or he may be serving other appointments, including a church plant in the region. They are responsible for organizing faith communities in their region with a focus on prime areas. They are not necessarily church planters, but more like a midwife. The vision is that God is doing new things in these areas and our job is to cooperate with the Holy Spirit. They can help tie a new faith community to an existing strong church in the area, make a plan for a more traditional church plant, or help new expressions of christian community start in local areas. The goal is to organize faith communities toward sustainability. Each Developer is asked to begin one new expression each quarter.

Timeline

The team should be assembled as soon as possible with the Director in place early Spring and an initial official launch date that coincides with the May Special Called Annual Conference. Additional Developers should be added as quickly as possible. The regional Developers should only be needed in this capacity for 3 years, unless their success warrants continuation of their role. But elements of the model could be used for future church planting. However, the next three years is our best window for larger scale church planting because of the end of the pandemic, the number of displaced United Methodists, and the new energy in the denomination around returning to our mission to make more disciples.

Funding

We propose that the funding for the Developers model come from some of the monies collected at disaffiliation by departing churches.

Evaluation

The DCM in collaboration with the Cabinet and the Board of Congregational Development shall evaluate the Director of Regional Development and the Developer Program every year, setting goals and benchmarks.

Attribution

We are grateful to the North Alabama Conference for sharing their model with us.

Proposal on the Connectional Structure of the Alabama-West Florida Conference

*Task Force on the Future Structure of the Alabama-West Florida
Conference*

PROPOSAL TO BE SUBMITTED TO ANNUAL CONFERENCE FROM TASK FORCE

#1 – ACTION TO BE TAKEN BY ANNUAL CONFERENCE:

Recommendation to the Alabama-West Florida Annual Conference: Reduce the number of districts in the conference to four.

The Alabama-West Florida Conference currently has four District Superintendents and eight districts. The proposal merely asks the annual conference to reduce the number of districts to match the number of superintendents we currently have by merging the districts in the four instances in which one superintendent supervises two districts effective January 1, 2024. It also announces that some boundaries may be redrawn during the remainder of 2023 and that the new district boundaries will be presented during the 2024 annual conference.

Be it resolved that, in accordance with the 2016 Book of Discipline, paragraph 415.6, the number of districts in the Alabama-West Florida Conference be reduced from eight to four. Effective January 1, 2024, the following adjustments would be made: Marianna-Panama City and Pensacola merge into one district; Montgomery-Opelika and Dothan merge into one district; and Montgomery-Prattville and Demopolis merge into one district and Mobile and Baypines merge into one district.

During the remainder of 2023, the Bishop and Cabinet of the Alabama-West Florida Conference will work, in consultation with congregational leaders and pastors, to adjust district boundaries in order to more effectively accomplish the mission of leading congregations to lead people to actively follow Jesus Christ. Any congregations transitioning to a different district would be under the supervision of the new superintendent as of January 1, 2024.

A report will be made by the Cabinet to the special session of Annual Conference to be held on Sunday, November 12th with new district boundaries and names.

The district superintendents are currently overseeing two districts, in the current arrangement: Baypines / Mobile, Montgomery-Opelika / Demopolis, Montgomery-Prattville / Dothan and Pensacola / Marianna-Panama City

Reducing the number of districts to four, and keeping the current arrangement would result in approximately the following number of appointments per the newly configured district:

BP / MOB 42 Full-time appointments, 50 Part-Time appointments
 MOP / DO 36 Full-time appointments, 40 Part-Time appointments
 MPC / PEN 42 Full-time appointments, 32 Part-Time appointments
 DEM / MPT 23 Full-time appointments, 72 Part-Time appointments

The proposal also would allow for the restructuring of District Committees, resulting in one District Committee on Ministry, one District Committee on Superintendency, one District Board of Trustees, and one District Committee on Nominations

Conference entities, such as Blue Lake, or Wesley Foundations would fall under the care of the district in which these entities are geographically located. Boards specific to particular districts, such as the Pensacola District Board of Mission would be absorbed into the district in which they are geographically located.

#2 - Recommendation to the Cabinet: New District Lines Would Adhere to State Lines

Though not unique within The United Methodist Church, our annual conference area is within the bounds of two different states. The Book of Discipline entrusts the Cabinet with the responsibility of drawing the lines for the districts within the annual conference. Recognizing some differences in the number of appointments that are within the proposed four districts as currently structured and the potential need for some shifting of churches to balance the work load for superintendents, we would still recommend new district lines adhere to state lines.

#3 - Recommendation to the Cabinet and District Boards of Trustees: Establishing District Office Locations for Superintendents and Naming of Districts

Whatever the outcome of the final drawing of the boundaries of the four districts, we would recommend the cabinet and districts seek to utilize existing properties throughout the conference to establish the location for district offices. We offer the following recommendations to the Cabinet and to the trustees of the respective districts for your consideration:

- Utilizing the current Mobile District Office (currently headquarters of the Southern Region of the Annual Conference) to serve as the office for the district superintendent appointed to southwest Alabama.
- Inquiring into the possibility of office space at Huntingdon College

(where the Conference Archives are already held) as a potential location for the district superintendent appointed to north central Alabama.

- Inquiring into the possibility of office space at the Alabama-West Florida Conference Foundation in Dothan as a potential location for the district superintendent appointed to southeast Alabama.
- Inquiring into the possibility of office space in a local church in the Florida panhandle as a potential location for the district superintendent appointed to northwest Florida

This recommendation keeps with the current proposal on district mergers we are recommending to the Alabama-West Florida Conference, respecting the role of the Cabinet in establishing the boundaries of the conference and not usurping the rightful authority of the District Board of Trustees to provide a workspace for the district superintendent, while looking to minimize potential costs to each district by utilizing existing spaces currently owned and in operation within the annual conference.

With regard to the naming of new districts, we acknowledge a history of districts being named by the major cities in a district, as well as the naming of districts based on a geographic area and would recommend both options be considered in the reconfiguration of districts should the annual conference approve a recommendation to reduce the number of districts to four. Other conferences use directional terms like Southwest, North Central, as well as using city names, and we feel either could serve us well as we move forward.

#4 - Recommendation to the Conference Board of Trustees: Sale of the Conference Office

In light of anticipated restructuring that will take place in the Southeastern Jurisdiction of The United Methodist Church, we would recommend the Conference Board of Trustees take steps to sell the Alabama-West Florida Conference Office located on Woodmere Boulevard in Montgomery, Alabama. Previous staff reductions, along with anticipated further reductions and potential conference realignment necessitate this recommendation to sell the property.

The Book of Discipline provides for certain positions within the Annual Conference structure for operation of the conference. We would encourage either a short-term rental agreement or a remote work arrangement for the essential conference staff after the sale of the property. Additional possibilities would include utilization of the Southern Region Office in Mobile or the potential of our conference staff working in conjunction with or for the other annual conferences we are paired with in the sharing of our episcopal leader.

#5a - Recommendation to the Alabama-West Florida Conference Delegates

to the SEJ and the SEJ COE: Reestablish the historical arrangement with AWF and the North Alabama Conference sharing an episcopal leader

Anticipating we will continue to be in an arrangement where we will share an episcopal leader with another annual conference, we would recommend that the historical arrangement of the Alabama-West Florida Conference sharing a bishop with the North Alabama Conference be reestablished by the Southeastern Jurisdiction. The rationale is as follows:

- This was the arrangement for episcopal leadership for our annual conference prior to us receiving our own bishop in 1988.
- The AWF and NAL Conferences share much greater affinity than the current configuration of AWF and South Georgia (SGA), where our bishop currently oversees portions of three different states and two different time zones.
- This arrangement enables a much more proactive engagement when it comes to the witness of the church in the world, working with civic and political leaders in primarily one state, while also allowing for greater focus on matters of public policy and witness relative to the social principles of the church.
- The affinity within the state of Alabama creates a connection among the clergy and churches of the two conferences that is not as easily established in the current configuration of AWF and SGA.

#5b - Recommendation to the AWF Delegates to the SEJ, to the SEJ Committee on Episcopacy, the SEJ College of Bishops, and the SEJ Conference: Establish New Conference Boundaries to Create an Alabama Annual Conference and a Florida Conference that includes the West Florida portion of AWF

Several factors have led to the development of this recommendation which will certainly alter life as we have known it, but will also enable us to live more fully into the future of The United Methodist Church with greater alignment in mission and ministry by establishing conference boundaries that adhere to state lines.

These factors include, but are not limited to the following:

- Simple practical realities, namely that the area of west Florida is located in the geographic bounds of the State of Florida, just as central and south Alabama is in the geographic bounds of the state of Alabama. As such, areas in Florida are socially, politically, economically, and culturally distinctively Floridian in nature and scope, and likewise, the areas in Alabama are distinctively Alabamian. The implications of our current two state structure are far reaching, impacting churches and clergy on matters such as property insurance, health insurance, clergy spouse

employment, custody agreements, advocacy on legislative matters, as well as different legal codes affecting clergy, conference trustees, and legal counsel. These factors affect open itineracy, the effectiveness of our connectional ministries that must focus on multiple states, and insurance options and costs, among other matters. Drawing conference lines that adhere to state lines mitigates these and other factors that result from our two state configuration.

- The shifting denominational environment with congregational disaffiliations will have an economic impact on our connection here in Alabama-West Florida and across the Southeastern Jurisdiction. We will see losses in the number of churches, members, and connectional support. As we have noted, these losses are necessitating changes in our structure. The future viability of the Alabama-West Florida Conference is a real question mark, fueling discussions about realignments, mergers, or other restructuring measures.
- We have already witnessed the departure of churches in the Alabama-West Florida Conference, and anticipate many more in the months to come. Some of these congregations contributed quite significantly to the conference budget. The conversations about sharing episcopal leaders, as well as the number of bishops needed to lead our jurisdiction, are evidence of the impending changes. Clearly, considerations are being made regarding the changing circumstance in which we find ourselves as a church. In any reconfiguration that takes place, it would make the most sense from a structural standpoint that west Florida would be united with the rest of the state of Florida, rather than be aligned in a two, or even a three, state area, as has been the case since the interim assignments were implemented in 2021 and continued in some cases by the Southeastern Jurisdiction as episcopal assignments in 2022.
- As The United Methodist Church emerges from this unprecedented time in the history of our denomination, establishing two conferences from the existing three would enable each new conference to create much needed momentum going forward, changing the narrative of loss that has come with disaffiliation to one that highlights the new opportunities for churches and clergy as the mission connects communities in ways not previously known in the prior conference configuration. The pool of appointments for clergy will be larger as it will be possible for clergy to serve congregations in areas that they would not have previously been able to serve without the consent of a bishop in another area.
- The ability to restructure Alabama-West Florida into an Alabama Conference and a Florida Conference would be easier than other areas, as churches and property are already legal recorded in the counties in their respective states. Transfer of assets can also be accomplished in the case of endowments, bequests, or other restricted use funds that may be held by the Alabama-West Florida Foundation.

- For a period of time, the Cabinets of both conference could work with clergy who may have a preference of serving in one state over the other as appointments become available in each area and the transfer provisions in the *Discipline* would prevail as it relates to conference membership for those who do, in fact, cross state lines to join another conference.

The responsibility for establishing the number of conferences, as well as conference boundaries, is held by the Southeastern Jurisdictional Conference. The recommendations outlined regarding districts adhering to state lines, of selling the conference office, and reestablishing the historical arrangement of a sharing an episcopal leader with the North Alabama Conference, are all offered as steps to be taken toward the redrawing of conference boundary lines resulting in the eventual merger of the Alabama portion of Alabama-West Florida with North Alabama and the west Florida portion of Alabama-West Florida with Florida.

This concludes our report of recommendations regarding the future structure of the Alabama-West Florida Conference, and we offer it for your consideration as the annual conference, as well as for the Cabinet and other entities that have oversight of the areas addressed above.

We are hopeful for the future of The United Methodist Church and see these recommendations as actionable steps that can move us toward greater alignment, enabling us to be the best stewards of the resources entrusted to us by the congregations of the annual conference, positioning us in a manner that will generate momentum and excitement, as well as new opportunities to strengthen the connection as we emerge from a period of seeing it unraveled. We believe this is a most appropriate time to take these, and other steps that may be necessary, to ensure that the mission continues as we seek to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world through the work of the people of The United Methodist Church in Alabama and Florida.

Respectfully submitted by the Future of the Annual Conference Task Force Members:

Dr. Jeremy Pridgeon, Elder, Alabama-West Florida Conference
 Dr. Cory Smith, Elder, Alabama-West Florida Conference
 Dr. Darren McClellan, Elder, Alabama-West Florida Conference
 Rev. Cherie Meadows, Deacon, Alabama-West Florida Conference
 Rev. Christina Shaver, Elder, Alabama-West Florida Conference
 Dr. Shirley Woodie, Laity, First United Methodist Church, Ozark
 Rev. Dale Cohen, Elder, North Alabama Conference
 *Rev. Frederick Outlaw, Elder, Alabama-West Florida Conference (Rev. Outlaw served on the Task Force until his death on March 4, 2023.)

Consent Agenda

The following reports indicated by agency name and beginning page number are part of the CONSENT AGENDA. They will be considered as having passed by consent of the annual conference unless they are removed from the CONSENT AGENDA on Monday, June 13, at the business session. PLEASE READ THE REPORT CAREFULLY PRIOR TO THE ABOVE DATE. (See Standing Rule #12)

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Alabama Rural Ministry

Being deployed and away for approximately a year brings a fresh perspective into discipleship, servant leadership development, and serving the poor and people in need, through their most substantial asset, their home. I learned so much about leadership and discipleship in the Middle East and return invigorated. Certainly, home repair ministry allows our seniors a warm, safe, dry, and comfortable space where they may age in their most cherished and memorable surroundings. Mission teams comprised of youth and adults, bring joyous laughter, Christ's compassion, deep care, and endless hope to each person they serve. Youth mission trips like ARM equip our next generation of leaders with tools on how to share their faith and make a tangible difference with a person in need. ARM is easily a metaphor of the Starfish Story, a simple youth who tirelessly tosses single starfish back into the ocean habitat regardless of how overwhelmed the scene of so many stranded starfish might present.

Despite the challenges rendered from COVID-19 affecting our intern placements, the challenges within the UMC affecting our church giving, or even a deployment; the faithful work of servant leaders resulted in us touching a few more families, loving and nurturing children in day camp, and building servant leaders for the present and future of Jesus' church. Below are a few snapshots: Summer Mission Camp: Eight teams participated in our summer camp held only in Tuskegee last summer. Comprised of 126 missionaries, they served at various homes in Macon and Lee Counties. The effects of COVID-19 deeply impacted our intern recruiting but we were blessed to have three hard working interns matched with our full-time team. The youth theme was "Give Your Heart" and based upon Bob Munger's booklet, "My Heart, Christ's Home". After a solid day of serving, the youth and interns worked through this book in a worshipful and discussion-based setting. They reflected on how Jesus lives in each room of our heart and cleans out the smelly skeletons in our heart's hall closet. Ultimately, we give Jesus the keys to become the Master of the House, our heart, his home.

Summer Children's Ministry: Son Shine Kids Day Camp hosted approximately 25 children receiving a safe space to thrive and grow in age-appropriate discipleship and life skills. In addition to the Bible coming to life for them, the youth mission teams also taught them some very practical skills. Children learned how to work with basic tools, how to make their own nutritious sandwiches, even learned basics of photography, and so much more! They had a blast! We are grateful to the many day camp sponsors including church groups, individuals, and ladies' groups that help support the day camp ministry.

Home Repair Events:

During the fall and winter months, we had a number of week- long, weekend, and day long home repair service days organized by local groups and churches

in Lee and Macon Counties. This included Auburn University's Honors Student Week of Service, My Jerusalem days of repair, MLK weekend, and most recently a group of six church teams from the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship (CBF) and a national rural poverty alleviation initiative through CBF called Together for Hope. The ARM@AU student group partners with the Auburn Wesley Foundation to coordinate monthly Saturday Service Days. With the summer ministry and these weekend groups, we hosted 311 mission volunteers this year. Here is how you can serve with us in home repair: Commit to 1 Day, 1 Weekend, 1 Week options for home repair in East Alabama and the principles to do this in your own community.

Home Repair and Poverty Education:

Finally, No More Shacks celebrated its 14th Annual Year of our team living in a shack replicating the conditions people face when living in substandard houses. It continues to create a tangible picture of the plight so many seniors and children endure when living in homes that are cold, damp, and unsafe. We can all take a part in eliminating shacks in Alabama and beyond. No More Shacks raised \$180,000 toward the goal of \$200,000. We are grateful yet again for the Auburn Wesley Foundation who allows us to put the shack on their front lawn and our local UMC churches and other churches beyond the connection that give so faithfully.

Upcoming:

Now that I am back from deployment, we have a substantial amount of rebuilding, just like so many others. The new challenges of recruiting interns resulting from the landscape change due to COVID-19, a substantial amount of staff turnover while I was away (something we were trying to avoid), and the changing face of the UMC presents new challenges and opportunities. ARM's commitment to developing servant leaders who compassionately serve the poor and neediest among us through home repair is unwavering.

One last thing, we are extremely grateful to Rev. Jeff Wilson and Rev. Mark Grizzard who helped ARM while I was deployed. Through Rev. Wilson's recommendation, Rev. Grizzard stepped into the role of an interim director while I was away and helped ARM to build some new partnerships. We are very grateful!

Thank you for your prayers and love. We invite you and your church to continue praying, giving, and serving with us as we grow servant leaders who help us repair homes for those in need.

Grace and peace-let's keep on serving,
Lisa Pierce

The ARK

The ARK's original Mission statement from its founding in 1979 continues today, it's simple...just like the gospel...to "Be the presence of Jesus Christ on Panama City Beach."

Today you can ask most people who live & work on PCB from life-guards, cabbies and waiters, to the homeless and police about the ARK and you'll hear a consistent line... 'they help people.' . We think there is no better hashtag...even including the hundreds of positive reviews about our POUR Coffee Shop! The Mission of the ARK is moving, emotional & infectious to most who walk in the door who witness our serving the least, the last and the lost.

Our last report just after Hurricane Michael in 2018 laid out news as we began our new mission remaking the ARK from its long-blessed run as a Youth Retreat. Today in February of 2023 we're still serving Panama City Beach's best coffee and housing persons in need with our 160 beds. We've refocused our housing mission from a Fall only transitional housing project to a year-round Transitional Sober living facility due to the tremendous and fruitful need. We've assisted, housed & fed over 300 residents during the last year, some for a week, some for a year. Because of the varied forms of dormitories, we have been able to host men, women, and families, even fostering a few pets to help those who can't find a spot for their fur babies.

We continue hosting the J1 Visa program students. Housing high achieving students from all over the world who are seeking a place to live, work & play in the US. Most of the students are 1st time visitors from areas like Turkey, South America, Jordan and China. As the world of J1s come to us, we have the opportunity to share the gospel of Jesus by housing those in need, serving weekly meals, offering excursions like dolphin tours and of course lots of conversation with residents, staff & J1 students. Lifelong friends are made, many seeds are planted and baptisms in the Gulf of Mexico are a regular occurrence each season.

The POUR Coffee shop continues to grow with sales doubling over the last 2 years approaching \$1M. It has been studied and duplicated by individuals and Churches local and as far away as Indiana. It's a joy to witness an energized pastor or lead member of a church latch onto the idea of creating an easy open front door to their church or mission. Who can deny the power and positive vibe of a cup of excellent coffee to the WORLD served with a smiling face... especially early in the morning.

The Board of Directors, led by Executive Director, Mike & Liz Bennett and Rev. Jean Tippit since 2020 when Pastor Doug Pennington retired. The Board has a mix of local Methodist laity and clergy along with leading laity from other

Panama City Beach Churches that together bring mission minded servants from every church on the Beach to serve at The ARK.

Mike & Liz continue in their service as the ARK Directors as they have since onboarding in 2017. Assistant Director Rob Raines was hired in December of '22 and along with other staff has been a tremendous asset in overall organization & order at The ARK.

Financially The ARK has been very blessed! The balance sheet is in good shape as operations continue to fund the mission with profit to spare along with many small & large donations, one a 6-figure cash donation. The UMC refocused mission of locals funding local missions has been met and we are thankful to God for making that happen.

Moving forward from the present into the future the ARK Crew has plans to grow our current facilities & offerings with our new onsite gym & POUR patio as well as the launch of our newest vision. The ARK II Community vision presented in 2022 has excited and energized Arkians from our past to our present. A hoped for catalyst of the vision was purchased a few months ago by an affiliate of the ARK, the ARK Church. Our first 2 bedroom Tiny house will house those who have excelled while living at the ARK and are ready to move from dorm style living but continue living in a Christ centered, sober community....exciting good GOD stuff to those of us who serve at The ARK!

We thank you for your prayer, support and encouragement!

Blessings,
The ARK Crew

AWFUMC Steps to Chartering a Church

PURPOSE

The purpose of this document is to guide a New Church in the administrative steps of chartering. There are a lot of things that need to take place during chartering. It is the responsibility of the leadership of the New Church to ensure that this is done. The Conference can provide guidance through the various steps, managing finances, and access to legal help if needed. (*UMC Book of Discipline* ¶259)

DEFINITIONS

New Church Starts

- The bishop may appoint a pastor to launch a new local church, or with the bishop's approval the district superintendent may authorize a local church or group of local churches to launch a new church by gathering interested people in small groups for Bible study, outreach, community building, and worship at a site in an area approved by the district board of church location and building.
- Membership opportunities and resources may be limited.
- A strategic demographic, cultural, or language opportunity for serving a limited population is present.

Chartered Church

- Has a clearly defined vision and ministry to its specific local community.
- Maintains its ministry through its gifts, graces, and resources.
- Pays its Annual Missional Giving.

— A New Church may begin these steps when they are organized by the conference. We recognize that churches are unique and will move at various speeds in the process. (*UMC Book of Discipline* ¶259.4) The length of time can vary from church to church but there must be steps taken at regular intervals.

— Each new church must establish its unique worship, discipleship and outreach ministries. The new church will need to register for a **CLI** and other licensing to allow it to function legally during all stages of ministry.

— The new church will need to determine what its presence will be on the web and create its own platforms to include websites, social media and other sites.

- The new church is expecting at all times to abide by the Conference Safe Sanctuary Policy. <https://www.awfumc.org/awfsafesanctuaries>
- The Board of Congregational Development, in conversation with the pastor, church and DS, will establish benchmarks and hear reports on progress towards those benchmarks regularly.
- Charters happen when all steps are completed and a new church has a membership of 50 to 100 and has established financial stability. (*Conference Journal* 1993)
- Financial stability is defined as being able to provide for a full time clergy, facility for meeting, ministry programs and to begin paying apportionments within the year.
- The AWFL Conference or another partnering church will manage finances for a new church until they complete the first nine steps. This should include but is not limited to payroll, managing tithes and offerings, paying vendor bills, and insurance.

STEPS TO CHARTERING

1.) Obtain GCFA and Conference ID Number

Each United Methodist church has a unique identification number known as the GCFA number. After consultation with the DS, the New Church completes an application for a GCFA number and submits it to the Conference Office. Verify with the Conference Office that the New Church has been assigned a GCFA Number and a Conference ID Number.

Complete before first year of ministry

2.) Establish Mission and Vision Statements

Each New Church is unique and serves a unique community. Therefore each church must establish its unique mission and vision statements that will guide its ministry and direction.

Complete before first year of ministry

3.) Establish a Working Church Roll

Each United Methodist Church is responsible for the members of their church. Each new church must determine how to manage the contact information, record of attendance and giving of their members. Until the new church is chartered, members must be both held on the church's roll maintained locally and the General Church Roll maintained by the Conference.

Complete before first Charge Conference

4.) Elect Leadership and Other Positions

In an official meeting usually led by the District Superintendent, members of the Administrative Council (aka Lead Team, Single Board Governance, Leadership Team) need to be elected.

Complete at first charge conference of new church

5.) Incorporate as Non-Profit (strongly encouraged but not required)

The New Church will need to decide on an official corporate name and verify with the Secretary of State that the name isn't taken. The Articles of Incorporation need to be prepared with the help of legal counsel so as to include language compliant with IRS and UMC requirements. The completed and signed Articles need to be sent to the Secretary of State.

Complete prior to opening a bank account

6.) File for Employer Identification Number (EIN)

The New Church once legally formed needs to apply for a Federal Employer Identification Number. Go to the following link for the application and instructions: <https://www.irs.gov/businesses/small-businesses-self-employed/apply-for-an-employer-identification-number-ein-online>

Complete prior to opening a bank account

7.) Establish Financial Policies

Each church must establish written financial policies in accordance with the Book of Discipline and wise accounting practices. This will include but not be limited to processes for tithes and offerings; guidelines for handling all monies; and working budget planning. Please go to <https://www.awfumc.org/localchurchinformation> and look under Resources and click on Local Church Finance Committee Training. Make sure to click on the presenter balloons to see the comments that go with each page.

Complete prior to opening a bank account

8.) Recognition as a 501(c)(3) Under the Group Ruling

Complete GCFA's Group Ruling Application. (<https://www.umgroupruling.org/einstart>) You will receive a letter that states that the New Church is a 501(c)(3) under the United Methodist Group Ruling. Since most churches are not on the IRS's list of 501(c)(3) charities, this letter should be evidence enough to prove that the New Church is able to receive charitable contributions that are tax deductible.

Complete prior to opening a bank account

9.) Open New Church bank account

10.) Management of Finances

Once a church has financial policies in place, and has opened a bank account it can begin to manage its own funds. Any funds being managed by the conference or partnering church can be transferred to the New Church to manage.

Complete once all previous steps have been taken and prior to chartering

11.) Establishing Plan for Nurture, Outreach, and Worship

Every United Methodist church has the mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. Recognizing that each church within this larger mission has its own unique community and vision for making disciples in that space, it is critical for each church to have a plan for this work. This should include but not be limited to Nurture -discipleship and pastoral care; outreach-ministry in the specific geographical community you are placed with the population God has called the new church to reach and worship-sacraments and the word. Prior to chartering the new church must show how it will make disciples in its unique community.

Complete 1 month prior to review for chartering

12.) Audit to Review Readiness to Charter

As the New Church approaches the time to charter there will be a review of the church's readiness. The District Superintendent, the pastor, lay leadership from the New Church, a representative from the Conference Office or Partnering Church, representatives from the Conference Board of Congregational Development, and other church leaders will meet to confirm that all steps have been taken and that the church meets the qualifications to charter.

Complete 1 month prior to chartering

13.) Conduct a Church Conference to Charter

Following the guidelines found in UMC BOD 259.5-10, the District Superintendent in consultation with the pastor will set a date and conduct a Church Conference in accordance with UMC BOD 246 and 248.

As set by DS and Church Leadership

14.) Transfer of Membership

Once the Church Conference votes to become a chartered church, the membership will be transferred from the General Church Roll to the local church.

Complete 1 month from when church is chartered at a Church Conference

15.) Deeding Over Property

Any property of the New Church that was acquired in the name of the parent church or Conference will need to be legally transferred to the New Church. All deeds must include the Trust Clause. (See attached example). Have an attorney prepare deeds for this transfer. The signed deeds need to be filed at the county courthouse. If there is a mortgage on any of this property, you will need

to contact the bank.
Chartered at a Church Conference

Complete 1 month from when church is

16.) Transferring/Verifying Insurance Coverage

Contact the insurance company that is covering the property, liability, and Workers Comp for the New Church. You will need to notify them that the New Church is incorporating and will no longer be a ministry of the parent church or the Conference.

Complete 1 month from when church is chartered at a Church Conference

17.) Reviewing/Updating Contracts or Accounts

Similar to Insurance--utilities, banking, and credit accounts, etc. they will need to be contacted to change names from the partnering church or Conference. Management of these accounts will need to be turned over to the New Church.

Complete 1 month from when church is chartered at a Church Conference

18.) Payroll Transition

Ensure that the person that will be responsible for payroll has received training and guidance in setting up the New Church's payroll. The New Church may need to purchase software/services. The New Church will need to enroll in EFTPS (Electronic Federal Tax Payment System) in order to remit Federal withholdings. (Go to EFTPS.gov)

Complete 1 month from when church is chartered at a Church Conference

Lastly, once a church is chartered it will follow the designations below to achieve 100% Conference Missional Giving. (AWFL Journal CCEA Report 8)

- 1 year -none
- 2 year -25%
- 3 year -50%
- 4 year -75%
- 5 year -100%

Blue Lake United Methodist Assembly

The past few years have been quite a journey for Blue Lake, but we are feeling blessed because you continue to support us as we seek to move into a new vision for this special place. We are excited to share some of what is happening and to celebrate with you the progress we have been making.

2022 Updates

In the second half of 2022 we saw our number of campers and guests move steadily back toward our last normal operating year in 2019. In fact, we had more people at camp this past summer than we did in 2019. It was a joy and a relief to see so many returning to this special place once again. We anticipate impacting even more lives in 2023 as all indications are that we will continue to serve larger numbers of groups this year. God's ministry at Blue Lake continues to change lives in significant ways as disciples of Christ are made for the transformation of the world!

In 2022 we received a grant through the National United Methodist Camp and Retreat Association which enabled us to address some of our strategic planning around marketing and communication. With this grant we were able to update our logo, launch a new website, and create a more intentional marketing plan so that we might connect with new people in new ways.

We also partnered with *Sacred Playgrounds*, an organization that helps camps gather data to inform decisions, to survey campers to get a clearer picture of the Blue Lake camp experience. We will be using this data to further develop our programs moving forward. Below are a few important statistics shared with us by campers and their parents in 2022.

- 91% of campers indicated they had a lot of fun at camp.
- 87% of campers learned more about God while at camp.
- 86% of campers indicated their faith was strengthened while at camp.

Parents indicated they saw a variety of positive changes in their children after camp. These changes included:

- My child is more pleasant to their family members.
- My child has engaged in more conversations about God/faith.
- My child has shown a greater interest in attending church.

2023 Campaign

We continue to work on our strategic plan in a variety of areas. In 2023, our major emphasis is on sustainability and the long-term financial health of Blue Lake. To jumpstart this work more aggressively, Blue Lake has launched the *Be the Spark Campaign* to support the sustainability of Blue Lake.

Our goal for the *Be the Spark Campaign* is to raise at least \$450,00 to address two specific needs that we currently have. The first is to pay off our remaining mortgage which sat at \$380,000 in January from its original amount of \$1.8 million. The second is to use the additional \$70,000 to begin facility updates throughout our site. Our debt, which supported major updates to our camp a decade ago, has been a significant financial burden and has delayed our ability to fully reinvest in the site.

Meeting our goal for this campaign will enable us to address both areas of greatest need and launch us toward becoming a sustainable ministry. In addition, we will be better situated to continue the ongoing work of our strategic plan that includes improving our financial health in the short and long terms, further developing our programs, and investing in more significant facility updates across the site.

Thank You!

There is much to celebrate about Blue Lake, and we are full of hope for the future of this special place. We are not completely past our challenges, but God is casting a new vision for this ministry. This vision moves beyond simply surviving and toward a future of thriving. We continue to need your prayers and your support as we journey on the path that God is pointing us toward. Thank you to all those who continue to support Blue Lake in so many ways. Your partnership, prayers, and care for this special place are a significant reason that Blue Lake's ministry endures. We look ahead with hope and joy, knowing that God is doing a new thing and sending so many people to help us accomplish all that is before us.

Thank you for being a blessing and we hope to see you here soon!

Patric Newton
Executive Director

Commission on Archives and History and Archivist's Report

We are the Ministry of Memory! The Commission On Archives and History (COAH) is the agency responsible for management of the Methodist Archives Center (MAC). It is the responsibility of the archivist and those working in the MAC to maintain the daily operation of the Center. We also assist the COAH with their meetings and the Memorial Service held at each AWFC Annual Session. It is also the archivist's responsibility to gather information and write the Memoirs printed each year in the Journal of the AWFC.

Not only is the MAC the depository for the AWFC but also Huntingdon College Special Collections. It is located in Houghton Memorial Library on the Huntingdon College campus in Montgomery, Alabama. The MAC performs a joint function for the college and the conference.

In the past year we had twenty-five people doing in-house research with several coming multiple times. The number of online and/or telephone research requests filled were over sixty-six.

The following are the names and numbers of accessions received and processed for the Alabama West Florida Conference:

- MC854-2022 Library Publications and Periodicals
- MC855-2022 Reference Files
- MC856-2022 Audio Visuals
- MC857-2022 Artifacts

The following are the names and numbers of accessions received and processed for the Huntingdon College Special Collections:

- HC336-2022 Publications
- HC337-2022 Reference Files
- HC338-2022 Audio Visuals
- HC339-2022 Artifacts
- HC340-2022 Capstones
- HC341-2022 "Art Show" Materials
- HC342-2022 Freshman Seminar
- HC343-2022 Harper Lee "Thank You" Note
- HC344-2022 John Wesley Fellows; A Foundation for Theological Education Conference

Respectfully Submitted:

Sharon Tucker

Archivist AWFC and HC Special Collections Library

Commission on the Status and Role of Women

The General Commission on the Status and Role of Women advocates for full participation of women in the total life of The United Methodist Church. We're helping the church recognize every person – clergy and lay, women and men, adults and children - as full and equal parts of God's human family.

2022 was a year of transition for the committee. We want to thank Ruth Ann Powers, previous chair of AWF COSROW, for her years of service and dedication to advocating for women in the church. Long standing members were intentional in recruiting new members from around the conference to continue their legacy moving forward.

March 8th is International Women's Day every year and the committee hosted a Lunch & Learn panel discussion highlighting women in leadership around the conference and within the UM Connection. The event sparked district wide gatherings for female clergy and lay women to fellowship together. We hosted two other Lunch & Learns around the 50th Anniversary of GCSRW and Income Disparities within the Church. We will be hosting quarterly Lunch & Learns throughout the year and all are invited to attend! Over the last year, we have reached over 100 individuals through our educational webinars & fellowship gatherings.

Our Annual Conference COSROW Breakfast was hosted by Rev. Kathy Fisher & Whitfield UMC. We were excited to host two bishops, cabinet members, and the General Secretary of GCSRW at our event among the 40 members in attendance. Every year we recognize a mission award and seminary scholarship.

The Alice Lee Award was proudly presented to Rev. June Jernigan. The Alice Lee Award was established to help promote COSROW's primary purpose of "challenging the church to a continuing commitment to the full and equal responsibility and participation of women in the total life and mission of the church, sharing fully in the power and in the policy making at all levels of the Church life."

The Jane Walker Scholarship was presented to Rev. Kristen Wright and Jenn Knox. This scholarship is for applicants who affirm, represent, and advocate for women's leadership in the church. They must be accepted or enrolled in a United Methodist seminary approved by the University Senate or be pursuing an undergraduate degree in Christian Education at a University Senate approved United Methodist institution.

At every Annual Conference, committee members and volunteers serve as monitors during all business sessions, special called sessions, and clergy / lay

sessions. For 2022, the committee summarized the findings of the individual reports and reported it to the Bishop and cabinet members.

To learn more about COSROW, check out our display table at Annual Conference or visit the website at <https://www.resourceumc.org/en/partners/gcsrw/home>.

Thank you,
Rev. Chelsey Brown & Katy Wrona
COSROW Co-Chairs

Communities of Transformation

The Alabama West Florida Conference started Communities of Transformation (COT) in 2013 as a response to the need to serve under-resourced families in our neighborhoods in a more holistic and relational way. After ten years, Communities of Transformation has been established as an independent nonprofit organization in full partnership with the AWF Conference.

The COT sites seek to address poverty by providing a nurturing space that empowers members to dream of a brighter future and take steps to make that dream a reality. This all happens during a weekly meeting, which includes dinner and childcare. While the COT Central Office continues to provide support to the sites, each site relies on local churches and community support for volunteers, meal donations, and financial resources for daily operations.

Communities of Transformation has been working to expand their educational impact and has developed a Transformational Learning branch of the organization. Churches (or other ministries) may now also partner with COT to host a poverty simulation called COPE (Cost of Poverty Experience). This event is a 2.5-hour interactive experience that offers a glimpse into the lives of low-income individuals living in our neighborhoods. By being assigned particular family roles and interacting with government agencies, churches, and other resource providers, participants get a taste of the obstacles that are faced, the decisions that have to be made, and the consequences for real-life families struggling to make ends meet. The experiential nature of this training helps attendees more deeply understand the complexities of poverty, paving the way for addressing the issues of poverty more comprehensively.

COT also hosts in person and virtual trainings focused on understanding poverty alleviation, SHIFing perspective, and understanding a Biblical Framework. If your church is interested in hosting a COPE or other training, please email our director, Katy Wrona, at kwrona@communitiesoftransformation.org.

We are grateful for the COT communities that operate throughout our service area in Brewton, Dothan, Evergreen, Mobile, Montgomery, Phenix City, and Pine Hill. We are thankful to all the churches, pastors, and lay leaders who work with Communities of Transformation to change lives and impact our communities. We look forward to meeting more of you who would like to become involved.

To find out how you can be involved in this life-changing initiative, visit our website at <https://www.communitiesoftransformation.org/>, or visit our Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/CommunitiesofTransformation/>.

Thank you,
Katy Wrona
Executive Director

Conference Board of Congregational Development

The Office of Congregational Development in conjunction with the Board of Congregational Development did great work this conference year. They were able to implement some new initiatives and continue to build upon existing programs. Like many other areas of ministry, Congregational Development experience challenges, but nothing it could not overcome.

One of the highlights of this past year was being awarded a \$10,000 grant from the Foundation for Evangelism. Rev. Bill Kierce applied for this grant to fund a Rural Church Evangelism/Innovative Outreach Cohort. The purpose of the cohort was to explore emerging models of effective community engagement and outreach. This cohort launched on August 18, 2022 with 35 pastors participating. The cohort was held over a nine-month period and had three phases each three months in length: 1) Exploration, 2) Adaptation, and 3) Implementation. We are grateful to the pastors who took part in this cohort and look forward to seeing the fruit of this learning experience.

During this conference year, Next Steps consultations continued throughout the conference. This has been a great offering to churches as they discern not only the future ministry of their church, but also how to best meet the needs of those in their surrounding communities. It has brought great joy to see churches make connections with community partners and discover new ways of doing ministry.

In October 2022, Bishop David Graves commissioned the Task Force on Church Planting and Revitalization led by Dr. Geoffrey Lentz. This group was tasked with creating a new model for congregational development in the Alabama-West Florida Conference. The intent was to then use this model to start new ministries and churches in areas that would no longer have a United Methodist presence post-disaffiliation. A complete report of the task force can be found in the Book of Reports.

As we close out this conference year, we want to extend our most sincere gratitude to a long time and committed employee, Mrs. Sandy Gutting, who served as Office Manager for the Office of Congregational Development for over 15 years. Additionally, we wish to recognize Rev. Bill Kierce for the great work he did serving as Director of Congregational Development and Vitality for the past five years. Finally, we pay tribute to Rev. Frederick Outlaw who served as Chair of the Board of Congregational Development until the time of his passing in March 2023. “Well done, my good and faithful servant!” (Matthew 25:23 NLT)

Submitted by Deaconess Celeste Eubanks
On Behalf of Rev. Frederick G. Outlaw – posthumous

Conference Board of Discipleship

Sacred Space Spiritual Formation

The Spiritual Formation Team under the Board of Discipleship focus is that of our Annual Conference and its churches, pastors, and laity. We are concentrating on helping the local church and its members with training and teaching in spiritual formation.

The training of Spiritual Directors and the continuing education of our certified Spiritual Directors now fall under The Center for Sacred Space. The Center for Sacred Space is a nonprofit with close ties with the Alabama-West Florida Conference and the Episcopal Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast. They started our third three-year Spiritual Director training in February 2023.

This training is suited to those who hunger to experience deeper intimacy with God, grow in attentiveness to God's movement, are drawn to compassionate listening, feel a call to companion others on the spiritual journey and seek spiritual community with others.

The Center for Sacred Space held several continuing education retreats for our Spiritual Directors in 2022. An Enneagram retreat led by Rev. Pam Avery, one of our conference spiritual directors that is certified as an enneagram facilitator. A silent retreat at Blessed Trinity Shrine Retreat in Fort Mitchell, Alabama, and Living in an Icon: Contemplation in Nature at Live Oaks Pavilion facilitated by Sonja Crawford.

During Lent this past year we had several churches hold formation experiences. At First Methodist Church of Pensacola in Wesley Abbey, April 11 – 12 of Holy Week there was a Labyrinth and Stations of the Cross set up for persons to attend. 26 Persons attended this offering.

At Whitfield Memorial United Methodist Church in the Sheppard Center April 11- 16, there was a Lenten prayer room entitled "Breathe on Me". With the Labyrinth and exploration tables of other contemplative prayer practices. 50 people from our conference attended this offering.

We have Certified Spiritual Directors ready to help you with your church's training in spiritual formation, leading drum circles, developing prayer shawl ministries, as well as leading in social justice and reconciliation. Pilgrimages through the National Memorial and Legacy Museum in Montgomery, Alabama with a booklet with reflections questions, and meditations of the experience. We have Certified Spiritual Directors throughout the leadership of our Annual Conference from laity in the pews to District Superintendents. These Spiritual

Directors facilitate many groups and teach spiritual practices and spiritual formation. Many Certified Spiritual Directors are assisting Community of Transformation. They are involved with the Contemplative Outreach of Pensacola. They serve on Emmaus Walks, in United Methodist Women's groups, Covent Bible Studies, Advent studies, various Bible studies, and Sunday School classes. They facilitate Companions in Christ studies, centering prayer groups, and Lectio Divina training. They are found helping and leading in worship. Our Spiritual Directors are available to lead formational experiences as well as Labyrinth and prayer room experiences. Contact AWFSpiritualFormationTeam@gmail.com for help finding the perfect spiritual director for your need.

We have nine Certified Spiritual Directors trained in Supervision. All of our Spiritual Directors are held to the highest level of ethics and must be seeing a Spiritual Director themselves as well as be in peer or one-on-one supervision and take continuing education.

Our Certified Spiritual Directors are there to listen to those who need someone to walk with them through discernment, a crisis, growth in your prayer life, or any other need you may have. Our directors have many directees in formal direction but more often we are the person that listens to you without judgment or trying to tell you what you should do in your everyday life.

We hold sacred space for persons to speak their stories without fear. We hold our district superintendents, Bishop and cabinet, Annual Conference, and General Conferences in prayer. I am very proud of our directors and it is an honor to serve with them.

Submitted by:

Elizabeth M Whatley, Certified Spiritual Director, Supervisor
Chair, Spiritual Formation Team, Division of the Conference Board of
Discipleship

Conference Board of Global Ministries

This year the Board of Global Ministries has continued to experience travel difficulties in the work of missions due to issues surrounding the Covid-19 virus. Although we have not been able to offer support through in-person experiences, we have been able to offer financial support.

Despite travel challenges, we have been able to actively remain in partnership with Tanzania. The AL-WF Leadership Development Team had planned to return to Tanzania to participate in the Leadership Seminar scheduled there for September 11–17, 2022. Though they were unable to participate in person, our committee was able to provide funds to assist with travel and other expenses for the 25 pastors and leaders from 24 churches across 7 districts in Tanzania gathering in Mwanza for the seminar. We look forward to the time when we are able to once again send teams to Tanzania.

We received six applications for the Renfro Grant this year, and after reviewing them, our committee sent the top three applications on to the SEJ Grant Selection Committee. All three of our forwarded applications received partial grants. They include Uriah UMC, First UMC Port St. Joe, and new church start Restoration UMC. Congratulations to them.

Our committee was also able to provide funds to Communities of Transformation (COT) to assist in promoting their Awareness Walks throughout our Conference, as well as assisting in the expense of presenting the Cost of Poverty Experience (COPE) throughout our Conference. Both of these are great tools for promoting awareness, recruitment, and fundraising for the important work of COT.

We also provided funds to Amber Kupfer, a 2-year Global Mission Fellow, to show our support for her work in Miami, FL. Additionally, we provided funds to Embrace Kids, Dumas Wesley Community Center, and Inner-City Mission of Mobile in support of their mission and ministries.

We are now working on creating a yearly grant to help fund new missions for small churches and new church starts in our Conference.

Respectfully submitted,
Rev. Kathy Fisher
Chair of Board of Global Ministries

Conference Board of Higher Education and Campus Ministries

The Board of Higher Education and Campus Ministry is committed to the spiritual growth of the students on the various colleges and universities throughout the Alabama-West Florida Annual Conference. In this commitment, Auburn University, Alabama State University, Troy University, The University of South Alabama, Tuskegee University, Huntingdon College, and The University of West Alabama Wesley Foundations and Campus Ministries are working tirelessly to connect to the students on their respective campuses. In their contexts, they continue to search for innovative strategies to reach their colleges and universities with the gospel of Jesus Christ. As shared in previous annual statements the BHECM is encouraging and moving towards a mandate that requires the campus ministry units to find diversified sources of fundraising, deepen relationships with local congregations, and cultivate greater alumni commitments. Funding and oversight remain the greatest challenges at a systemic level for the work of the BHECM. Annual metrics are requested to assess the vitality and fruitfulness of the ministries of each campus. This is for mutual accountability and stewardship of Annual Conference resources.

Campus Ministry remains a vital outlet to reaching the next generation with the salvific message of Jesus Christ. Likewise, they provide laboratories for future pastors and church leaders to preach, teach, and minister to their fellow students. Wesley Foundations must remain a priority for the Alabama-West Florida Annual Conference as they are the missional outposts to students during one of the most formative seasons of their life. The coming years are going to be critical in visioning what United Methodist campus ministry can and should be for the students coming onto campus over the next five to ten years. Please continue to pray for each campus minister, their ministry staff, and the campuses they serve. In conclusion, consider how your local congregation could commit financially and as board members and ministry partners to a Wesley Foundation to further their mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the World and nurture the next generation of pastors and church leaders!

Grace and Peace,

Rev. Dr. Levi S. Gardner
Chair, BHECM

Huntingdon College

When I first stepped foot on the Huntingdon Campus in 2003, I was immediately struck by the cruciform design of the College's main building, Flowers Hall, and the central location of the grand Collegiate Gothic chapel in that building. The design of the building and the location of the chapel say it all: Huntingdon College is a College of the Church.

For more than 110 years, Ligon Chapel has served as the heart of campus. And now, as Huntingdon approaches its 175th birthday, Ligon Chapel continues to evolve in order to meet the needs of a new generation of disciples being prepared by Huntingdon for lives of service in the transformation of the world. While Ligon Chapel looks like the chapel of every alum's memory, it's far from that chapel in the breadth of its usage for today's students.

"We have completely transformed historic worship space into an updated, modern worship and performance space that can be used by all," says the Reverend Rhett Butler '13, Chaplain of the College. "You walk in and can't tell anything has been done. That is, until the lights and microphones come on."

Chaplain Butler leads weekly Tuesday Night Worship (TNW), a lively contemporary worship service that meets at 8:30 p.m. in Ligon Chapel. "Sacred arts and liturgy are important to me, and I'm really excited for all we can do with this system. The sound and lighting are part of an all-digital system that is top-tier professional, selected and installed to work with the amazing acoustical features of this historic, sacred space. Music, concerts, dance, gospel choir, concert choir, worship team, and even theater productions can be presented well in this space, which has not been the case for many years."

The Chaplain has three interns working with him each week, providing hands-on experience in worship technology for their resumes as they look forward to entering seminaries or other paths in ministry.

"From the soaring music of great cathedrals to the contemporary worship bands of today, music is at the heart of the Christian worship experience," says Chaplain Butler. "Music is also a central component of the liberal arts experience at a College of the Church. All our College ensembles, including its choirs and its bands, are now able to perform and celebrate their gifts in a space that allows them to shine!"

In addition to weekly TNW, Chaplain Butler also leads a weekly Eucharist in the Jean Rodgers Chapel in Flowers Hall, designed 20 years ago specifically for use by smaller prayer and worship ministries.

For more information about Huntingdon College, please visit www.huntingdon.edu

Submitted by:

Reverend J. Cameron West, President

Wesley Foundations

Auburn Wesley Foundation

On behalf of our staff, student leaders and board of directors, I want to begin by saying thank you to the Annual Conference, the Board of Higher Education and Campus Ministry and our Bishop David Graves for their support and leadership. And I want to also thank the Director of Connectional Ministries, Celeste Eubanks, and our District Superintendent Dr. Jeff Wilson for helping me to give leadership to this ministry during this season.

Perhaps the clearest story of God's work through the Auburn Wesley Foundation this year is the presence of a new and strong group of freshmen who have found a Christian community to grow with. Throughout the year this group consistently made up about 50% of our gatherings, bringing an energy and joy that has been a real gift to the whole ministry. They represent to us God's faithfulness in rebuilding a strong and vibrant campus ministry coming through the years of the pandemic.

We will come into the fall semester with a full student council, made up of a student president and ten other students giving leadership, in pairs, to our five ministry areas: outreach, worship, fellowship, discipleship, and missions. This is a sign of increasing strength and growth in the ministry – to see a growing number of students with a desire to serve and lead and take ownership of the ministry. Pray for our student council – that they may lead faithfully and with great passion for Christ's grace to be shared in the campus community through Wesley. May they grow in their own discipleship through this experience.

By the time you are reading this we will have had a team of 14 students spend a week in San Juan de Pastocalle, Ecuador with our Methodist missionary partner Sara Flores. We will have joined in an ongoing building project of local Methodist school and had the chance to lead Bible school for children in that community during time there. This team is our first out of the country mission team since the Spring of 2019.

Our staff and local board are taking seriously the ways that the denominational strife will radically change the way extension ministries, like Wesley Foundations, are supported financially. We are already a full year into a three-year effort to strengthen our alumni support. We are grateful to continue to be an extension of the UMC for students in Auburn and so will look to strengthen partnerships across the connection. We also know that it will be important for us to have support beyond the UMC, with churches who are disaffiliating. We want to work to have broad support so that we may continue to have a vibrant campus ministry offering a Wesleyan alternative in a space that is otherwise dominated by reform theology and the ways that it expresses itself in campus ministry.

If all goes well, as you are reading this, both myself and the Rev. Paige Holaday (from the Florida Conference) will be ordained as deacons in full connection. We celebrate the chance for us to express our vocation in ordained ministry and through the Auburn Wesley Foundation. Campus ministry is an amazing place for us to build that bridge between the church and the world. And there's no better place to live into that, than in Auburn.

Grace + Peace,
Rev. Tony Jeck

2023-2024 Board of Directors

Effective July 1, 2023

UMC Members:

Leonard Bell, Ann Bethea, Virginia Davis, Janet Deutsch, Christy Flurry, Rev. Patrick Hitchman-Craig, Rob Lyda, Lindsey Middleton, Rebecca Moseley, Dennis Pinkard, Brian Rogers, Rob Stanford, Liz Stewart

Non-UMC Members:

Michael Carter, Beth Cofield, Sarah Crim, Ben Farrow, Aimee Northrup

Student Members: TBD

Ex-Officio:

Bishop David Graves, Resident Bishop AWF Conference
Rev. Dr. Jeff Wilson, District Superintendent
Celeste Eubanks, Director of Connectional Ministries
Mrs. Kay Whaley, BHECM Liaison
Dr. Rob Thomas, BHECM Member
Patricia Stevenson, Director of Alumni & Development
Stephanie Jeck, Bookkeeper
Christy Benitez, Administrative Assistant
Charlie Gullede, Resident Manager, Wesley Dorm
Rev. Tony Jeck, Director
Rev. Paige Holaday, Associate Director
TBD, Student President
TBD, Ministry Interns

University of South Alabama Wesley Foundation

The Wesley Foundation at the University of South Alabama continues to be a ministry that provides college students in the Mobile area the opportunity to connect with other students, grow in their faith, and serve others with the love of Jesus. We are reaching students not only at the University of South Alabama, but at all colleges and universities in the Mobile area, including the University of Mobile, Coastal Community College, Bishop State, and Springhill College. Our weekly programming gives students the opportunity to connect and worship at our Tuesday night dinner and worship, and the chance to dive into the sacred text at our Wednesday night Bible study. We also outreach to South's campus with a weekly presence at the Student Center, we participate in local mission projects, we hold social events, and offer students several ways to connect with United Methodist churches for worship.

This year has marked a new form of partnership. We have begin connecting with other Wesley Foundations in the sunbelt conference. In January we hosted a joint retreat where students from the Wesley Foundations at the university of Southern Mississippi, Troy University and the University of South Alabama joined together in worship, study and fellowship at a retreat center in Orange Beach. Students built deep Christian friendships that have continued throughout the rest of the school year. We are building on that success with a joint Mission trip after graduation this may. We are coordinating the details for all of these Wesley Foundations to do hurricane relief in the Tampa area through our UMWIM coordinators there.

USA Wesley would like to say thank you to all those who care for us and support us prayerfully, financially, and in tangible ways. You are demonstrating what it is to be the hands and feet of Christ, and you are a part of equipping the future leaders of our faith with the knowledge and experiences they need to do the same. We ask for your continued prayers and support, and if you are ever in the Mobile area, feel free to stop by and see us. We would love to show you around.

Peace,
Rev. Jeremy Steele
Executive Director
USA Wesley Foundation

University of West Alabama

PROGRESS

UWA Wesley new semester began on January 23rd for our kick off we offered a Biblical Escape Room on Noah's Ark. We had a large attendance of 45-50 students. This so far has been our biggest turn out for the semester. Monday nights consist of local churches sponsoring a meal and we offer the church opportunity to share a message if they just want to feed I get someone to speak. We have had some really awesome speakers every Monday night normal attendance is 12-20. I try to mix it up with a speaker, a game night, one night we had the Livingston Police Department Chief speak and then do a demonstration with the drug dog. We had Jessie Spangler from Blue Lake come and speak about summer job opportunities, we had 3 students apply and they were all offered a job.

We offer student led Bible Study and dinner on Thursday night we have 8-10 attending on a regular basis. The students also help plan the meals. Jarion Rogers does a great job leading and Alyssa Thicklin, Alyssa Rickles, and Brandy Sermon do a good job getting a meal planned.

We have 10 rooms that we lease out unfortunately we were not full due to some unforeseen incidents that 2 students had to pull out of school. The facility is in the best shape it has been since I've been here. We installed new flooring this summer in all the dorm rooms and the kitchen, restrooms, and TV room in the main building. We also painted all the dorm rooms and the foyer in the main building, we gave the students option to paint their room in lieu of one months rent. We had to purchase a new washer, dryer, and fridge for the pantry.

GOALS

- After Spring Break have an Easter Escape Room
- Churches are lined up to feed through April 24th
- Planning on getting more students involved in leadership of The Wesley
- Take a group to participate in a real escape room in either Tuscaloosa or Meridian
- Get all the rooms full before the semester is over
- Getting the board to 60% UMC
- Spending 100% of funding on mission and outreach
- Main goal is to reach students for Christ!

Elizabeth Stone

Director, UWA Wesley Foundation

P. O. Box 795

451 University Drive

Livingston, AL 35470

Conference Board of Laity

Much has happened in our conference and denomination since we last gathered one year ago for Annual Conference. We are in a season of change and that will continue into next year. This past summer the conference held conversations with Bishop Graves, staff, and myself, in regional laity meetings to answer questions and discuss concerns around the growing divisions in the UMC. Most of our divisions are cultural in nature. I believe that the church has to speak to the culture, and not the other way around. By nature, the church is counter-cultural. Our mission is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. It is not to let the world change God.

After those initial conversations, I have continued to travel the conference at the request of many churches and groups (lay and clergy) to answer questions as everyone is attempting to discern their path forward. It has been an honor and privilege to meet so many faithful laity that serve their local church in the background. Many of the questions you have asked revolve around the role of laity in the local church. I ran across a Laity Sunday posting from a church outside our conference that gives a brief historical dynamic between Lay and Clergy and wanted to share. I did not author this, but it does give great insight and a brief history.

In church lingo, everyone is either clergy or laity — clergy are those who have been ordained by the church and set aside to do the specific work of serving communion, baptizing, teaching and preaching, while laity are ... well, everyone else! Laity comes from the Greek word “laos,” which simply means people, crowd, nation, or congregation. When we use the word “laity” now, it means not just any random group of people, but God’s people, the new people who have been brought into the community which Jesus Christ formed.

However, there’s a dirty little secret about clergy and laity; there is no Biblical basis for this division! The idea that some people are supposed to do God’s work while everybody else has to get on with living ordinary life is not something that Jesus would have taught. In the early church, everyone had a role to play; everyone participated wholeheartedly in the work of spreading the good news of Jesus.

Eventually, ordinary churchgoers began to believe that there were two kinds of Christians — the good Christians, who became priests, monks or nuns, and the ordinary, run-of-the-mill Christians, who had to live ordinary lives in the real world, and thus could be forgiven for living less-than-holy lives. Or to put it another way — clergy and laity. Fortunately, Martin Luther and the Reformers exposed this thinking to

be inconsistent with Jesus' teaching. They began to introduce "ordinary Christians" to the idea that everyone can be a serious disciple of Christ. Every one of us has spiritual gifts and talents to use on behalf of the common good.

John Wesley continued this emphasis by encouraging laypersons to preach and teach, as well as perform other tasks usually left to clergy. His teaching on sanctification and Christian perfection clearly implied that laity and clergy alike were called to holiness.

In our *Book of Discipline*, one of the first sections is titled, "The Ministry of All Christians," and it includes this critical sentence: "All Christians are called through their baptism to this ministry of servanthood in the world to the glory of God and for human fulfillment."

Notice the phrase all Christians. Not just the preacher. Or the children's minister. All Christians. That means you.

I give thanks for the laity and the vital role they play in the life of the church. I give thanks to our conference Board of Laity and all their work and leadership throughout the year. Keep focused on the mission of the church, keep serving and providing leadership at your church. Most of all keep God at the center of all you do, and he will provide a calm spirit as we continue to navigate choppy waters. You are not here by accident. God has a plan for you and the church. Thank you for your selfless sacrifice and your service. It is my prayer that each person in our conference would find their place in God's Church.

Blessings,
Gene

Conference Board of Pension and Health

The Board of Pension and Health Benefits offers quality healthcare, disability, pension, retirement, financial planning, long-term care and death benefit coverage to the clergy and churches of the Alabama-West Florida Conference.

With the continued uncertainty in the healthcare environment, the Board continues to give careful attention to our resources as we look toward the future.

Our greatest resource is confidence in God's abundance and goodness.

Your Board of Pension and Health Benefits is prudent in long-term planning, and judicious in our management of the Board's important benefits programs. We are committed to the goal of sustainable churches, a sustainable Alabama-West Florida Annual Conference, and a sustainable United Methodist Church.

Report 1 – Health Insurance

The Board works hard to provide excellent health care coverage to our clergy and lay participants through a partially self-funded insurance plan, administered by Blue Cross Blue Shield of Alabama. Lucas Tribble serves as chairperson of the Insurance Subcommittee of the Board. The Board continues to provide for and support the Wellness Sub-Committee. The cost of this health insurance plan is covered by participant premium equivalents, church direct billing, and apportionments. While contributions to the Clergy Retired Benefit Stabilization Fund are presently suspended, it remains a part of our funding plan to guarantee the financial strength of our Health Insurance Plan and to help offset the unfunded liability for retiree benefits. The Board's health insurance reserve investment fund market value as of December 31, 2022 was \$13.0 million. The Board of Pension and Health Benefits also maintains an Operating Reserve Fund at the United Methodist Foundation with a balance of \$500,000.

Plan participants are encouraged to complete an annual Biometric Screening and an on-line Health and Lifestyle Assessment. Participation in additional wellness activities offered by the Board is optional but highly encouraged.

The Board of Pension and Health Benefits seeks to increase the insurance reserves each year in its efforts both to maintain fiscal strength and stability in our insurance program and to offset the unfunded liability associated with providing post-retirement medical benefits to current and future retirees. The Conference unfunded liability for retiree health benefits was estimated in 2015 to be approximately \$27,600,000, in 2017 at \$24,300,000, at \$17,600,000 in 2019, \$27,150,000 in 2021 and \$15,387,100 in 2023. The 2023 actuarial results reflect the cost savings from implementing the 2023 plan design changes. The two main components of that plan change were the elimination of benefits for clergy

retiring prior to age 65 and those who had not attained age 60 prior to January 1, 2023. The summary of the 2023 study results is included in Report 2. The full report is available upon request to the Board of Pension and Health Benefits office.

The Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (COBRA) health benefit provisions amend the Employee Retirement Income Security Act, the Internal Revenue Code and the Public Health Service Act to require group health plans to provide a temporary continuation of group health coverage that otherwise might be terminated. The law generally applies to all group health plans maintained by private-sector employers with 20 or more employees, or by state or local governments. The law does not apply to plans sponsored by the Federal Government or by churches and certain church-related organizations. While providing COBRA coverage was optional in the past, the Board of Pension and Health Benefits discontinued COBRA prior to 2012, believing it no longer necessary and not in keeping with our commitment to faithful stewardship of Annual Conference funds.

Health Insurance Eligibility Matrix

The Group Health Benefits Plan is not a form of entitlement. The Conference Board of Pension and

	BCBS-Conference Clergy Active Health Plan	BCBS-Conference Staff Active Health Plan
Active Clergy	Mandatory enrollment for eligible clergy (appointed at 100%-75%) unless covered by spouse group health plan, by military or government retirement insurance plan. See note 1.	Not Eligible
Active Clergy Spouse	Dependent enrollment is optional until age 65. See note 2.	Not Eligible
Retired Clergy under 65	Not Eligible	Not Eligible
Retired Clergy Spouse under 65	Not Eligible	Not Eligible
Retire Clergy over 65	Not Eligible	Not Eligible
Retired Clergy Spouse over 65	Not Eligible	Not Eligible
Conference Staff	Not Eligible	Full-time employees eligible. Family coverage available at the employee's expense.
Local Church Staff	Not Eligible	Not Eligible

Note 1: Mandatory enrollment for eligible clergy (appointed at 100%-75%) unless covered by spouse group health plan, by military or government retirement insurance plan. Documentation of enrollment is required. Clergy age 65+, not in retirement status serving 100%-75% will remain on the active plan. Church will be direct billed for the premium.

Note 2: Dependent enrollment is optional until age 65. Spouse age 65, will no longer be eligible for active plan, but eligible for enrollment in the Conference MedSupp Plan (if on active plan for previous 5 years) . The church to which the Clergy is appointed will be direct billed for the family coverage; however, clergy is responsible for the premium cost.

Note 3: •Clergy members retiring after July 1, 2017 with 35 or more years of service will receive a full premium reduction for themselves and their Medicare eligible spouses assuming they have been on the active plan the prior five years. •With respect to married individuals that are each clergy with appointments in the Alabama West Florida Annual Conference, each such clergy must satisfy Medicare and Plan eligibility requirements and

Health Benefits reserves the right to amend the active and retired plan of benefits and the eligibility.

BCBS Medicare Supplement Plan	SunLife Dental/Vision Plan	Active Plan Premium Reduction	Medicare Supplement Premium Reduction
Not Eligible	Enrolled in plan with Conference health enrollment	N/A	N/A
Must enroll in AWF MedSupp Plan at age 65 paying full MedSupp premium.	Enrolled in plan with Conference health enrollment	Not Eligible	Not Eligible
Not Eligible	Not Eligible	Not Eligible	N/A
Not Eligible	Not Eligible	Not Eligible	
Must have attained age 60 prior to 1/1/2023.	Not Eligible		2.9% per year for 5-34 years of service subject to requirements. See note 3
Clergy must have attained age 60 prior to 1/1/2023	Not Eligible		
Must have attained age 60 prior to 1/1/2023 and meet other eligibility req'mts.	Enrolled in plan with Conference health enrollment	Not Eligible	
	Not Eligible		

premium reductions will be applied to each such clergy and not because of their status as a spouse of a clergy. Participants retiring after July 1, 2017 with 5 to 34 years of service will receive a 2.9% premium reduction for each year of service for themselves and their Medicare eligible spouses assuming they have been on the active plan the prior five years. In all cases, the clergy must have attained the age of 60 prior to 1/1/2023 to be eligible for this plan.

Note 4: The Church will be billed for retired clergy appointed to the local church and enrolled in the Conference Medicare Supplement Plan regardless of the appointment percentage.

Note 5: Active and retiree health benefits are available to clergy and lay staff who maintain membership in a local United Methodist Church. Members who withdraw their membership will lose benefits on the last day of the calendar month when this withdrawal becomes effective.

2022 HEALTH INSURANCE RECEIPTS AND EXPENDITURES				
			Current YR	Balance
Beginning Balance (without PRM Val. Adj)				\$711,826.80
Receipts				
	Apportionments		\$898,627.16	
	Premiums			
		Clergy Assmt	\$51,617.05	
		Clergy	\$3,570,318.66	
		Lay	\$32,615.45	
		Retired	\$107,359.12	
	Refunds of Claims		0	
	Reinsurance		\$0.00	
	Misc Receipts		0	
	Total Receipts		\$4,660,537.44	
Total Available			\$4,660,537.44	\$5,372,364.27
Expenditures				
	Claims Direct - BCBS		\$4,730,415.52	
	Reinsurance Premium Paid		\$222,244.36	
	Dental Premium Paid		\$130,198.47	
	Premium Refunds		\$2,943.00	
	Valuation Adj - PRM Obligation		\$0.00	
	Miscellaneous		\$626.51	
	Fund Operations		\$132,195.95	
	Total Expenses		\$5,218,623.81	\$153,740.46
	Transfer to Foundation		\$0.00	\$0.00
Net Available over Expenses			(\$558,086.37)	

Report 2 – Report of Actuarial Valuation of Post-Retirement Medical Benefits of Employees and Retirees

In response to the direction of the 2000 General Conference, every two years the Alabama-West Florida Conference retains an outside consulting firm to calculate the liabilities associated with providing postretirement medical benefits to current and future retirees in accordance with the terms of its existing plans and contribution arrangement. The report in Exhibit 1 was prepared by PRM Consulting Group, based on conditions existing as of January 1, 2023.

The full report presents actuarial liabilities for the plan, as well as the applicable expense and liability amounts that would exist in the conference-reported plan financial information in accordance with the Standards issued by the Financial Accounting Standards Board (FASB) (ASC 715, and formerly FASB Statements 106, 132R and 158). In addition, cash flow information is presented which projects the future claims and participant contributions for the current group of active and retired participants, along with the resulting employer costs. Cash flows, liabilities, and the net periodic post-retirement benefit costs have been calculated based on conditions existing as of the January 1, 2023 measurement date.

Please contact the Fiscal Office at 334-356-1034 if you would like to review the report. In this report (Number 2, Exhibit 1), we summarize the information provided through the valuation. Currently there is no formal funding plan established, although the Board of Pension and Health Benefits seeks to use any revenues over expenditures in the health insurance program to build up reserves and to underwrite this liability. We fund the annual retiree health costs through apportionments and individual monthly premium equivalents.

Exhibit 1 – Summary of Principal Plan Liabilities and Costs

The following tables summarize the Statement of Financial Accounting Standards Board (FASB) (ASC 715, and formerly FASB Statements 106, 132R and 158).

Expected Postretirement Benefit Obligation (EPBO)	\$ 15,484,331
Accumulated Postretirement Benefit Obligation (APBO), using Valuation Discount Rate	\$ 15,387,091
Accumulated Postretirement Benefit Obligation (APBBO), using 7% Discount Rate	\$ 12,536,046
Value of Plan Assets (Retiree Benefit Funds)	\$ 12,633,725
Value of Plan Assets Recognized under Accounting Standards	\$ -
Service Cost for 2023 fiscal year	\$ 58,619
Net Periodic Postretirement Benefits Cost 2022 fiscal year	\$ (5,012,122)
Net Periodic Postretirement Benefits Cost 2023 fiscal year	\$ (1,320,053)
Expected Net Employer Cash Flow for 2023 fiscal year	\$ 657,150

Benefit Obligation

<i>Reconciliation</i>	<i>2022 Fiscal Year</i>	<i>2021 Fiscal Year</i>
Benefit Obligation, beginning of year	\$ 28,460,010	\$ 27,149,828
Service Cost	598,696	1,112,789
Interest Cost	709,285	659,510
Contributions by Participants	109,768	111,976
Actuarial (Gains) and Losses	(8,825,146)	-
Foreign Currency Exchange Rate Changes	-	-
Benefits Paid	(471,942)	(574,093)
Plan Amendments	-	-
Business Combinations	-	-
Divestitures, Curtailments or Settlements	(5,193,580)	-
Special Termination Benefits	-	-
Other	-	-
Benefit Obligation, end of year	\$ 15,387,091	\$ 28,460,010

Report 3 - Post-Retirement Medical Benefits for Retirees

Purpose of the Plan: This is a retiree health plan designed to supplement the amounts Medicare pays for some hospital, medical, and surgical services. The Plan is not designed to cover all the expenses that Medicare does not pay. You must be eligible for Medicare and enrolled in Parts A and B of Medicare in order to receive any benefits under the Plan. Part D is recommended but not required to participate in the Plan. However, drug coverage is not included in the Plan. The Plan is self-insured by the Alabama-West Florida Conference of the United Methodist Church. This means that the Conference pays for all claims out of its own assets and does not buy an insurance policy to pay benefits under the Plan. Blue Cross is responsible for administering claims under the Plan; Blue Cross does not insure the benefits under the Plan. Retiring and Retired Clergy members must maintain membership in the United Methodist Church to receive Post Retirement Medical benefits. Those that no longer have membership in the United Methodist Church will be removed from this plan on July 1, 2023. Following July 1, 2023, any new withdrawals will be removed at the end of the month of withdrawal.

Report 4 – Pension

The Reverend Amy Persons chairs the Pension sub-committee of the Conference Board of Pension and Health Benefits. The Board continues to be delighted by the fine work of Wespath Benefits and Investments. With assets exceeding \$21 billion and over 91,000 active and retired participants, Wespath Benefits and Investments ranks in the top 100 pension plans in the country and is the largest faith-based not for-profit financial service organization in the world. In addition, Wespath Benefits and Investments acts as a socially responsible investor and participates actively in shareholder advocacy, proxy voting, portfolio screening, and community investing. Wespath Benefits and Investments is the largest denominational investor in affordable housing programs for low and moderate-income families in the nation. To date, they have allocated nearly \$1 billion to affordable housing and community development investments.

Many current and future retirees find that their pension benefit is derived from several different plans. While the number and variety of plans make calculating pension benefits confusing, the various plans offer a certain level of security due to the diverse ways in which retiree pensions are funded.

1. The Pre-1982 plan bases the pension payment for a retired person on the number of years served with pension credit prior to 1982 and the Past Service Rate (PSR). The Board of Pension set as its goal to offer a sustainable PSR increase in future years. For 2023, the PSR is set at eight hundred thirty-seven dollars (\$837) per service year for retired clergy and five hundred eighty-five dollars (\$585) for surviving spouses. For 2024, the Board proposes a 2% increase setting the PSR at eight hundred fifty-four

dollars (\$854) per service year for retired clergy and five hundred ninety-seven dollars (\$597) for surviving spouses. The Annual Conference adjusts the pension benefits of those living in Conference provided retirement homes by a reduction of \$50.00 per month for clergy and \$35.00 per month for surviving spouses.

2. The Ministerial Pension Plan (MPP) was the mandatory retirement plan for clergy serving from 1982 through 2006. Under this plan, the Conference Board of Pension contributed 12% of the Denominational Average Compensation (DAC) on behalf of each eligible clergy person under appointment. Benefits at retirement are based upon specific decisions made by the retiring participant.
3. By mandate of the 2004 General Conference, beginning in January 2007, Wespath Benefits and Investments replaced the MPP with the Clergy Retirement Security Program (CRSP), which has two components – a Core Defined Benefit Plan and a Core Defined Contribution Plan. The Core Defined Benefit Plan determines a pension benefit using the following formula by multiplying 1.25% of the Denominational Average Compensation (DAC) in the year of retirement by the number of years of credited service after 2006. The Core Defined Contribution Plan determines the pension benefit from the defined contribution of 3% of the participant's plan compensation. Clergy appointed to less than full time service and Part Time Local Pastors at 75% are credited for service at seventy-five (75%). By mandate of the 2012 General Conference benefits under this plan stopped accruing on December 31, 2013. Participants will lose no earned benefit.
4. The 2012 General Conference modified the Clergy Retirement Security Program. The January 2014 plan retains the two components – a Core Defined Benefit Plan and a Core Defined Contribution Plan. The Core Defined Benefit Plan determines a pension benefit using the following formula by multiplying 1% of the Denominational Average Compensation (DAC) in the year of retirement by the number of years of credited service after 2013. The Core Defined Contribution (DC) Plan determines the pension benefit from the defined contribution of 2% of the participant's plan compensation. In addition, the conference will match participant's voluntary personal contributions to The United Methodist Personal Investment Plan (UMPIP) up to 1% of the participant's plan compensation and deposit those matching funds into the participant's CRSP DC account. Clergy appointed at not less than 75% of full-time service and Part Time Local Pastors appointed at not less than 75% are required to participate in the Clergy Retirement Security Program. Clergy appointed at less than 75% are not eligible to participate in CRSP, but may and are encouraged to,

participate in the UMPIP.

5. The United Methodist Personal Investment Plan (UMPIP) is a voluntary defined-contribution plan for personal contributions and rollovers made by clergy and lay employees.

When the recommendation of the Alabama West Florida Conference Commission on Equitable Compensation is approved and in cooperation with the cabinet, the Conference Board of Pension sets the following appointment salary service standards for 2024:

1. Elders, Provisional Members, Associates Members and Local Pastors at or greater than \$40,500 will serve at 100% and are eligible for pension and health insurance benefits, unless appointed by the Bishop and the Cabinet to less than 75%.
2. Elders, Provisional Members, Associates Members and Local Pastors at or greater than \$30,375 but less than \$40,500 will serve at 75% and are eligible for pension and health insurance benefits, unless otherwise appointed by the Bishop and Cabinet to a lower percentage.
3. Elders, Provisional Members, Associates Members and Local Pastors at or greater than \$20,250 but less than \$30,375 will serve at 50%, unless otherwise appointed by the Bishop and Cabinet to a lower percentage and are not eligible to participate in CRSP or the health insurance plan.
4. Elders, Provisional Members, Associates Members and Local Pastors at or greater than \$10,125 but less than \$20,250 will serve at 25%, unless otherwise appointed by the Bishop and Cabinet to a lower percentage and are not eligible to participate in CRSP or the health insurance plan.

Retiring pastors may expect their pension benefits to come from multiple plans – Pre-1982 based on years of service with pension credit before January 1, 1982 and the PSR or the Defined Benefit Service Monies (DBSM) whichever provides the greater annuity payment, MPP based on defined contributions from 1982 through 2006, supplemented by PIP and UMPIP contributions, CRSP based on the number of service years between 2007 and 2013 and the DAC in the year of retirement and CRSP based on the number of service years after 2013. Because of the change in plans, it is important for participants to verify that the pre-2017 appointment information, including appointment percentages for less than full time appointments, listed in the *Journal of the Alabama-West Florida Conference* each year is correct. The Conference Board of Pension and Health Benefits will assume that the Journal information is correct unless a correction is submitted in writing and verified within the conference year in which the Journal is printed. The Cumulative Pension and Benefit Fund served as a voluntary defined contribution retirement plan through 2006, funded through employer contributions made on behalf of deacons (prior to 2006), diaconal ministers, and lay employees of local churches. This fund is now part of the UMPIP plan.

Information from Wespath Benefits and Investments is available online at <https://www.wespath.org>

The Board of Pension and Health Benefits recommends that the apportionment line item for Conference Claimants Fund be set at \$140,000 for 2024. Since pension liabilities are tied to the Conference Average Compensation, the market results of Wespath Benefits and Investments plan assets, and the change in actuarial mortality tables, future increases in the Conference Claimants Fund line item may track with these variables and Wespath Benefits and Investments actuarial projections.

We call attention to ¶ 622 of *The Book of Discipline 2016 of The United Methodist Church* relative to the requirement that the apportionment for the pension and benefit programs be paid in proportion to the payment of the pastor's salary by the local church. *The Discipline* gives the church treasurer the primary responsibility for the application of proportional payment. If the church treasurer fails to do this, the pastor is then required to adjust his/her cash salary.

Report 5 – Supplement One to the Clergy Retirement Security Program

This Supplement One is applicable to the Alabama-West Florida Conference and is effective January 1, 2007. It replaces any previously executed Addendum A (or Attachment 1) and shall be in effect until amended by the Annual Conference in accordance with the provisions of the Clergy Retirement Security and the Comprehensive Protection Plan revised January 1, 2007.

CPP contribution base shall be the active participant's plan contribution for a plan year not to exceed 200% of the Denominational Average Compensation. The CPP contribution rate shall be 3% of the contribution base of each active participant. [CPP Section 4.01(a).]

The CPP church contribution shall be made monthly to the plan by the Annual Conference in accordance with the Plan Document. Such CPP church contributions shall be transferred monthly from the deposit account of the Alabama-West Florida Conference by Wespath Benefits and Investments to the Comprehensive Protection Plan. The Annual Conference shall maintain an amount in its deposit account sufficient to provide for the monthly transfer of the church contributions on behalf of its active participants. The Alabama-West Florida Annual Conference Board of Pension and Health Benefits is hereby authorized, at its discretion, to arrange with Wespath Benefits and Investments for active participation in CPP by persons who are eligible under special rules but not automatically included as active participants. [CPP Section 3.03(a)]

All full and associate members appointed to Sabbatical Leave or to attend school shall continue to participate in CPP, provided the Conference makes the required

contribution based on 3% of the plan compensation [Disciplinary Paragraph 351; CPP Section 3.02(a).]

The surviving spouse benefit will be 70% of the participant's formula benefit.

Report 6 – Alabama West Florida Annual Conference Comprehensive Funding Plan for Plan Year 2023

The 2012 General Conference established a requirement for Annual Conferences to develop a comprehensive funding plan to identify both liabilities and resources. The Conference Board has developed and submitted the plan to Wespath Benefits and Investments. Printed below is the favorable opinion on Alabama-West Florida Conference 2023 Comprehensive Funding Plan. Printed below is the favorable opinion letter from Wespath. If you would like to see the complete plan once submitted, contact the Fiscal Office at 334-356-1034.



Opinion on **Alabama-West Florida Conference 2023** Comprehensive Benefit Funding Plan

The funding plan meets the standards for a Pre-82 funding plan as established by Wespath Benefits and Investments and the favorable opinion requirements for a funding plan. Note: The statement above and any written opinion provided by Wespath do not imply any representation as to the ability or probability of the applicable plan sponsor to fulfill the obligations included in the funding plan.

Wespath Benefits and Investments

Wespath Benefits and Investments
1901 W Chestnut Ave
Glenview, IL 60025

Report 7 – Claimants' Memorial Fund

We recommend the continuation of the Claimants' Memorial Fund. Funds being invested by this board with the interest will be used for the benefits of the conference claimants. Individuals and groups are invited to make voluntary contributions in any amount as memorials to deceased ministers, members of minister families, or lay persons. Checks should be made payable to the

Alabama-West Florida Conference and sent to the conference treasurer, Montgomery, with the name or names of the persons being memorialized. Families of those so memorialized will be notified that a memorial gift was received.

Report 8 – Special Appointment Pension Responsibilities

In keeping with ¶1506.3.a, and 4, of the *2016 Discipline*, we recommend that those clergy appointed to extension ministries be approved for pension responsibility on this Annual Conference in the following full time appointments: the director of the Assembly Grounds, the director of the Mobile Inner City Mission, the director of each Wesley Foundation, the Chaplain at the United Methodist Children’s Home, the Director of Bright Bridge Ministries (formerly Pensacola Urban Ministry) and the Pensacola Hispanic Ministry provided such appointments are made as members of this Annual Conference under ¶ 344.1a(1) and 346.1 of the *2016 Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church*. The district superintendents, clergy appointed to the Conference Connectional Ministry, Ministerial Services, and the Fiscal Offices are approved with pension responsibility on this Annual Conference.

We recommend that special appointments to the United Methodist colleges and universities and other general agencies shall be listed as with pension responsibility on the institution or agency.

We recommend that chaplains in the Armed Forces be listed with pension responsibility on the chaplaincy of the military service.

We recommend that clergy under appointment as approved evangelists, area appointments and other special ministries shall be listed with pension responsibility on this Annual Conference only upon payment to the Conference Claimants Fund an amount equal to 14% of the DAC as determined by Wespath Benefits and Investments.

By special arrangement those clergy or probationary members on Sabbatical leave or appointed to attend school may qualify for the Comprehensive Protection Plan.

We recommend that special appointments to non-Methodist institutions shall be listed without pension responsibility on this Annual Conference.

We recommend that all missionaries shall be listed with pension responsibility on the General Board of Global Ministries.

Report 9 – Depositories

We recommend that the official depository for pension funds shall be the same as that designated by the Conference for other Conference funds as well as Wespath Benefits and Investments.

Report 10 – Pensions for Lay Employees

We strongly endorse the UMPIP and the Lay Long-Term Disability Plan administered by Wespath Benefits and Investments for lay employees of United Methodist local churches and agencies. In keeping with paragraph 258.2g (12) of the *2016 United Methodist Book of Discipline*, we recommend and urge our churches to use these plans provided by the General Church to provide pension equal to at least 3% of compensation and death and disability coverage for our lay persons who serve our churches.

Churches and agencies should contact Wespath Benefits and Investments, 1901 Chestnut Avenue, Glenview, IL 60025, (800) 851-2201 for information on becoming plan sponsors for the UMPIP for lay employees.

Report 11 – Full Time Service as a Requirement for Pension Credit Pre-1982

We call attention to the following provisions relative to full time service, rendered prior to January 1, 1982, as a normal condition for pension credit which appears in ¶ 1506.3 of the *2016 United Methodist Book of Discipline*

- A. Full-time service of a ministerial member or a lay pastor shall be required as a normal condition for pension credit; provided, however, that such credit may be granted for part time service by a three-fourth vote of those present and voting in the Annual Conference, on recommendation of the conference Board of Pension and Health Benefits.

- B. Full-time service shall mean that full time is devoted to the work of a pastor by one who has not attained the mandatory age of retirement for a Conference member, who is not attending school as a regular student, who is not substantially employed in non-pastoral work; and whose cash support per annum from all church sources is not less than the schedule of equitable compensation adopted by the Annual Conference for those in this person's classification.

It should be noted that service of either a ministerial member or lay pastor is without pension credit if it is not full-time service as defined, except in cases of approved part-time service.

**Report 12 – Resolutions Relating to Rental/Housing Allowances for Retired
or Disabled Clergypersons of
the Alabama – West Florida Annual Conference**

The Alabama–West Florida Conference (the “Conference”) adopts the following resolutions relating to rental/housing allowances for active, retired, or disabled clergypersons of the Conference:

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

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

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

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

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED:

THAT an amount equal to 100% of the pension or disability payments received from plans authorized under The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church (the “Discipline”), which includes all such payments from Wespeth Benefits and Investments during the year 2022 by each active, retired, or disabled clergyperson who is or was a member of the Conference, or its predecessors, be and hereby is designated as a rental/housing allowance for each such clergyperson; and

THAT the pension or disability payments to which this rental/housing allowance applies will be any pension or disability payments from plans, annuities, or funds authorized under the Discipline, including such payments from Wespeth Benefits and Investments and from a commercial annuity company that provides an annuity arising from benefits accrued under a Wespeth Benefits and Investments plan, annuity, or fund authorized under the Discipline, that result from any service a clergyperson rendered to this Conference or that an active, a retired, or a disabled clergyperson of this Conference rendered to any local church, annual

conference of the Church, general agency of the Church, other institution of the Church, former denomination that is now a part of the Church, or any other employer that employed the clergyperson 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 active, retired, or disabled clergyperson's pension or disability as part of his or her gross compensation.

NOTE: It should be noted that the above applies only to the clergyperson and not to the surviving spouse. The rental/housing allowance that may be excluded from a clergyperson's gross income in any year for federal income tax purposes is limited under Internal Revenue Code section 107(2) and regulations there under to the least of: (1) the amount of the rental/housing allowance designated by the clergyperson's employer or other appropriate body of the Church (such as this Conference in the foregoing resolutions) for such year; (2) the amount actually expended by the clergyperson to rent or provide a home in such year; or (3) the fair rental value of the home, including furnishings and appurtenances (such as a garage), plus the cost of utilities in such year. If you need further information concerning this exclusion, please contact your CPA or the Conference Fiscal Office.

Report 13 – Special Grants

No monthly grant recommended for the 2024 Conference year.

Report 14 – Homes for Claimants

The Board of Pension and Health Benefits owns 2 living units for persons who retired from the conference prior to 2003. Ms. Carrie Porter is chairperson of the Homes sub-committee of the board. No additional assignments of homes to retirees will take place, and homes are being sold as they are vacated. Home sales proceeds are placed in the Homes for Claimants account for homes operating expenses.

OPELIKA

2008 Glenwood Drive

Mrs. Gerald Freeman

PENSACOLA

2743 Honeywood

Mrs. Thomas Sowell

Report 15 – Policy for Claimants Home Occupants

Should an occupant of a claimant's home choose to relocate from a claimant's home the following policy will apply:

Documented moving expenses not to exceed \$2,000 will be reimbursed.

A grant not to exceed \$3000 will be given to offset documented closing costs for the purchase of a home or documented rental deposit for an apartment, town home or assisted living facility.

The moving expenses and grant will be available to clergy persons or a surviving spouse occupying a claimant home. It is not available to family members when the home is vacated as a result of the death of a clergy person or surviving spouse.

Report 16 – Need-based Housing Grants

By direction of the Annual Conference, the Board began selling vacant homes in 2003. Beginning in 2005, the Board began offering need-based housing grants for retiring clergy. To qualify an applicant must be:

A clergy person who retires with a minimum of 20 years fulltime service with pension credit in the Alabama-West Florida Conference and is receiving his/her pension.

An un-remarried surviving spouse of an active clergy person with a minimum of ten (10) years full-time service in the Alabama-West Florida Conference. He/she must have been married to the qualified clergy person during the years of qualifying service. Exceptions may be considered in the case of death prior to 10 years of service.

The surviving spouse of a retired clergy person who was married to that clergy person at the time of his/her retirement.

Clergy persons who are placed on Clergy Medical Leave by the Annual Conference.

APPLICATION PERIOD:

Clergy retired June 1, 2003 or thereafter may apply for a grant any time subsequent to their retirement and within 24 months of retirement date.

Surviving spouses may apply within one year of the date of death of the clergy person. Clergy persons who are placed on Clergy Medical Leave by the Annual Conference may apply within one year of being placed on Clergy Medical Leave or they may apply subsequent to retirement, provided they retire on or after June 1, 2003.

To be considered for a grant, the applicant and spouse's post-retirement earned income from all sources must be equal to or less than 1.25% of the denominational average compensation (DAC) in the year of application.

Applicants must submit a Board of Pension and Health Benefits Financial Statement, along with the most recent 1040 Income Tax Form including all schedules. Applicants must also complete an interview with a Grant Committee appointed by the Board of Pension.

Grants are intended to assist retiring clergy to obtain housing. The money granted to applicants should be used to aid with some form of housing such as down payments, closing costs, rental deposits, etc. Grants are awarded on a one-time basis up to \$3,500, as set forth herein. Grants will be disbursed within 30 days after approval by the Grants Committee.

Grants are not guaranteed but will be awarded based upon the Grant Committee's discretion considering financial need, circumstances, available grant funds and the totality of the overall circumstances.

Amendments

These guidelines maybe amended from time to time by simple majority of the Conference Board of Pension and Health Benefits.

Report 17 – Other Retirement Services

Wespath Benefits and Investments offers other outstanding services to active and retired clergy including Voluntary Supplemental Life Insurance through UNUM. Active and Retired clergy (and participating UMPIP lay employees) have access to free financial planning services through EY (Ernst and Young). For more information on these services, please contact the Pension and Health Benefits office.

Report 18 –Alabama-West Florida Conference Policy on Clergy Medical Leave and CPP Benefits

(Approved June 2005) TERMS:

Medical Leave: A conference relations status of a clergy member who is unable to perform his or her ministerial work because of a physical or emotional impairment, the conference may grant medical leave upon recommendation of the conference boards of ordained ministry and pension.

CPP Disability Benefits: Benefits paid by the Comprehensive Protection Plan to clergy persons who are determined by Wespeth Benefits and Investments to be eligible for these benefits and are on medical leave.

Medical Leave is granted to clergy who are members of the annual conference who are unable to perform their ministerial work because of incapacity due to health matters and disabling conditions. It is not a status that is used to solve appointment problems.

The 2016 Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church References:

¶356. *Medical Leave Due to Medical and Disabling Conditions that Prevent Performance of Ministerial Duties-*

1. When clergy who are members of an annual conference (¶369) are unable to perform their ministerial duties because of medical and disabling conditions, upon recommendations of the conference Board of Ordained Ministry and the conference board of pensions, and by a majority vote of the executive session of clergy members in full connection with the annual conference who are present and voting, they may be granted annual medical leave without losing their relationship to the annual conference; provided, however, that such leave may be granted or renewed upon reasonable and appropriate investigation of the case by the joint committee on clergy medical leave of the annual conference, or the party responsible for managing clergy medical leaves in accordance with the annual conference's policies, which will report its findings to the conference Board of Ordained Ministry and the conference board of pensions. This relationship may be initiated by the clergy member or cabinet with or without the consent of the clergy member through the Board of Ordained Ministry. When medical leave is given without the clergy member's consent, reasonable accommodation shall be offered whenever possible. When a clergy member is granted medical leave by the annual conference, if the medical evidence has not yet met the standards for the receipt of benefits as set forth in the Comprehensive Protection Plan, section 5.04, the conference board of pensions may authorize payment of the benefits in the amount that would otherwise be payable from the Comprehensive Protection Plan. The payments shall be made by Wespeth Benefits and Investments as a charge to the annual conference granting medical leave. If payments from the Comprehensive Protection Plan are subsequently approved, the annual conference will be reimbursed for benefits already paid, not to exceed the amount otherwise payable from the Comprehensive Protection Plan. Each medical leave granted by the annual conference shall be recorded in the conference minutes.
2. When clergy who are members of an annual conference are unable to perform their ministerial duties between sessions of the annual conference

on account of medical conditions, with the approval of a majority of the district superintendents, after consultation with the executive committee of the conference Board of Ordained Ministry and the executive committee of the conference board of pensions, a medical leave may be granted by the bishop for the remainder of the conference year; provided, however, that such leave may be granted upon reasonable and appropriate investigation of the case including accommodation provisions by the joint committee on clergy medical leave of the annual conference, or the party responsible for managing clergy medical leaves in accordance with the annual conference's policies, which will report its findings to the conference Board of Ordained Ministry and the conference board of pensions. When a clergy member is granted medical leave by the bishop, if the medical evidence has not yet met the standards for receipt of benefits as set forth in the Comprehensive Protection Plan, section 5.04, the conference board of pensions may authorize payment of the benefits in the amount that would otherwise be payable from the Comprehensive Protection Plan. The payments shall be made by Wespath Benefits and Investments as a charge to the annual conference granting medical leave. If payments from the Comprehensive Protection Plan are subsequently approved, the annual conference will be reimbursed for benefits already paid, not to exceed the amount otherwise payable from the Comprehensive Protection Plan.

3. When clergy members on medical leave provide medical evidence that they have recovered sufficiently to resume ministerial duties, or are able to return through reasonable accommodation, in consultation with the appointive cabinet, upon recommendation of the joint committee on clergy medical leave or the conference relations committee, and with the approval of the executive committee of the conference Board of Ordained Ministry, they may receive an appointment from a bishop between sessions of the annual conference, thereby terminating the medical leave. Such appointment shall be reported immediately by the cabinet to the conference board of pensions and to Wespath Benefits and Investments. Such termination of leave, together with the effective date, shall also be recorded in the minutes of the annual conference at its next regular session.

¶635.2(1): “Conference Board of Ordained Ministry

“The duties of the annual conference board of ordained ministry shall be...

- k) To interview applicants and make recommendation concerning: (1) changes from the effective relation to a leave of absence or retirement; (2) return to the effective relation from other relations; (3) honorable location; (4) readmission of located persons and persons discontinued from probationary membership; (5) sabbatical leave; (6) medical leave; (7) appointment as a student; (8) termination; and (9) changes to or from less than full-time

ministry.

“The board shall keep a record of these changes and the reason behind them and place a copy in the permanent records of the annual conference maintained by the secretary of the conference.”

¶652. Each annual conference shall establish a procedure by which it will manage clergy medical leave. The annual conference may establish a joint committee on clergy medical leave (JCCML). If the annual conference establishes such a committee, it should be composed of at least two representatives each from the Board of Ordained Ministry and the conference board of pensions, who may be elected by those boards at the beginning of each quadrennium and at other times when vacancies occur, and a district superintendent appointed from time to time by the bishop to represent the cabinet. The joint committee shall be encouraged to include in its composition a person with a disability, preferably someone under appointment. Unless and until other members are elected, the chairperson and registrar of the Board of Ordained Ministry and the chairperson and secretary of the conference board of pensions, or others designated by them, shall be authorized to represent their respective boards. The committee shall organize at the beginning of each quadrennium by the election of a chairperson and a secretary. If the annual conference does not establish a joint committee, the annual conference’s established policy and process for managing clergy medical leave nonetheless should involve the Board of Ordained Ministry, the conference board of pension and representation from the cabinet.

The duties of the annual conference, with respect to clergy medical leave, or the joint committee on clergy medical leave, or its equivalent, shall be:

- a) To study issues related to clergy medical leave in the annual conference.
- b) To provide for a continuing personal ministry to any clergy on medical leave of the conference and to aid them in maintaining fellowship with the members of the conference.
- c) To provide advice and support to and, where appropriate advocacy for, clergy on medical leave in (i) applying for and securing disability benefits from the Comprehensive Protection Plan and government programs, (ii) exploring possible sources of interim financial assistance before disability benefits can be obtained, (iii) establishing rehabilitation and return-to-service programs, and (iv) assessing the need for and providing reasonable accommodations.
- d) To make recommendations to the Board of Ordained Ministry, the conference board of pension, and the cabinet on matters related to clergy medical leave, including steps for the prevention of the need for medical leave, the process of granting medical leave, benefits, grants or other assistance, and programs of rehabilitation.

- e) To cooperate with and give assistance to Wespath Benefits and Investments in its administration of the Clergy Retirement Security Program, the Comprehensive Protection Plan and other benefit plans for clergy on medical leave, and to the extent applicable assist with the disability benefits and other benefits provided under those plans.

Going on Medical Leave

1. When an eligible clergyperson requests CPP Benefits:
2. Application is requested from the Conference Pension and Benefits Officer.
3. Application is completed:
 - a. Form A, Applicant Information for Long-Term Disability Benefits is completed, signed by the applicant, and mailed to Wespath Benefits and Investments.
 - b. Form C, Clergy Disability Benefits Application is completed and signed by the applicant including the Authorization to Release Information page to Wespath Benefits and Investments and mailed to the District Superintendent
4. The District Superintendent signs Form C, acknowledging that the individual is applying for disability benefits and mails it to the Conference Pension and Benefits Officer.
5. The Conference Benefits Officer signs Form C, acknowledging that the individual is applying for disability benefits.
6. The Conference Benefits Officer contacts by phone or email each member of the JCCML to alert them to the fact that the individual is applying for CPP Disability Benefits and signs Form C for the Chair of (JCCML) The Conference Pension and Benefits Officer mails Form C to Wespath Benefits and Investments.
7. Form F, The District Superintendent must state, in writing, that the Bishop has or will grant the individual clergy medical leave. The District Superintendent must also indicate one of the following:
 - a. The applicant will be granted clergy medical leave ONLY if disability benefits are approved from the CPP and if approved the date incapacity leave will begin,
 - b. The applicant has been or will be granted medical leave and the conference deposit account should be charged for conference

disability grant in the amount of:

Greater of 70% of plan compensation or 40% of DAC (standard CPP benefit)

Other (specify amount)

- c. The applicant has been or will be granted medical leave without benefits and the date medical leave will begin.

If the conference deposit account is to be charged with CPP benefits (option b), the conference Pension and Benefits Officer will coordinate approval with the Executive Committee of the conference board of pension and health benefits.

Form F is signed by the Conference Pension and Benefits Officer and mailed to Wespath Benefits and Investments.

The Conference Pension and Benefits Officer will provide a copy of Form F to the board of ordained ministry Executive Secretary to ensure that the board of ordained ministry takes appropriate action. Because of HIPPA privacy regulations, it will be the standard position of the JCCML to recommend to the board of ordained ministry the status recommended by The Lincoln National Life Insurance Company Disability and Life Claims.

Coming Off Medical Leave

For participants with a date of disability prior to December 31, 2012; among the reasons a participant will no longer receive CPP disability benefits are the following:

1. If a participant becomes disabled on or prior to the date he/she attains age 60, and is receiving disability benefits in the Conference year in which he/she attains age 65, and the disability continues, then the benefits will terminate on June 30 following the person's 65th birthday anniversary (if the final day of the regular session of such person's conference falls in the month of May or June, or, otherwise, on the last day of the month in which the closing day of such Conference session occurs) Para 5.04 d. (7) CPP Plan Document.
2. If the participant becomes disabled after age 60, and the disability continues, then the benefits will terminate on the earlier to occur of (i) June 30 following the end of a five year period from the date the disability was determined to have begun (if the final day of the regular session of such person's Conference falls in Mayor June, or, otherwise, on the last day of the month following the end of such five-year period in which the closing day of such Conference session occurs); or (ii) June 30 following

such person’s retirement date (if the final day of the regular session of such person’s Conference falls in Mayor June, or, otherwise, on the last day of the month in which the closing day of such Conference session occurs).
 Para 5.4 d. (8) CPP Plan Document.

3. If the individual provides medical evidence that they have recovered sufficiently to resume ministerial work or are able to return through reasonable accommodations, a request must be submitted to the Bishop and the Joint Committee on Clergy Medical Leave.

For participants with a date of disability January 1, 2013 or later.

Age Benefit Table

<u>Age at CPP Disability Date</u>	<u>Benefit Duration</u>
62	60 Months
63	48 Months
64	42 Months
65	36 Months
66	30 Months
67	24 Months
68	18 Months
69	12 Months or until Age
	72, whichever occurs earlier

The JCCML, through the Conference Pension and Benefits Officer, may request a referral through the Disability Management Alternatives for the name of a physician available and competent to provide an Independent Medical Evaluation of the individual’s request Because of HIPPA privacy regulations, the JCCML will request only a recommendation from the physician as to the individual’s ability to resume work and will follow the physician’s recommendation as to making a recommendation to the board of ordained ministry. Alternately, and at the discretion of the JCCML, the recommendation of Liberty Mutual regarding continuation of CPP Disability Benefits may form the recommendation of the JCCML to the board of ordained ministry.

Having received the recommendation from the JCCML, the Board of Ordained Ministry will conduct the interview required in ¶635.2 (k)

If an individual receives an appointment between sessions of annual conference, the cabinet must report the appointment immediately to the conference board of pension and Wespath Benefits and Investments. Such termination of medical leave, together with the effective date must also be recorded in the minutes of the annual conference at its next regular session.

Part-Time Appointments

If an individual seeks a part-time appointment in anticipation of coming off medical leave the following information is required:

1. The appointment cannot last longer than 12 months.
2. The written recommendation of the individual's doctor. The operative word is recommendation. That is, the doctor believes that it is in the medical best interest of the individual to begin part-time service and is encouraging and cooperating with the return to part-time service.
3. The number of hours that the individual will work.
4. When the appointment will start
5. Will the person serve a church as the only pastor or will the individual serve as an associate of a church?

Approved: Board of Pension and Health Benefits - 01/12/2005
 Board of Ministry - 03/01/2005

Report 19 – Death Benefit Program

Since January 1, 1995 the conference has participated in Wespeth Benefits and Investments' Basic Protection Plan, now Clergy Supplemental Life. Clergy Supplemental Life is an additional death benefit added to the regular death benefit provided by the Comprehensive Protection Plan (CPP) in which each full-time clergy, with a base compensation and housing equal to at least 25% of the Denominational Average Compensation (DAC).

2023 Death Benefit for Active Participants

Active Participant CPP death benefit	
Active Participant Clergy Supplemental	\$50,000.00
UNUM death benefit (under age 70)	
Active Participant Clergy Supplemental	\$25,000.00
UNUM death benefit (70 or older)	\$16,250.00

2023 Death Benefit for Retired Participants

- For clergy who retired before January 1, 2013
 - 30% of DAC in the year of death
- For clergy who retired after January 1, 2013 \$20,808.00
- Retired Participant Clergy Supplemental Life Benefit \$5,000.00

For additional information related to other death benefits go to the Alabama-West Florida website at: www.awfumc.org.

Report 20 – Investment Policy

Approved by Board of Pension and Health Benefits 2-7-2018

A. Statement of Purpose

The purpose of the Investment Policy is to provide governance and oversight to investments of the Alabama - West Florida Annual Conference funds. The intent is to facilitate and not hinder conference agencies in the execution of their duties related to the management of their investment portfolios and in the use of their funds.

In recognition of their fiduciary responsibilities and the authority given by the *2016 Book of Discipline* (§613.5), the Board of Pension and Health Benefits (BOPHB) delineate the governance of the investment of the funds. This Investment Policy shall comply with the policies related to Conflict of Interest and Investment Management of Annual Conference Pension and Pension Related Funds under §1508 of the Book of Discipline (2016) and the Conflict of Interest Policy of the Alabama - West Florida Conference.

B. Delineation of Responsibilities

While the *2016 Book of Discipline* (§612.1) states the purpose of the Council on Finance and Administration shall be to develop, maintain, and administer a comprehensive and coordinated plan of fiscal and administrative policies, procedures, and management services for the annual conference, the BOPHB is granted authority to govern the investment of pension funds per §612.5a (4) of the *2016 Book of Discipline*. Therefore, under this Investment Policy all operational policy decisions and implementation are delegated to the BOPHB for the following accounts: Deposit Account, Ministers Memorial Endowment fund and Pre-82-Funding Account (outside of the Plan), (the “Funds”).

The BOPHB shall at least once per year review the Investment Policy, the effectiveness of the Investment Committee, and the overall results of the

investments, and will acknowledge in writing that they have done so.

The BOPHB shall retain responsibility for various functions related to the investments. These functions include, but are not limited to setting spending policies, assigning of members to the Investment Committee, and recommending changes and updates to the Investment Policy.

The BOPHB shall exercise fiduciary standard of care; the standard of care when making decisions is the Prudent Expert Standard, defined as:

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

Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) § 2550.404a-1 Investment duties.

C. Members of the Investment Committee

The BOPHB Investment Committee shall be selected by the BOPHB. The Committee shall be composed of a minimum of 7 members. The chairperson and other officers shall be selected by the Committee from among its members. The members' individual terms shall not exceed the Individuals' term on BOPHB and shall be staggered to provide for continuity and experienced leadership. Committee members may include but are not limited to individuals from BOPHB, Conference Finance and Administration (CFA), the Board of Trustees (BOT), and the Conference Treasurer.

D. Responsibilities of the Investment Committee

To define and develop investment goals, and other operational guidelines;
To recommend to the BOPHB, the selection and discharge of the Investment Manager (s);

To monitor and evaluate the performance results and standard deviation of the Investment Manager (s) investment funds;

To provide a semi-annual written account of the investment results, accounting summary and any significant developments to BOPHB and the Conference Treasurer who serves as its staff;

To establish asset allocation parameters, risk tolerance and an investment strategy that apply to the individual Funds;

To require all portfolios be managed with the aim of maximizing funds available for mission in a manner consistent with the Funds' objectives;

To establish expectations for investing in alignment with the *Social Principles of The United Methodist Church*;

To establish effective communication procedures between the Committee, the BOPHB, the staff and the outside service providers;

To monitor and control investment expenses;

To delegate in writing the execution and administration of certain Committee responsibilities as appropriate to the Conference Treasurer who serves as its staff; the delegation of duties and responsibilities of the Conference Treasurer as contained in ¶619 of the *Book of Discipline* (2016);

To carry out any other duties required for the legal operation of the investments, including but not limited to hiring outside vendors to perform various services; To report to the BOPHB any significant deviations from this policy for prior approval before they are implemented.

E. Investment Manager(s)

To achieve its investment objectives and to ensure alignment with United Methodist Policies and alignment with the *Social Principles of The United Methodist Church*, the Investment Manager of Annual Conference Funds, shall be Wespath Investment Management, a division of Wespath Benefits and Investments, (formerly the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits), a general agency of The United Methodist Church. The primary role of Wespath is to assist the Committee by providing investment management and custody services. The use of Wespath shall be affirmed each year by the BOPHB. The investments within the funds shall be invested in accordance with the Investment Strategy Statement and Statement of Administrative Investment Policy of Wespath Benefits and Investments and Wespath Investment Management (https://www.Wespath.org/assets/1/7/investment_policy.pdf).

This document is considered an addendum to this policy. The Committee acknowledges that the Wespath document may be modified at any time by Wespath without specific consent of the Committee. The Committee will request annually, a red-lined copy of the Investment Strategy Statement and Statement of Administrative Investment Policy. The Committee's contact person will determine whether any changes merit disclosure to the Committee.

F. Investment Performance Benchmarks

The investment performance of total portfolios and asset class components will be measured against the published benchmark for the respective investment funds, as well as, against commonly accepted performance benchmarks. Consideration shall be given to the extent which the investment results are consistent with the investment objectives and guidelines as set forth in this Investment Policy.

G. Risk Posture and Time Horizon

The Committee understands the long-term nature of the investable assets relative to each Fund's objectives. It further understands, capital market returns will vary from year to year due to a variety of essentially unpredictable factors, including in general: changing market valuations and trends, the interplay of global economic cycles, changing monetary conditions, and the occurrence of geopolitical events, natural disasters and other exogenous forces. The Committee recognizes that risk must be assumed in the investment pool(s) in order to achieve a pool's investment objective over an acceptable long-term time horizon of 10 to 20 years. The Committee will endeavor to invest in a manner that achieves a risk-adjusted rate of return appropriate for each of the investment Funds based on the target asset allocation directed by the Committee. In addition to the capital markets risks, the Committee also considers and seeks to effectively manage and control the following forms of risk:

- Asset Protection Risk is the risk of loss due to fraud, embezzlement or financial system failure, which is mitigated through strong internal controls and the use of licensed trust companies to custody investment assets. Through the Wespath Funds, assets are custodied with Bank of New York Mellon.
- Purchasing Power Risk is the risk of loss when the rate of return on investments does not keep up with rate of inflation. For mitigation, the Committee will understand and implement investment strategies that increase the probability of producing positive real rates of return over the accepted time horizon.
- Liquidity Risk is the risk of loss arising from situations that include not having enough cash and/or cash equivalents to meet the obligations of the Committee and where the sale, if possible, of illiquid assets will yield less than their fair value. To mitigate this risk, the Committee will use proper cash management planning and employ asset allocation strategies constructed with highly liquid capital market securities.

H. Responsibilities of Investment Manager(s)

The Investment Manager(s) shall provide the Conference Treasurer and the Investment Committee as necessary the following reports:

The portfolio's complete holdings;

1. A review of the investment performance measured against the respective benchmarks;
2. A commentary on investment results in light of the current investment environment and the goals and guidelines;
3. A review of the key investment decisions and the rationale for the decisions;
4. A discussion of the Investment Manager(s) outlook and what specific decisions this outlook may indicate;
5. Any recommendations as to changes in goals and guidelines in light of material and sustained changes in the capital market; and any significant change in the Investment Manager's outlook, ownership or key employees.

I. Socially Responsible Investment Guidelines

As an Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church, the Annual Conference is committed to the implementation of the socially responsible investment policies in *The Book of Discipline* (2016) (§717);

Sustainable and Socially Responsible Investments-In the investment of money, it shall be the policy of The United Methodist Church that all general boards and agencies, including the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits, and all administrative agencies and institutions, including hospitals, homes, educational institutions, annual conferences, foundations, and local churches, make a conscious effort to invest in institutions, companies, corporations, or funds with policies and practices that are socially responsible, consistent with the goals outlined in the Social Principles. All United Methodist institutions shall endeavor to seek investments in institutions, companies, corporations, or funds that promote racial and gender justice, protect human rights, prevent the use of sweatshop or forced labor, avoid human suffering, and preserve the natural world, including mitigating the effects of climate change. In addition, United Methodist institutions shall endeavor to avoid investments in companies engaged in core business activities that are not aligned with the Social Principles through their direct or indirect involvement with the production of anti-personnel weapons and armaments (both nuclear and conventional weapons), alcoholic beverages or tobacco; or that are involved in privately operated correctional facilities, gambling, pornography or other forms of exploitative adult entertainment.

The boards and agencies are to give careful consideration to environmental, social, and governance factors when making investment decisions and actively exercise their responsibility as owners of the companies in which they invest. This includes engaging with companies to create positive change and hold them accountable for their actions, while also considering exclusion if companies fail to act responsibly.

Further, the Socially Responsible Investment Program stated in the Investment Strategy Statement and Statement of Administrative Investment Policy of Wespath Benefits and Investments and Wespath Investment Management (https://www.Wespath.org/assets/1/7/investment_policy.pdf), as revised, is the authority for the Annual Conference's Socially Responsible Investment Guidelines.

J. Target Asset Allocations and Rebalancing Guidelines

The purpose of allocating among asset classes is to ensure the proper level of diversification and standard deviation (risk) for each portfolio. The Committee recognizes that rebalancing is a critical element in controlling the long-term asset allocation of the Funds. The Committee also recognizes that asset allocation shifts may arise from cash flows and through different market fluctuations. Each investment Fund will be rebalanced quarterly during the months of March, June, September, and December using the Institutional Investor Portal rebalancing feature provided by Wespath to minimize deviations from the determined target allocations. The primary considerations in the asset allocation decisions and rebalancing process are:

1. Maintain inflation-adjusted purchasing power;
2. Grow the corpus of the funds to meet future obligations;
3. Achieve a minimum return in excess of inflation but with minimal annual fluctuations in the corpus; and,
4. Maintain the longevity of the assets and their distributions while taking into consideration that there may be no additional contributions.

K. Investment Guidelines, Asset Classes and Target Asset Allocations

The Committee shall require that Wespath follow all guidelines as established in the *Investment Strategy Statement and Statement of Administrative Policy* of Wespath Benefits and Investments and Wespath Investment Management (https://www.Wespath.org/assets/1/7/investment_policy.pdf). *This policy guides the investment of the underlying investment funds.* To achieve its investment

objectives, the Investment Pool shall be allocated among one or more funds managed by Wespath. The purpose of allocating among investment funds is to seek a prudent level of diversification and to mitigate risk.

The following table defines each account’s allocation range and target allocation:

Allocation Guidelines for the Investment Accounts

1. Deposit Account

<u>Investment Fund</u>	<u>Allocation Range</u>	<u>Target Allocation</u>
Short - Term Fund (STIF)	100%	100%

2. Deposit Account Reserves

<u>Investment Fund</u>	<u>Allocation Range</u>	<u>Target Allocation</u>
Short - Term Fund (STIF)	25% - 35%	30%
Fixed Income (FIF)	35% - 45%	40%
Ext - Term Fixed Income (ETFIF)	00% - 10%	5%
Multiple Asset (MAF)	10% - 20%	15%
US Equity (USEF)	05% - 15%	10%

A. Ministers Memorial Endowment Fund

<u>Fund</u>	<u>Allocation Range</u>	<u>Target Allocation</u>
Short - Term Fund (STIF)	10% - 20%	15%
Fixed Income (FIF)	25% - 35%	30%
Ext - Term Fixed Income ((ETFIF)	0% - 10%	5%
Multiple Asset (MAF)	15% - 25%	20%
Equity Social Value Fund (ESVPF)	00% - 10%	5%
US Equity (USEF)	20% - 30%	25%

B. Pre-82 Funding Account

<u>Fund</u>	<u>Allocation Range</u>	<u>Target Allocation</u>
Multiple Asset (MAF)	100%	

Report 21- Rationale re: Motion on the Fair Use of Conference Assets

The 2022 Annual Conference of the AWFUMC referred the “Motion on the Fair Use of Conference Assets” to the Board of Pensions and Health Benefits to report back to the body at the next regularly scheduled annual conference.

The BOPH examined the ever-changing unfunded pension liability and unfunded Post-Retirement Medical liability which are used in the calculations for church disaffiliation costs under the Disaffiliation Agreement Pursuant to ¶ 2553 approved by the annual conference in 2019. We reviewed historical data and trends and assessed updated actuarial estimates of these liabilities. We consulted

with Wespith experts, obtained legal counsel, and reviewed similar scenarios being dealt with in other annual conferences. We examined the state of the Pension and Health Benefits funds held at the Alabama-West Florida United Methodist Foundation, reviewed the past uses of these funds, reflected on the purposes for which the reserves exist, and discussed the prospective sources of instabilities and uncertainties that could dissipate the reserves.

In our study, several factors emerged that became crucial to the BOPH's decision. We considered:

- The exceptional volatility of the financial market. Rises and falls of 10+ million dollars in the valuation of our pension liabilities have been common in recent years.
- The declining number of churches and church membership available to help fund any deficit or shortfall.
- The change in the cost of disaffiliation due to external conditions and previous decisions of the BOPH and annual conference. This total has already decreased by 36+ million dollars since 2022 AC, which is 11+ million dollars more than the amount the motion requested.
- To whom we have a fiduciary duty. As recorded in the *Book of Discipline* ¶ 639, the BOPH “shall have charge of the interests and work of providing for and contributing to the support, relief, assistance, and pensioning of clergy and their families, other church workers, and lay employees of the institutions, organizations, and agencies within that annual conference of The United Methodist Church.”

After a thorough review of these elements, the BOPH prayerfully decided, and unanimously voted, that it would not be in the best interest of the future of the AWFUMC to designate BOPH reserve funds to lower the required costs for disaffiliating churches.

This completes the reports of the Board of Pension and Health Benefits for 2023.

Submitted by, Allison Posell
Chair, Board of Pension and Health Benefits

Conference Commission on Equitable Compensation (CEC)

“It is the purpose of the commission on equitable compensation to support full-time clergy serving as pastors in the charges of the annual conference by: (a) recommending conference standards for pastoral support; (b) administering funds to be used in base compensation supplementation; (c) providing counsel and advisory material on pastoral support to district superintendents and committees on pastor-parish relations; and (d) submitting an arrearage policy to be adopted by the annual conference.” (§625.2, 2016 *Discipline*)

Through grants funded by apportionments from our AWF Conference congregations, the CEC can assist congregations, which have potential for growth, to become capable of financially supporting a full-time pastor, as well as assured that all full-time appointed pastors in the AWF Conference receive minimum salary. As our Church struggles with denominational changes, budgetary changes have become necessary to distribute apportionments with greater discernment. Accordingly, there will be no new Equitable Compensation grants distributed in the 2023-2024 annual conference year.

The CEC recommends the **minimum salary to remain at \$40,500 for all full-time appointed clergy for 2024.**

Arrearage Policy

1. In the event that the local church treasurer becomes aware that the church will be unable to provide to the pastor full payment of a regularly scheduled payroll, housing allowance installment, or full payment for regular directly billed benefit payments such as pension and health care, the church treasurer shall immediately notify both verbally (within 24 hours) and in writing (within 3 days) the pastor, lay leader, and chairs of S/PPRC, finance, trustees, and the church council of the impending arrearage. Upon receipt of such notice, the chair of S/PPRC and/or the pastor shall immediately (within 3 days) notify the DS of the impending arrearage. It is the pastor’s responsibility to keep copies of all written notifications and to provide additional written confirmation to the DS when an arrearage has taken place. Failure to document salary or benefit arrearages may result in a loss of compensation and/or forfeiture of pension and benefits.
2. Upon receipt of notice of an impending arrearage, the chair of S/PPRC shall immediately (within 24 hours) call a meeting of the pastor, lay leader, and chairs of finance, trustees, and the church council to discuss the financial situation and seek remedies to prevent an arrearage from occurring. Such remedies might include drawing from invested funds, an emergency appeal

for special giving from the congregation, or emergency grants or loans from the District or Conference. In accord with *Discipline* ¶624, such remedies cannot include a reduction in the pastor's compensation until the beginning of the next conference year.

3. If after consultation with the lay leader and chairs of S/PPRC, finance, trustees, and church council it becomes apparent that the church may be facing a long term financial crisis, the chair of S/PPRC shall notify in writing the pastor and DS that: (a) a CEC subsidy grant is necessary to maintain compensation for the remainder of the conference year, (b) a change in pastoral compensation may be necessary at the beginning of the following conference year, or (c) a change in pastoral appointment as deemed necessary by the bishop and cabinet.
4. If the local church becomes delinquent in the pastor's compensation (i.e. more than 30 days), then the district superintendent shall notify the CEC, which on its own initiative may send a representative to meet with the local church and pastor to seek resolution of the issue, or develop a payment plan with the local church/charge so that the pastor receives full payment of compensation by the end of the conference year. The district superintendent shall be invited to participate in this process.
5. If the local church is already receiving a subsidy grant, the CEC may: (a) determine if all subsidy grant funds allocated to the church were used to pay the pastor's salary, (b) examine the original subsidy grant application to determine if the amount requested was reduced, (c) require an outside audit of all church funds in compliance with GCFA Guidelines, (www.gcfa.org). The CEC shall notify the district superintendent in writing of its findings and recommendations.
6. If a local church becomes delinquent in the payment of the pastor's direct billed pension and benefits (i.e., more than 30 days), then the conference treasurer shall notify the conference benefits officer, the district superintendent, and the CEC. On behalf of the conference, the benefits officer and/or DS shall develop a written payment plan with the local church so that the conference receives full payment of pension and benefits by the end of the conference year.
7. *Discipline* ¶ 2543.1 makes clear that no real property on which a church building or parsonage is located shall be mortgaged to pay for the current or budgeted expenses of a local church (including arrearages), nor shall the principal proceeds of a sale of any such property be so used. This provision shall apply alike to unincorporated and incorporated local churches.

8. In extreme and unresolved circumstances, the local church and/or pastor may petition a session of the annual conference for assistance in payment of the arrearage, after completing the required financial audit of the church.
9. It is the responsibility of the pastor to provide evidence of an arrearage by providing documentation such as: treasurer's reports, charge conference reports of adopted compensation, check stubs, W-2 forms, and a Certification of Payment Form signed by the pastor, S/PPRC chair, trustee chair, treasurer, and church council chair.
10. The statute of limitations for filing a claim for funds from the annual conference (i.e., notification to the DS) for any salary arrearage is one year from the date of the initial arrearage. Once an appointment ends, the pastor no longer has claim on the local church for compensation funds (§ 342.4, *Discipline*).

Rev. Michael Cobb, Chairperson
Commission on Equitable Compensation

Council on Finance and Administration

Report No. 1 - ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Purpose: To develop, maintain, and administer a comprehensive and coordinated plan of fiscal and administrative policies, procedures, and management services for the Alabama-West Florida Conference.

1. The Council on Finance and Administration (CFA) shall be organized in accordance with paragraph 610 and 611 of the *2016 Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church* and Standing Rule No. 36 in the *2016 Journal of the Alabama-West Florida Conference*.
2. The Council on Finance and Administration (CFA) shall meet prior to Annual Conference and during session as needed. A fall and winter/spring meeting of CFA shall be held. The president of the Council may call other meetings.
3. All persons interested in presenting a request to CFA are invited to do so or to attend any of the Council meetings. All Council meetings shall be open to all interested persons, except when, by majority vote, the council elects to meet in executive session.
4. The Committee on Investments within CFA shall be responsible for reviewing, approving, and supervising all banking relationships of CFA with special attention given to investments including those of conference agencies.
5. The Committee on Audit and Review within CFA shall have responsibility for reviewing audits of all agencies receiving funds from the Annual Conference.
6. The Regions Bank shall be designated to serve as the conference depository to receive funds and keep specified records.

Report No. 2 - CONFERENCE OFFICERS

The Council on Finance and Administration shall be responsible for budgeting and for the work of the conference officers as listed in Standing Rule No.2.

A. Conference Secretary

The conference secretary fulfills the responsibilities prescribed by the *2016 Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church* and the Standing Rules of the Alabama-West Florida Conference.

B. Conference Fiscal Officer and the Fiscal Office

1. The responsibilities of the Fiscal Office shall include: Conference Treasurer/ Director of Administrative Services; Statistician; Conference Benefits Officer and Executive Secretary of the Conference Board of Pension and Health

Benefits; and other responsibilities assigned by the Council on Finance and Administration.

2. The Fiscal Officer shall keep records, make reports, and handle all financial transactions of all conference agencies.
3. The Fiscal Office shall prepare reports as required by the Council on Finance and Administration (CFA), and mail copies to persons who may need such reports.
4. All apportioned district and conference funds shall be channeled through Regions Bank and records kept by the Fiscal Office of the Conference.
5. The Fiscal Office shall disburse all checks pertaining to every fund and keep proper files of the copies of the check orders from the secretaries authorizing the issue of such checks. Copies of the checks issued shall be filed after having been charged against the account upon which they have been drawn.
6. The Fiscal Office shall tabulate, church by church, fund by fund, the information given on the remittance blanks for the conference depository.

C. Journal Editor - Conference Journal and Brochure of Reports

1. The Journal Editor shall chair the Editorial Committee (Standing Rule No. 15), and be responsible for the publication and distribution of the Annual Conference *Journal* and the *Book of Reports* for the Annual Conference.
2. All boards, commissions, committees and other agencies submitting reports to be included in the *Book of Reports* must have the reports in the hands of the editor no later than the last Monday in February.
3. The *Journal* Editor shall have authority to edit reports but not to change the meaning of any part of any report.
4. Standing Rule No. 15 shall be followed in distributing the *Book of Reports*. It shall be the responsibility of the district superintendents to supply the names and addresses of lay members no later than the last Monday of February. Additional copies shall be made available to the conference registrar.
5. All memoirs (including photographs) must be in the hands of the editor by the closing of the last business session of the annual conference. Responsibility for this material shall reside with the Commission on Archives and History.
6. All material to be included in the *Journal* (other than those in 5 above) must be in hands of the editor not later than ten (10) working days after the close of the Annual Conference.
7. The Annual Conference *Journal* shall be distributed according to Standing

Rule No. 15. Instructions for ordering the *Journal* will be provided in the *Book of Reports*.

D. Conference Registrar and Registration Policies

1. The Conference Registrar shall have full responsibility for interpreting the eligibility of those covered under Standing Rule No. 8 for entertainment at the Annual Conference Session. This may be appealed to the Council on Finance and Administration.
2. The Conference Registrar shall supervise registration of and assignment of rooms to Annual Conference delegates and handle calls for persons attending sessions.
3. Chairpersons of boards and agencies who are not elected delegates and attend the Annual Conference in order to give reports shall have their expenses paid by their own board or agency.
4. All physical preparation for Annual Conference shall be under the Registrar's supervision in cooperation with the Dais Committee, Worship Committee, and host facility staff.
5. No materials will be allowed on the registration table other than that necessary for registration. Other arrangements should be made to distribute materials through the site manager.
6. Use of dining halls, rooms, or areas shall be determined by the site manager. Fees for dining rooms shall be paid by the group using such rooms.
7. Space and/or rooms to be used for displays shall be assigned by the site manager and no other. Space shall be assigned on a first come basis.
8. Commercial displays will be allowed only in a room assigned and publicized for this purpose, with the exception of Cokesbury, which will continue to have a room assigned only to it.
9. Special needs, such as hymnals, altar furnishings, projectors, etc., shall be arranged through the site manager at least two weeks before conference. Needs arising during Annual Conference, which could not be anticipated, will also be arranged through the site manager.

Report No. 3 - BONDING REQUIREMENTS

Paragraph 618.1 of the *2016 Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church* gives CFA responsibility for the fidelity bonding of the conference treasurer. CFA recommends that the present policy of bonding be continued through Cincinnati Insurance Company. Paragraph 618.2 of the *2016 Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church* gives CFA the responsibility of requiring all agencies

and boards for which the conference treasurer does not serve as treasurer to have fidelity bonding in such amounts as it deems adequate.

In order to avoid the depositing of conference funds in any one bank in excess of the insured limits, CFA shall serve as the clearing house for all agencies in the Annual Conference making deposits in any bank, either savings or checking accounts. Bank accounts shall not be opened by any agency without approval by CFA. No agency shall permit the total amount deposited in anyone bank to exceed insured limits without CFA approval.

Report No. 4 - BUDGETING, FUNDING, and AUDITING PROCEDURES

1. All boards and agencies are required to cooperate with the conference treasurer in the development of detailed financial reports of the income, expenditures, remaining balances, and audits.
2. Program budget requests shall follow the prescribed procedures established by the CORE Team.
3. Agencies may request, or be asked, to meet with CFA to clarify their budget request or report.
4. The Conference Resource Center and all boards and agencies receiving funds from conference benevolences with budget amounts approved by the Annual Conference shall be allowed to draw funds or make expenditures on a monthly basis as needed. Funds available monthly for the program boards will be those approved by the CORE Team from the available pool. Funds available for the Conference Resource Center will be based on the benevolence receipts of the current year. Agencies of the Annual Conference that require monthly support will receive 1/12 of the approved allocation each month. Any expenditure more than the amount approved by the CORE Team in any Conference program board account shall be cleared with the President of CFA and the Director of Connectional Ministries.
5. All expenditures from the Interest on Investments Account shall be approved by a majority vote of CFA.
6. Each Agency, whose records are not kept by the Fiscal Office, is required to bond its treasurer and provide a certificate of insurance to CFA. Such agency shall provide a copy of its audit and other reports to CFA as deemed necessary by CFA. (Paragraphs 618.2 of the *2016 Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church*) Reports to CFA shall be in such detail, and provided at such times, as the Council shall direct.
7. CFA may withhold conference funds from any agency or board that fails or refuses to present proper bonds or audits. Such withholding shall continue until proper requests are met.

8. An audit of the complete financial status of the Annual Conference shall be published in the Conference *Journal*.

Report No. 5 - ZERO-BASED BUDGETING

The following proposal for “zero-based” budgeting is presented by the Council on Finance and Administration (the original proposal was adopted by the Conference on June 1, 1988):

1. All program area budgets of Annual Conference boards and agencies will begin the year with a zero balance.
2. The annual budgets for program boards and agencies shall be prepared on a “zero-base.” It is intended that all programs, projects and functions, old and new, be analyzed and reevaluated regularly and systematically by the CORE Team. Groups requesting budgeted funds shall be required to justify those requests in detail to explain why money is needed, specifically what it will be used for, the resulting benefits, and what would result if the request were denied.
3. At the end of the fiscal year, the unused balances for each board and agency shall be transferred to a reserve account, which shall be designated the “Mission and Ministry Fund.”
4. The Mission and Ministry Fund shall consist of the following:
 - a. Funds remaining in the CORE Team Missional Giving Fund at the end of the year;
 - b. Funds which may be budgeted for the Mission and Ministry Fund
 - c. Funds received from terminated activities which remain unused for those activities when transferred by the CORE Team
 - d. Interest earned from sources as may be provided by the Council on Finance and Administration
 - e. Funds from other sources that may be deposited by any board or agency or group within the Annual Conference.
5. Additional use of Mission and Ministry funds by program boards and agencies or for other program purposes of the Annual Conference shall be approved by a majority vote of the CORE Team.

Report No. 6 - FUND RAISING and COLLECTION POLICIES

CFA makes the following recommendations for those causes for which no funds are allocated:

1. That each local church observe World Communion Sunday, Human Relations Day, One Great Hour of Sharing, United Methodist Student Day, Peace with

Justice Sunday, Native American Awareness Sunday, and Golden Cross Sunday and that special offerings be received or budgeted for these special days.

2. That our conference continue to give its hearty support to the Advance Special program at both the General and Conference levels. (See complete listing of approved Conference Advance Special programs in the Journal Report of the Board of Global Ministries or the General Conference data log of Mission Handbook.)

3. That the Alabama-West Florida Conference fully support the following programs and give sponsoring agencies permission to raise and receive funds, provided that there be no goals or quotas placed on local churches:
 - A. Blue Lake
 1. Camps for the underprivileged and special youth (Blue Lake Assembly Ground Trustees)
 2. United Methodist Women's Blue Lake Support
 3. Blue Lake Partner Program (Assembly Ground Trustees)
 4. "Camping Sunday" for Blue Lake improvement and volunteer recognition (Assembly Ground Trustees)
 5. 20in12 Blue Lake Campaign
 6. "Blue Lake Sunday" to help reduce debt at Blue Lake (Assembly Ground Trustees)
 7. "Each One Reach One" small group/Sunday School scholarship campaign for summer camp
 - B. Homes for the Aging
 1. "Fountain of Love Offering," for Homes for the Aging (primarily in February) (The Board of Global Ministries)
 2. Support for New Homes sponsored by Methodist Homes for the Aging
 - C. The White Christmas and fifth Sunday church school offerings for Embrace Kids, formerly known as the United Methodist Children's Home
 - D. Golden Cross Ministries (primarily on Mother's Day) (The Committee on Health and Welfare Ministries)
 - E. Youth Service Fund (United Methodist Youth)
 - F. Huntingdon College (Board of Higher Education)
 - G. Mobile Inner City Mission (Board of Global Ministries)
 - H. United Methodist Men's Kingdom Builders Project (Board of Laity)
 - I. New Church Development Fund (Commission on New Congregational Development)
 - J. Wesley Foundation
 - K. Central Conference Pension Initiative (Board of Pension and Health Benefits)
 - L. The Ark
 - M. Mary Ellen's Hearth (under Embrace Kids, formerly known as United Methodist Children's Home)
 - N. Dumas Wesley
 - O. Milk & Honey
 - P. Bright Bridge Ministries

Report No. 7 - APPORTIONMENTS

	<u>2023</u>	<u>2024</u>	<u>+/-</u>
GENERAL CHURCH FUNDS			
World Service	1,483,118	1,216,158	-18.00%
Ministerial Education Fund	464,516	380,903	-18.00%
Black College Fund	214,667	176,027	-18.00%
Africa University Fund	48,261	39,574	-18.00%
Episcopal Fund	595,528	488,333	-18.00%
General Administration Fund	182,645	149,769	-18.00%
Interdenominational Coop. Fund	6,421	5,265	-18.00%
SOUTHEASTERN JURISDICTIONAL FUND			
SEJ Administration Fund	27,636	27,636	0.00%
ANNUAL CONFERENCE FUNDS			
Blue Lake Operation	177,000	130,000	-26.55%
Capital and Operating Fund (Trustees)	100,000	72,000	0.00%
(1) Conference Administration Fund	627,750	516,750	-17.68%
(2) Conference Ministries	602,000	534,520	-11.21%
(3) Congregational Development	254,296	183,093	-28.00%
District Superintendents Fund	556,000	556,000	0.00%
Equitable Compensation Fund	0	100,000	0.00%
Homes for the Aging	40,000	30,000	-25.00%
Higher Education			
Huntingdon/Birmingham Southern College	279,383	201,155	-28.00%
Student Aid, Huntingdon College	110,903	79,850	-28.00%
Wesley Foundation/Campus Ministry	385,539	277,588	-28.00%
Board of Pension and Health Benefits			
Conference Claimants Fund	200,000	140,000	-30.00%
Health Insurance Fund	900,000	650,000	-27.78%
Board of Pension and Health Benefits	0	0	0.00%
TOTAL CONFERENCE BUDGET	<u>7,255,663</u>	<u>5,954,621</u>	-17.93%

(1) Includes:

Archives and History	43,750	43,750	0.00%
Board of Ordained Ministry	120,000	100,000	-16.67%
Episcopal Office Expense	150,000	145,000	-3.33%
Fiscal Office	129,000	129,000	0.00%
Annual Conference Administration	180,000	94,000	-47.78%
Moving Fund for Retirees	<u>5,000</u>	<u>5,000</u>	0.00%
 Sub Total	 627,750	 516,750	 -17.68%

(2) Includes:

Connectional Ministries (CRC)	308,000	268,000	-12.99%
Communications	153,000	165,000	
Mission and Ministry Fund	<u>141,000</u>	<u>101,520</u>	-28.00%
 Sub Total	 602,000	 534,520	 -11.21%

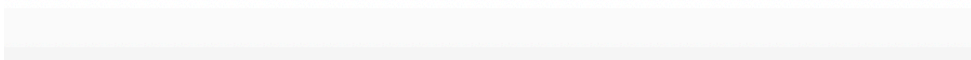
Connectional Ministries/Communications: \$461,000 \$433,000
 Supports salaries, benefits and expenses for two (2) program staff and one (1) support staff. Also supports general office expenses including telephone, printing, mailing, computer and miscellaneous expenses.

Mission and Ministry Fund: \$141,000 \$101,520

This fund supports eight (8) of the Boards related to the Conference CORE Team. They are Committee on Ethnic Local Church Concerns, Church and Society, Discipleship, Global Ministries, Laity, Higher Ed and Campus Ministries, Hispanic Ministries and Town and Country. The Mission and Ministry Fund also provides support for agencies related to the annual conference and new and emerging ministries. Those being supported in 2024 are Alabama Rural Ministries, Communities of Transformation and Quad W. Additionally, \$25,000 is set aside to provide grants to qualified applicants based on need and ministry opportunity.

(3) Includes:

Congregational Development Office	154,296	111,093	-28.00%
New Church Pastors' Salaries	100,000	72,000	-28.00%
New Church Development Fund	0	0	0.00%
Church Revitalization Fund	0	0	0.00%
 Sub Total	 <u>254,296</u>	 <u>183,093</u>	 -28.00%



APPORTIONMENTS - SUPPLEMENTAL REPORT

	2022 Budget	2022 Received	2022 %Received	2022 Expended
World Service Fund	\$ 1,483,118	\$ 1,141,040	76.94%	\$ 1,141,040
Ministerial Education Fund	\$ 464,516	\$ 373,631	80.43%	\$ 373,631
Black College Fund	\$ 214,667	\$ 174,408	81.25%	\$ 174,408
Africa University Fund	\$ 48,261	\$ 40,034	82.95%	\$ 40,034
Episcopal Fund	\$ 595,528	\$ 481,775	80.90%	\$ 481,775
General Administration Fund	\$ 182,645	\$ 144,788	79.27%	\$ 144,788
Interdenominational Coop Fund	\$ 6,421	\$ 5,004	77.93%	\$ 5,004
TOTALS	\$ 2,995,156	\$ 2,360,679	78.82%	\$ 2,360,679

SEJ FUNDS

SEJ Administration	\$ 27,636	\$ 21,993	79.58%	\$ 21,993
TOTALS	\$ 27,636	\$ 21,993	79.58%	\$ 21,993

ANNUAL CONFERENCE FUNDS

Blue Lake Operation Fund	\$ 150,000	\$ 149,086	99.39%	\$ 149,086
B/L Cap Impr/Debt Retirement Fund	\$ -	\$ -	0.00%	\$ -
Capital and Operations (Trustees)	\$ 100,000	\$ 97,924	97.92%	\$ 97,924
Conference Administration Fund	\$ 566,750	\$ 565,804	99.83%	\$ 565,804
Conference Resource Center	\$ 308,000	\$ 283,104	91.92%	\$ 283,104
Communications	\$ 153,000	\$ 136,294	89.08%	\$ 136,294
Connection Ministry Prog Pool	\$ 141,000	\$ 143,814	102.00%	\$ 143,814
Congregational Development Fund	\$ 254,296	\$ 224,378	88.24%	\$ 224,378
Dist. Superintendent's Fund	\$ 684,000	\$ 671,366	98.15%	\$ 463,401
Equitable Compensation Fund	\$ -	\$ -	0.00%	\$ -
Huntingdon/BSC	\$ 279,383	\$ 272,186	97.42%	\$ 272,186
Student Aid, Huntingdon	\$ 110,903	\$ 108,045	97.42%	\$ 108,045
Wesley Foundations	\$ 385,539	\$ 376,435	97.64%	\$ 376,435
Homes for the Aging	\$ 40,000	\$ 39,756	99.39%	\$ 39,756
Conference Claimants Fund	\$ 200,000	\$ 200,002		\$ 200,002
Health Insurance Fund	\$ 900,000	\$ 898,627	99.85%	\$ 898,627
Bd. of Pension and Health Benefits	\$ -	\$ -	0.00%	\$ 5,772
TOTALS	\$ 4,272,871	\$ 4,166,822	97.52%	\$ 3,964,629

GRAND TOTALS	\$ 7,295,663	\$ 6,549,494	89.77%	\$ 6,347,302
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Report No. 8 - STEWARDSHIP RESPONSIBILITIES and LOCAL CHURCH CONCERNS

1. CFA believes that all apportionments are needed in the amounts apportioned. Furthermore, CFA believes that all churches have the capacity to pay apportionments in full. In 2022, 86.94% of apportioned funds were paid by local churches. CFA continues to encourage all churches and all United Methodist Christians in the Alabama - West Florida Annual Conference to participate fully in our connectional ministries through generous serving, generous giving, generous living, generous leading, and generous praying. The 2024 Conference budget reflects an 18.00% reduction in Connectional Missional (Conference Ministries line) giving (apportionments.) General Church apportionments were reduced by 18.00% and Jurisdictional apportionments remain unchanged from 2023. Overall Annual Conference Connectional Missional (apportionments) decreased by 17.93% for 2024 compared to 2023.

2. By action of the 2001 Annual Conference, the following schedule shall be used in setting apportionments for new churches:
 - 1st full year no apportionment
 - 2nd year 25% apportioned
 - 3R year 50% apportioned
 - 4th year 75% apportioned
 - 5th year & following 100% apportioned

3. Apportionments shall be made to all churches using the apportionment formula outlined in CFA Report - Formula and Allocations.

4. Local churches shall provide for the audits of local church records as provided in paragraph 258.4d of the *2016 Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church*.

Report No. 9 - FORMULA and ALLOCATIONS

1. In 2012 a task force was formed to evaluate the fairness of the current formula for determining conference apportionments. They reviewed formulas used in each of the Southeastern Jurisdiction Annual Conferences. The task force recommended, and the 2013 Annual Conference approved, the continued use of the current apportionment formula.

2. Therefore, the apportionments shall be developed using a formula based on financial strength of the local churches and membership of the local churches. Financial strength will be weighted 75% and professing membership will be weighted 25% in the formula. Apportionments will be determined by local church decimal applied to the amount of each budget item at the conference level.

3. The financial strength of a local church in calculating the decimal formula shall be based on all local expenditures (lines 41a-47 of the Local Church Report to the Annual Conference). This eliminates all apportionments (including direct billing) and special giving from the formula. (Listing: Standing Rule No. 22)
4. The winter/spring meeting of the Council on Finance and Administration shall be the time for receiving requests from all boards and agencies for the ensuing year. All boards and agencies should be advised that they place their allocations in jeopardy when they fail to submit timely budget requests.
5. The local church will enter the Local Church Report information using the Brick River ACS System. Contact the District Superintendent's office for the User Name and Password if they are not known by the church pastor. The pastor and chairperson of the Committee on Finance or the church treasurer shall review the annual local church report as being correct before its final submission. The Fiscal Office will establish a date by which it should be notified if corrections are necessary. If no corrections are identified by that date, the fiscal officer will consider the report accurate. When the new year's apportionments are run in July/August, there will be only one set of apportionments, which will be the final set. There will not be a "Trial Set" of apportionments.

Report No. 10 - DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENTS' COMPENSATION

CFA voted to set the District Superintendent's salary compensation at \$127,508 for 2024. Further adjustments to District Superintendent's compensation are hereafter tied to the CAC, Conference Average Compensation. District Superintendent's salary will increase or decrease at the same percentage as the CAC changes.

District Superintendent's travel expenses will be paid on voucher from a travel pool of \$48,000. The executive committee of CFA shall adjust the rate per mile, as needed, within this limit.

1. District superintendents shall receive no supplementary travel funds from district administration funds.
2. The districts shall provide district superintendents a housing allowance and shall designate the housing amount in the minutes of the District Conference. This designation shall be made in advance of payment of such allowance, either upon appointment or in advance of the calendar year thereafter.
3. Each district shall place in its district administration fund an amount not to exceed \$2,000 for continuing education.

Report No. 11 - MOVING GUIDELINES and EXPENSES

The second Sunday following the adjournment of Annual Conference shall be the last Sunday of pastoral responsibility for each conference year. The official moving day will be Tuesday, June 20, 2023 and may be adjusted according to the needs and concerns worked out in consultation with the clergy persons, the churches and approved by the District Superintendent.

The entire June salary shall be paid to the pastor by the church from which he/she is moving. In effect 50% of the annual salary will be paid January through June; with the remaining 50% paid by the church receiving a new pastor. Health insurance contributions and/or premiums, as well as any UMPIP payments are to be deducted from the pastor's compensation for the full month of June, with the receiving church beginning such payments in July.

Upon retirement, disability, termination, or death of a minister serving within the bounds of the Annual Conference and serving a full time appointments under the provisions of Paragraph 333.1 of the *2016 Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church*, the conference shall pay up to \$3,000 for documented moving expenses to the first place of retirement, termination, or disability or the first place of dwelling for a surviving spouse. Moving expenses to be reimbursed shall not be incurred prior to retirement or termination notification to the Bishop and will be reimbursed after the move is completed.

Guidelines for clergy under appointment:

1. Following notification of appointment change by the district superintendent, the Chairperson of the PPRC should contact the minister to be appointed to communicate the church's policy in paying moving expenses and to discuss moving plans.
2. The receiving church is responsible for the first \$3,000 of documented moving expenses and is encouraged to pay all documented expenses for the incoming ministerial family.

Report No. 12 - ANNUAL CONFERENCE EXPENSES

1. A charge of \$28.00 per person, per night, will be made for all who use Conference provided housing. (Standing Rule No.8) CFA will be responsible for studying and investigating possible locations and expenses for housing during future sessions of the Annual Conference.
2. The *Book of Reports* will contain instructions for ordering printed regular bound copies of the *Conference Journal*. (Standing Rule 15)
3. Electronic versions of the *Book of Reports* and the *Conference Journal* may be substituted for printed copies.

Report 13 - CREDIT CARD POLICY

Organizations for which the Council on Financial and Administration has responsibility and or the Fiscal office provides financial services must coordinate approval before establishing credit card account and credit limits for consumer credit accounts.

Report No. 14 - INVESTMENT POLICY STATEMENT

SCOPE OF THIS INVESTMENT POLICY STATEMENT

This statement of investment policy reflects the investment policy, objectives, and constraints of the Council on Finance and Administration of the Alabama-West Florida Conference. (CFA)

PURPOSE OF THIS INVESTMENT POLICY STATEMENT

The Council on Finance and Administration sets forth this statement of investment policy in order to do the following:

1. Define and assign the responsibilities of all involved parties.
2. Establish a clear understanding for all involved parties of the investment goals and objectives for assets.
3. Manage assets according to prudent standards as established in common trust law and in accordance with general guidelines by the General Council on Finance and Administration of the United Methodist Church.
4. Establish the relevant investment horizon for which assets will be managed.

In general, the purpose of this statement is to outline a philosophy and attitude which will guide the investment management of the assets towards the desired results. It is intended to be sufficiently specific to be meaningful, yet flexible enough to be practical.

DEFINITIONS

1. "The Council on Finance and Administration" is the governing council established to administer the assets as specified by the *Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church* in its most recent edition and applicable actions of the annual conference.
2. "The Council on Finance and Administration" shall be referred to hereinafter as the "Council" in regard to this policy statement.
3. "The Investment Committee" consists of members of the Council, appointed by the Council, to act on behalf of the Council to administer this policy. It shall be referred to hereinafter as the "Committee" in regard to this policy statement.

4. "Investment Manager" shall mean any individuals or organizations employed to manage the investment of all or part of the assets.
5. "Investment Broker" shall mean any individual or organization employed to provide advisory services, including advice on investment objectives and/or asset allocation, manager search, and performance monitoring.
6. "Assets" shall mean all funds and securities for which the Council is responsible.
7. "Securities" shall refer to the marketable investment securities which are defined as acceptable in this statement.
8. "Investment Horizon" shall be the time period over which the investment objectives, as set forth, are expected to be met. The maximum investment horizon for these assets shall be set by the Council.

DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY

The Committee is responsible for directing and monitoring the investment management of the assets. As such, the committee is authorized to delegate certain responsibilities to professional experts in various fields subject to Council approval. These include, but are not limited to the following:

1. The Investment Broker may assist the Committee in: establishing investment policy, objectives, and guidelines; selecting investment managers; reviewing such managers over time; measuring and evaluating investment performance; and other tasks as deemed appropriate.
2. If an Investment Manager is used, he/she has discretion to purchase, sell, or hold the specific securities that will be used to meet the investment objectives.
3. The Custodian will physically (or through agreement with a sub-custodian) maintain possession of securities administered by the Committee, collect dividend and interest payments, redeem maturing securities, and effect receipt and delivery following purchases and sales. The custodian may also perform regular accounting of all assets owned, purchased, or sold, as well as movements of assets into and out of the investment accounts.
4. Additional specialists such as attorneys, auditors, and others may be employed by the Committee to assist in meeting its responsibilities and obligations to administer assets prudently.

If such experts employed are also deemed to be fiduciaries, they must acknowledge such in writing. All expenses for such experts must be customary and reasonable, and will be borne by the Council as deemed appropriate and necessary.

ASSIGNMENT OF RESPONSIBILITY

Responsibility of the Council

The Council is charged by law, the *Book of Discipline* and the actions of the Alabama-West Florida Conference of The United Methodist Church with the responsibility for the management of the investment assets. The Council and Committee shall discharge their duties solely in the interest of the annual conference, with the care, skill, prudence and diligence under the circumstances then prevailing, that a prudent person, acting in a like capacity and familiar with such matters would use in the conduct of an enterprise of a like character with like aims. The specific responsibilities of the Committee, subject to the approval of the Council, relating to the management of investment assets include:

1. Projecting the investment needs and communicating such needs to the investment brokers/investment managers on a timely basis.
2. Determining the Council's risk tolerance and investment horizon, and communicating these to the appropriate parties.
3. Establishing reasonable and consistent investment objectives, policies, and guidelines which will direct the investment of the assets.
4. Prudently and diligently selecting qualified investment professionals, including investment manager(s), an investment broker, and a custodian
5. Regularly evaluating the performance of the investment manager(s) to assure adherence to policy guidelines and monitor investment objective progress.
6. Developing and enacting proper control procedures: for example, replacing an investment manager due to a fundamental change in investment management process or failure to comply with established guidelines.
7. The Conference Treasurer shall serve as the contact person for the investment brokers or investment managers.

Responsibility of the Investment Broker

The investment broker's role is that of a non-discretionary advisor to the Committee. Investment advice concerning the management of investment assets will be offered by the investment broker and will be consistent with the investment objectives, policies, guidelines, and constraints as established in this policy statement. Specific responsibilities of the investment broker include the following:

1. Assisting in the development and periodic review of investment policy.
2. Conducting investment manager searches when requested by the Committee.
3. Providing "due diligence" or research on the investment manager(s).
4. Monitoring the performance of the investment manager(s) to provide the Committee with the ability to determine the progress toward the investment objectives.
5. Communicating matters of policy, manager research, and manager performance to the Committee.
6. Reviewing asset investment history, historical capital markets performance, and the contents of this investment policy statement with any newly appointed members of the Committee and Council.
7. Executing orders for the purchase and sale of securities.

Responsibility of the Investment Manager(s)

Each investment manager must acknowledge in writing its acceptance of responsibility as a fiduciary. Each investment manager will have full discretion to make all investment decisions for the assets placed under its jurisdiction, while observing and operating within all policies, guidelines, constraints, and philosophies as outlined in this policy statement. Specific responsibilities of the investment manager(s) include the following:

1. Discretionary investment management including decisions to buy, sell, or hold individual securities, and to alter asset allocation within the guide lines established in this policy statement.
2. Reporting, on a timely basis, quarterly investment performance results.
3. Communicating any major changes to economic outlook, investment strategy, or any other factors which affect implementation of investment process or the investment objective progress of investment management.
4. Informing the Committee regarding any qualitative change to investment management organization: Examples include changes in portfolio management personnel, ownership structure, investment philosophy, etc.
5. Voting proxies, if requested by the Committee, on behalf of the Council, and communicating such voting records to the Committee on a timely basis.
6. Monitoring the appropriateness of the strategy given overall investment strategies, philosophies, and objectives

INVESTMENT GUIDELINESAllowable Assets

1. Cash Equivalents
 - Treasury Bills
 - Treasury Money Market Funds
 - Repurchase Agreements
 - Certificates of Deposit
 - Common Development Fund of the AL-WF United Methodist Development Fund, Inc.
 - Flexible Demand Note offered by The United Methodist Development Fund
2. Fixed Income Securities
 - U.S. Government and Agency Securities
 - Mortgage Backed Bonds
 - Income Fund of the AI-WF United Methodist Foundation, Inc.
 - Fixed Term Notes offered by The United Methodist Development Fund
3. Equity Securities
 - Common Stocks of U.S. Corporations
 - Convertible Notes and Bonds of U.S. Corporations
 - Growth Fund and Growth & Income Fund of the AW-FL United Methodist Foundation, Inc.
4. Restrictions

Investments shall not knowingly be made in securities in which the corporate entity has a significant interest in distilled spirits, wine or other fermented juices, tobacco, gambling, pornography or firearms. Investments shall not knowingly be

made in securities of corporate entity in which the core business:

- Manufactures cigarettes, cigars, chewing tobacco, smokeless tobacco, or in a company in which 10% or more of gross revenues are derived from supplying key components to the tobacco industry or the sale and marketing of tobacco related products.
- Produces alcoholic beverages (beer, wine, distilled liquor) or in a company in which 10% or more of gross revenues are derived from supplying key elements for alcohol production or from the sale, distribution or marketing of alcoholic beverages.
- Owns or manages casinos, racetracks, off-track betting parlors; or in a company that derives 10% or more of gross revenues from the production of goods and services related to the gaming or lottery industries.
- Derives 10% or more gross revenues from the production, distribution or sale of products or devices that are interpreted to be pornographic, meet the legal criteria for obscenity or legal definition of “harmful to minors.”
- Derives 10% or more gross revenues from the manufacture, sale or distribution of antipersonnel weapons such as land mines, “assault type” automatic and semiautomatic weapons, firearms, and ammunition provided for commercial and private markets.

Prohibited Assets and Transactions

Prohibited investments and transactions include, but are not limited to the following:

- Commodities and Futures Contracts
- Private Placements
- Options
- Short Selling
- Margin Transactions

Diversification

In order to achieve a prudent level of portfolio diversification, the securities of anyone company or government should not exceed 10% of the total assets under management, and no more than 20% of the total assets should be invested in anyone industry. With the exception of U.S. Government securities, no fixed income issues may exceed 15% of the market value of the fixed income portfolio.

Guidelines for Fixed Income Investments and Cash Equivalents

- Assets may be invested only in investment grade bonds rated A (or equivalent) or better.
- Maximum maturity for any single fixed income security is 10 years.
- Money Market Funds selected shall contain only U.S. Treasury securities.

Return

The Committee has set a goal of outperforming, net of all investment expenses, a blended market index which best represents the strategic asset

allocation of the overall investment structure.

Total Portfolio Blended Benchmark (based on the asset allocation described below):

50% Equity Blended Benchmark – comprised of 70% of the Russell 3000 Index and 30% of the MSCI All Country World Index Ex-U.S.

50% Fixed Income Blended Benchmark – comprised of 80% Barclays Capital U.S. Aggregate Bond Index, 10% Barclays Capital Global Aggregate ex-U.S. Bond Index, and 10% Barclays Capital U.S. Corporate High Yield Bond Index

- The **Russell 3000 Index** measures the performance of the largest 3000 U.S. companies representing approximately 98% of the investable U.S. equity market. The Index is constructed to provide a comprehensive, unbiased, and stable barometer of the broad market and is completely reconstituted annually to ensure new and growing equities are reflected.
- The **MSCI All Country World Index Ex-U.S.** is a market-capitalization-weighted index maintained by Morgan Stanley Capital International (MSCI) and designed to provide a broad measure of stock performance throughout the world, except for U.S.-based companies. The Index consists of 44 country indices comprising 23 developed and 21 emerging market country indices.
- The **Barclays Capital U.S. Aggregate Bond Index** is the most common index used to track the performance of investment grade bonds in the U.S. The Index is weighted per market capitalization. Treasury securities, mortgage-backed securities (MBS) foreign bonds, government agency bonds and corporate bonds are some of the categories included in the index. The bonds represented are medium term with an average maturity of approximately 4.5 years. In all, the index represents about 8,200 fixed-income securities with a total value of approximately \$15 trillion (about 43% of the total U.S. bond market). To be included in the index, bonds must be rated investment grade (at least Baa3/BBB) by Moody's and S&P. However, almost 80% of bonds represented in the index have an AAA rating.
- The **Barclays Capital Global Aggregate Ex-U.S. Bond Index** provides a broad-based measure of the global, investment-grade, fixed-rate debt markets. The index includes government, government agency, corporate, and securitized non-U.S. investment-grade fixed income investments, all issued in currencies other than the U.S. dollar and with maturities of more than one year.
- The **Barclays Capital U.S. Corporate High Yield Bond Index** measures the USD-denominated, high yield, fixed-rate corporate bond market. Securities are classified as high yield if the middle rating of Moody's, Fitch and S&P is Ba1/BB+/BB+ or below.

Risk

Higher returns involve higher volatility. The Committee is willing to tolerate some volatility (based on the target allocation) to meet its long-term total return objectives. However, it is intended that assets be managed and diversified in a manner that seeks to minimize principal fluctuations over the established time horizon.

Diversification across asset classes is a core principle of prudent portfolio management. The asset class targets and ranges below show the approved investment levels associated with the investment objectives. The portion invested in each sub-class and strategy will change periodically to reflect the Investment Consultant's/Manager's tactical investment policy if it is within the acceptable ranges listed. Any proposed investment changes outside these ranges must be approved by the Committee prior to being implemented. The Committee should review asset allocation targets and ranges annually.

Target Asset Allocation

	Tactical Minimum	Strategic	Tactical Maximum
Global Equity	30%	50%	70%
U.S. Large Cap Equity	15%	30%	36%
U.S. Small/Mid Cap Equity	5%	10%	13%
Non-U.S. Developed Markets	5%	7.5%	10.5%
Non-U.S. Emerging Markets	5%	7.5%	10.5%
Global Fixed Income	30%	50%	70%
U.S. Investment Grade Bonds	20%	36%	50%
Non-U.S. Bonds	5%	7%	10%
High Yield Bonds	5%	7%	10%

From time to time, market conditions may cause the portfolio's investments to vary from the established target allocations. To remain consistent with the asset allocation guidelines established by this Policy, each broad asset class (as defined above) shall be reviewed periodically for potential rebalancing back to target or initial allocations. The Investment Consultant/Manager retains discretion to rebalance based on market conditions, economic events, or account activity if allocations remain within the permissible ranges.

Liquidity is required to meet cash flow needs as well as unanticipated expenditures or distributions. Therefore, a liquid reserve of no more than 2% may be maintained to aid in payment of expenses and or distributions. Liquidity guidelines: Investments may be made through a combination of

externally managed strategies (separate account managers and/or manager models), Mutual Funds, and Exchanged Traded Funds (ETFs) that provide daily liquidity.

Investment Policy Review

To assure continued relevance of the guidelines, objectives, financial status and capital markets expectations as established in this statement of investment policy, the Council shall review this policy at least annually.

Report No. 15 – GIFT POLICY

The AWFUMC Gift Policy applies to all Agencies, Boards, Commissions and Committees. The purpose is to establish consistent and equitable recognition for leadership/service to the Annual Conference.

No apportioned funds will be used to recognize service as a leader/member of Conference Agencies, Boards, Commissions and Committees upon their termination of service. Funding for such recognition in the form of a gift is the sole responsibility of the members of the Agencies, Boards, Commissions or Committees.

Report No. 16 - FISCAL YEAR END

1. The Fiscal Office will close the annual financial records on December 31, 2023.
2. The last day that apportionment payments can be credited to the prior year asking is January 12, 2024.
3. Churches sending apportionment payments AFTER December 31 must do one of the following:
 - a. Deliver payment to the Fiscal Office in Montgomery AL any time before 10:00 a.m. on January 12, 2024.
 - b. Mail the payment. Regardless of the postmark date, payments received after 10:00 a.m. on the closing date cannot be credited to the prior year apportionments.
 - c. Submit online payment via the Shelby Portal prior to January 10, 2024. Account information can be obtained by contacting suzanne@awfumc.org prior to December 15, 2023.

Submitted by,
Mr. George Mingledorff, President
Council on Finance and Administration

Audit Statement

The Council on Finance and Administration of the Alabama-West Florida Conference of the United Methodist Church engaged Warren Averett, LLC to conduct an audit of the financial statements of the Conference for the year ended December 31, 2022, which comprised the statements of financial position and the related statements of activities, functional expenses and cash flows. In the opinion of Warren Averett, LLC, the financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the Council on Finance and Administration of the Alabama-West Florida Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church as of December 31, 2022 and 2021, and the changes in net assets and cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America. The audited financial statements will be published in the 2022 Alabama-West Florida Conference Journal and will be available upon written request to the Conference Fiscal Office, attn: Conference Treasurer, 4719 Woodmere Blvd, Montgomery, AL 36106.

Conference Board of Trustees

REPORT 1 – FUND BALANCES

The Board of Trustees of the Alabama-West Florida Annual Conference holds in trust all properties of the Annual Conference. The real properties held are the following: The Episcopal Residence: 3291 Lancaster Lane, Montgomery and the Annual Conference Office building at 4719 Woodmere Blvd, Montgomery. The Board is the Trustee for the following bequests (market value as of December 31, 2022):

FUND	COST VALUE	BENEFICIARY
1. Norris Allen Fund	\$ 201,434	Board of Ministry
2. Hattie B. Norred Fund	\$ 130,366	Board of Trustees
3. C.B. Gilmore Fund	\$ 246,872	Board of Trustees
4. Lowndesboro Trust	\$ 9,746	Lowndesboro UMC
5. Mary Lloyd Reynolds	\$ 162,030	Board of Missions
6. J.B. Skinner Estate	\$ 1,472,810	Embrace Kids

The Board of Trustees holds these funds in trust, with the revenues being used as directed by the donors.

We call attention to the resolution adopted by the Annual Conference of 1988, which designated the Alabama-West Florida United Methodist Foundation as the official depository for discretionary endowment funds owned by the Annual Conference and its related boards and agencies. Local churches are encouraged to use the Foundation for endowment funds in order to insure proper management and fiduciary accountability.

REPORT 2 - SIGNATURE AUTHORITY

In keeping with ¶2515 of *The 2016 Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church*, and as modified by the 2021 Annual Conference, the Chair, Vice-Chair or Treasurer of the Conference Trustees may sign any required written instruments necessary to carry out any action regarding a local church disaffiliation, or the sale, transfer, lease, or purchase of Annual Conference property, without the requirement for a second signatory, provided they also receive the written approval of a non-signatory who is either the Chair or Vice-Chair of Trustees, or the Chancellor or Associate Chancellor of the Conference. All such signatures and acts on behalf of the Conference shall be deemed to be valid and binding on behalf of the Conference.

REPORT 3 - DESIGNATION OF UMC OWNED PROPERTY AS CULTURAL, HISTORICAL, OR ARCHITECTURAL LANDMARK

Paragraph 2512.7 of *The 2016 Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church* directs that “the board [of trustees of the annual conference], after consultation with the conference commission on archives and history. . . shall develop a policy for an annual conference response, on behalf of any local church, church-related agency, or district or annual conference board of trustees located within the bounds of the annual conference, to any governmental effort to designate a property held in trust for the benefit of The United Methodist Church (§2501) by any such board of trustees as a cultural, historical, or architectural landmark.”

Governmental designation of church-owned real property as a cultural, historical, or architectural landmark severely infringes upon and restricts the rights of the church as a property owner and as a religious institution.

Governmental designation of church-owned real property can cause a reduction in the market value of the property.

Typically, the exterior facade of a building may not be altered without governmental permission.

Depending on governmental requirements, alterations of the interior may be forbidden without governmental permission.

Improvements (such as buildings) on the property are either forbidden to be demolished, or can be demolished only after extensive and expensive applications and hearings.

Sale of landmarked property, when it is no longer required for church purposes, becomes almost impossible; a buyer is not given the freedom to demolish the structures on the property or to use it as he/she sees fit. Such limitations would render church-owned property virtually unable to be sold in the future. The church could be blocked from transforming the donations given in the past to establish real property for United Methodist use into new establishments for United Methodist Church use, a promise made to the donors at the time their donations were originally solicited.

In exchange for such limitations on the use of property, governmental bodies typically will compensate the property owner for such reduction in property value and limitations on development and use by allowing federal and state income tax credits against actual expenditures made for future rehabilitation work done to the property. Such income tax credits are worthless to a church, however, because

a church does not pay income taxes.

Because of the restrictions and infringements upon the rights of the church as a property owner and religious institution, in general such governmental designations should be discouraged.

There may be, however, instances when allowing such a land-marking to take place is in the best interests of both the public and the church. Therefore, the following principles are established as the policy of the Alabama-West Florida Annual Conference:

1. Any Board of Trustees which voluntarily wishes to cooperate with a governmental body in having that property landmarked which the Board of Trustees holds in trust for The United Methodist Church shall do the following:
 - a. Comply with the provisions of ¶s 2515, 2539, 2540, 2541, and/or 2543 (as appropriate) of *The 2016 Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church*, just as if such land-marking were a sale of the property.
 - b. Obtain a majority vote of the Bishop and Cabinet, combined, approving such a voluntary land-marking of church-owned property.

2. On behalf of the Alabama-West Florida Annual Conference, the Annual Conference Board of Trustees, as the designated successor in interest to church-owned property held in trust for the United Methodist Church under ¶2549.3 of *The 2016 Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church*, and as the designated agency “to intervene and take all necessary legal steps to safeguard and protect the interests and rights of the annual conference anywhere and in all matters relating to property and rights to property” of any of its agencies, organizations, or local churches under 2512.4, is directed to intervene, at the request of the superintendent of the district in which the affected property is located, to oppose any governmental effort to involuntarily designate any such property as a cultural, historical, or architectural landmark. This intervention may include engaging what legal or professional counsel is needed. Such intervention may include opposing such land-marking designation in any or all state or federal courts, if necessary and appropriate. The Annual Conference Board of Trustees may, at its discretion, undertake such intervention by financial assistance to the affected board of trustees. Such funding shall come first from any positive balance in the fund described below. Additional funding, if necessary, be requested from the Annual Conference Council on Finance and Administration.

3. The Annual Conference Committee on Finance and Administration shall establish an interest-on-investments account to be used, at the discretion of the Annual Conference Board of Trustees, to help defray the costs of

opposing governmental efforts at involuntary land-marking of church-owned property as described above. Funds contributed to this fund may only be used for the designated purpose. Any use of these funds will be reported to the Annual Conference. Income generated from this account may be used by the Annual Conference Council on Finance and Administration (or its successor organization) for any purpose it shall designate. The Annual Conference Board of Trustees is directed to a) request monies from the apportioned budget of the Annual Conference, as reasonably available, and b) solicit voluntary contributions, to put into the account to hold in reserve for the designated purpose.

REPORT 4 - GENERAL TRUST GUIDELINES

In the absence of specific guidelines regarding the investment and distribution of gifts to the Alabama-West Florida Conference Board of Trustees, the board establishes these guidelines in order to provide ongoing support of the ministries identified by the donor. The use of “Board of Trustees” in this document refers to the Board of Trustees of the Alabama-West Florida Conference of the United Methodist Church.

- The objective of the trust is to conserve principal as an ongoing source of funding.
- Any part of the principal may be withdrawn only in extreme and overwhelming circumstances, bordering on the financial survival of the entity designated by the donor and must be approved by the Board of Trustees.
- Fund management will be provided through the services of the Alabama-West Florida United Methodist Foundation.
- Up to 100% of the income may be utilized upon approval of the Board of Trustees. The Board shall use the “Corporate Law” definition of income, which generally defines income as earnings from all sources including interest, dividends, net rentals and capital appreciation.
- Realized capital gains will routinely be treated as an increase in principal value unless approved by the Board of Trustees for distribution as part of “income”.
- The use of a trust fund as collateral for a loan will be decided on a case by case basis by the Board of Trustees.
- Board of Trustees will determine the investment strategy for each fund and any changes in investment strategy will require approval of the Board.
- Any material change to the income distribution policy requires approval of the Board of Trustees.
- Board of Trustees encourages the use of the General Trust Guidelines for all additional gifts.

REPORT 5 - 15 PASSENGER VANS

In an extraordinary action The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (see www.nhtsa.gov) issued a safety advisory for the fourth time in five years saying:

- 15 passenger vans are far more prone to rolling over than school buses, cars, or mini-vans.
- Occupants of 15 - passenger vans are less apt to wear seat belts.
- 15 - passenger vans are three times more likely to roll over when fully loaded than when they have fewer than 10 passengers.

Federal law does not let car dealers sell the vans for transporting people 18 years and younger.

The South Carolina United Methodist Advocate, dated May 2001 stated: *School buses average 0.2 deaths per 100 million miles. Vans average 1.2 deaths per 100 million miles.*

The Alabama-West Florida Chancellor states, “I believe that the use of these vans should be strongly discouraged by the Conference. There have been studies which tend to show that 15-passenger vans can become unstable in emergency situations where the vans are fully loaded. While the vans have not been prohibited by the Department of Transportation, the use of fully loaded vans to transport passengers has been strongly questioned. There is evidence that a fully loaded 15-passenger van exceeds the design criteria for the suspension systems of the van. Under emergency braking or handling maneuvers, the van can become unstable and there have been several crashes involving fully loaded vans. Consequently, it is my opinion that the Conference should strongly discourage the use of 15-passenger vans for the transportation of people in our Conference. Although the Conference cannot prohibit the use of these vans, I believe we should strongly discourage the use of these vans due to the liability concerns and safety concerns.”

It is the recommendation of the Board of Trustees that churches not use or purchase 15 passenger vans to transport passengers and that before churches do so that they obtain competent legal advice and consult with their insurance company.

REPORT 6 - PARSONAGE STANDARDS

The Book of Discipline states, “Housing provisions shall comply with Annual Conference housing policy and parsonage standards.” In order to establish a housing policy and housing standard the Annual Conference recommends two

options available for the local church. The Annual Conference does not put one option above the other. The options are co-equal, depending upon the local situation.

The Charge Conference shall review the recommendations of the Pastor-Parish Relations Committee regarding provision of adequate housing for the pastor(s) of a local Charge in consultation with the District Superintendent, the Charge shall choose one of these two options.

OPTION ONE

Housing Allowance: Any congregation considering a housing allowance shall consult with the District Superintendent to understand all the positive and negative aspects of housing allowances. Before implementing a housing allowance, a congregation must obtain the District Superintendent's permission. The congregation must present a tentative draft budget for the first two years and demonstrate the impact of the change on the overall fiscal health of the congregation. If the congregation decides to sell an existing parsonage, the church leadership shall follow the Discipline guidelines for selling the parsonage and using the proceeds of the sale.

Upon recommendation of the Pastor-Parish Relations Committee and the Board of Trustees with approval by the Finance Committee, the Charge Conference shall provide an annual housing allowance. The housing allowance shall not be considered as part of compensation or remuneration of the pastor(s).

OPTION TWO

Upon recommendation of the Pastor-Parish Relations Committee and the Board of Trustees with approval by the Finance Committee, the Charge Conference shall provide a parsonage that furnishes only major appliances, installed floor covering and window dressing.

REQUIRED MINIMUM STANDARDS

In addition to the Discipline requirements for parsonages the following is required for all parsonages, in the Alabama -West Florida Annual Conference.

- Electrical wiring that meets code and is sufficient to meet today's needs for electricity.
- Climate control - both heating and air conditioning

Rooms:

- Living Room or Great Room
- Dining Room or eating area large enough for at least 8 people
- Kitchen
- 3 bedrooms
- 2 baths

- Indoor laundry area
- Shelter for 2 vehicles
- Secure storage area

Equipment:

Good quality, dependable appliances:

- Stove
- Microwave
- Dishwasher
- Refrigerator with freezer compartment
- Washer and dryer
- Hot water heater of at least 60 gallons
- Wired for basic cable or satellite dish service
- Maintained smoke alarms
- Current fire extinguishers for kitchen and other required areas
- Vacuum, if there are carpets

If no lawn service and pastor is expected to maintain lawn the following are minimum requirements:

- Gas mower
- Trimmer or weed eater

Furnishings:

- Quality window coverings in neutral colors that ensure privacy
- Quality floor coverings in neutral colors that are durable and easy to maintain

Maintenance:

- Regular pest control inspection and treatment
- Annual termite inspection and treatment
- Landscaping and maintenance thereof should be representative of the neighborhood
- Regular schedule for painting both on the outside and inside of the house as needed.
- Any needed repairs should be done in a timely manner
- Annual carpet cleaning
- Regular maintenance and cleaning of chimneys if one exists

CARE OF THE PROPERTY

1. The pastor and family should care for the parsonage as good stewards for the Lord's property, carefully avoiding undue wear and tear, but at the same time they should "be at home" in the parsonage, knowing that the home and furnishings are to be used with inevitable and expected depreciation.

2. The church shall provide an adequate amount of insurance of the building and equipment and for public liability. The minimum amount of insurance carried on the parsonage should be equal to 80% of the replacement value of the building, furnishings, and equipment. All clergy families are responsible for insuring all of the family's personal items.
3. There shall be a plan identifying repairs, replacements or additions that need to be made to the parsonage. All broken and worn-out equipment should be removed.
4. The Board of Trustees in consultation with the parsonage committee shall keep the parsonage in good repair. They shall furnish the clergy family with a list of those church members who can do minor repairs and the names of repair companies with whom the church does business. A list of procedures to follow when repair work is needed should also be given to the clergy family.
5. Regular pest control inspection and treatment, annual termite inspection and annual carpet cleaning should be budgeted.
6. The pastor and spouse should be consulted in the selection of equipment.
7. If the vacating parsonage family had pets they shall be responsible for having the house and yard treated for fleas and other parasites before moving. They shall also be responsible for having the carpeting cleaned and must vacate the house early in order to allow for this process to occur.
8. Each pastoral charge should place an amount in the budget annually for normal maintenance and repairs to the building and equipment or the replacement of same if necessary.

REPORT 7 - POLICY STATEMENT CONCERNING SEXUAL MISCONDUCT BY CLERGY OF THE ALABAMA-WEST FLORIDA CONFERENCE OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH, INC.

The Alabama-West Florida Conference of the United Methodist Church, Inc. affirms *The 2016 Book of Resolutions*, Sexual Abuse Within the Ministerial Relationship and Sexual Harassment Within the Church, which states that sexual abuse within the ministerial relationship and sexual harassment within the church are incompatible with biblical teachings of hospitality, justice and healing. In accordance with *The 2016 Book of Discipline* ¶161(F), we affirm that all human beings, both male and female, 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 of the United Methodist Church supports equity among all persons without regard to ethnicity, situation or gender.

Statement of Purpose

Clergy members of this conference are in a position of sacred trust, responsibility and power which affords the opportunity for unique relationships of grace and

caring. Sexual *misconduct* by the clergy *violates this* trust and constitutes an abuse of the power and position of the clergy. It is the purpose of this policy to prohibit sexual abuse, sexual harassment and sexual misconduct by the clergy members of this conference in the performance of their responsibilities as ministers of the gospel. It is also the purpose of this policy to provide a method for reporting such misconduct and a procedure for resolution of complaints of misconduct involving clergy members of this Conference.

Theological Foundation

All persons are created by God. Scripture teaches that male and female are created in the image of God, and are of equal value in Christ. Jesus was sent into the world that all persons may experience whole relationships with God and each other. We are called to live in a right relationship with God, with one another, and with ourselves. This calling to live in the fullness of our God-created humanity requires that we sustain a vital relationship to God so that we may maintain the dignity of all life, and treat each other with respect and dignity. *The 2016 Book of Discipline* states: “We affirm that sexuality is God’s good gift to all persons. We believe persons may be fully human only when that gift is acknowledged and affirmed by themselves, the church and society.”

Definitions

Sexual harassment is defined by *The 2016 Book of Discipline*, ¶161(J) as “any unwanted sexual comment, advance or demand, either verbal or physical, that is reasonably perceived by the recipient as demeaning, intimidating, or coercive. Sexual harassment must be understood as an exploitation of a power relationship rather than an exclusively sexual issue. Sexual harassment includes, but is not limited to, the creation of a hostile or abusive working environment resulting from discrimination on the basis of gender.” Sexual harassment may occur in any environment where the work of the church takes place. Sexual harassment also includes intimidating or coercive behavior that threatens or results in a tangible employment action.

Gender Harassment is behavior that is harassing in nature against a woman because she is a woman or against a man because he is a man.

Sexual abuse is conduct of a sexual nature that is in violation of the legal rights of others and/or conduct that is prohibited by law. Sexual abuse includes criminal sexual conduct or sexual contact by force, threat or intimidation that is in violation of the laws of the states of Alabama or Florida. As applicable to interactions with children or vulnerable persons, the term “sexual abuse” includes the subjection of a child or vulnerable person to any sexual act by any person responsible for their care in violation of the laws of the states of Alabama or Florida. To uphold the moral standards of the United Methodist Church as defined by *The 2016 Book of Discipline*, no person under the age of 18 nor any

vulnerable adult may give consent to sexual acts.

Sexual abuse within the ministerial relationship occurs when a person within a ministerial role of leadership (pastor, educator, counselor, youth leader, or other person of leadership) engages in sexual contact or sexualized behavior with a congregant, parishioner, client, employee, student, staff member, co-worker or volunteer.

Sexual Misconduct is conduct which is a chargeable offense within the meaning of ¶2702 of *The 2016 Book of Discipline*. Sexual misconduct may also be an abuse of power through sexual contact or activity (not limited to sexual intercourse) which exploits the vulnerability of a parishioner, client, staff member, or volunteer, or conduct which causes or allows those persons to engage in sexual conduct with a person in a professional relationship (whether paid or unpaid) to this annual conference.

Sexual misconduct may also include any sexual contact or activity (not limited to sexual intercourse) between a person in a therapeutic or counseling role or relationship with a parishioner or client. In such instances, consent is not a defense. Such behavior is inappropriate and immoral.

Policy Statement

Sexual harassment, gender harassment, sexual abuse and misconduct of a sexual nature within the life of the Church interfere with its moral mission. The Alabama-West Florida Conference of the United Methodist Church prohibits and will not tolerate these behaviors, which are sinful, demeaning, abusive and wrong. This Conference commits itself to the fair and expedient investigation of any complaint of sexual and gender harassment, sexual abuse or misconduct of a sexual nature within the Conference and will take action deemed appropriate and in compliance with the *Book of Discipline*. Further, it shall be the policy of The Alabama West- Florida Conference of the United Methodist Church to create an environment of hospitality for all persons, male or female, which is free from this type of sinful conduct and which encourages respect, equality and kinship in Christ.

Procedure for Reporting Complaints

Some instances of harassment can be resolved informally by conversation between the parties or facilitated by mediation. In all other instances, conduct that is in violation of this policy must be reported immediately. Such a report may be made either to the Presiding Bishop of the Conference or any District Superintendent of this Conference. A report of such conduct may be reported to the Presiding Bishop at the Bishop's office in Montgomery, Alabama or to the District Superintendent at any of the District Offices within the Conference. Upon receipt by a District Superintendent of a report of clergy misconduct

of a sexual nature, the District Superintendent must immediately report such complaint to the Presiding Bishop.

Non-Retaliation for Reporting

The Alabama-West Florida Conference of the United Methodist Church will not retaliate against any person who brings forward a complaint or reports any conduct prohibited by this policy. All staff, leaders and volunteers are expected to immediately report any knowledge of harassment, abuse or misconduct to any one of the persons listed above. Prompt and appropriate investigation and corrective action, where appropriate, will be taken, including discipline. Persons who make false accusations may also be disciplined in the event that the accusations have been proven false.

Investigations

All investigations and remedial measures shall take place according to the pertinent provisions of the *Book of Discipline*. Nothing contained in this policy shall be construed to in any way alter or enlarge on any requirement of the *Book of Discipline*. All complaints or reports of conduct that is in violation of this policy shall be promptly and thoroughly investigated in accordance with the Book of Discipline. All investigations shall be consistent with fair process as set forth in ¶2701 of *The 2016 Book of Discipline* and the Decisions of The Judicial Council of the United Methodist Church.

Confidentiality

While The Alabama-West Florida Conference of the United Methodist Church cannot guarantee absolute confidentiality, it will make every reasonable 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.

Mandatory Reporting

The Alabama-West Florida Conference of the United Methodist Church will comply with all applicable state or federal laws regarding the mandatory reporting of misconduct of a sexual nature committed by any clergy.

Mediation and Reconciliation

The Alabama-West Florida Conference of the United Methodist Church encourages resolution of disputes and conflicts by mediation and reconciliation. Where appropriate, the Conference encourages parties to utilize mediation in order to reach a just and equitable resolution of the matter, giving due consideration to the severity of the situation, the position of the parties and nature of the conduct involved. Where appropriate, the conference encourages the utilization of mediation agencies such as *Just Peace*, and appropriate support teams.

REPORT 8 - SAFE SANCTUARIES POLICY and MINIMUM STANDARDS

INTRODUCTION. One mission of The Alabama-West Florida Annual Conference Board of Trustees is to support the work of the local church. At each meeting the members keep in front of them the question, “How will this action help the local church?” Our prayer is that the revised Safe Sanctuaries Policy and Minimum Standards will help the local church accomplish its ministries while ensuring the safety of our children, youth, and at-risk or vulnerable adults. We encourage clergy and laity to read this policy and make it an essential part of the operations of your local church. If you have any questions you may contact any member of the Board of Trustees.

I. THEOLOGICAL BASIS. The theological basis of the Safe Sanctuaries Policy and Minimum Standards (SSPMS) is grounded in the following:

- A. Children are important! Jesus said, “Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me . . .” (Mark 9.37, all Scripture references are from the New Revised Standard Version). We ought to offer hospitality and protect children. Jesus said, “If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones who believe in me, it would be better for you if a great millstone were fastened around your neck and you were drowned in the depth of the sea.” (Matthew 18.6; Mark 9.42).
- B. *The Social Principles of The United Methodist Church* state that “. . . children must be protected from economic, physical and sexual exploitation, and abuse.” Id, Paragraph (§) 162C.
- C. Members of the United Methodist Church regularly pledge commitment to demonstrating the love of Jesus Christ so that each person will be “. . . surrounded by steadfast love, . . . established in the faith, and confirmed and strengthened in the way that leads to life eternal” (*Baptismal Covenant II, United Methodist Hymnal*, p. 44).
- D. Paragraph 2702 of *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church 2016* names child abuse, sexual abuse, sexual misconduct, and sexual harassment as chargeable offenses for both clergy and lay members.

II. DEFINITIONS. The following definitions shall be used in establishing, applying, and interpreting the SSPMS:

A. Abuse

1. **Physical abuse** occurs where a person intentionally causes bodily harm to a child, youth, or at-risk or vulnerable adult.
2. **Emotional abuse** occurs where a person speaks violently or cruelly to a child, youth, or at-risk or vulnerable adult, or otherwise exposes a child, youth, or at-risk or vulnerable adult to violence or emotional cruelty.
3. **Neglect** is abuse which occurs where a person endangers the health, safety, or welfare of a child, youth, or at-risk or vulnerable adult by failing to act in a reasonable manner.

4. **Sexual abuse** occurs where an adult or another older or more powerful youth has sexual contact with a child, youth, or at-risk or vulnerable adult.

B. Personnel

1. **Governing body** refers to the local church leadership approved and elected by the annual Charge Conference of the local church and in compliance with *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church 2016* (§ 243, 244, and 247). Examples may include Church Council, Administrative Board, Board of Stewards, etc.
2. **Authority figure** is a person who is the primary leader of any youth, children, or at-risk or vulnerable adult activity and such person is required to be twenty-one (21) years of age or older.
3. **Assistant** is a person who gives help to and is directed by an **authority figure** in the course of any **youth, children, or at-risk or vulnerable adult** activity including, but not limited to, volunteers, interns, camp counselors, and Vacation Bible School workers. Such an **assistant** must be at least twelve (12) years of age. However, in order to count for satisfying requirements of the **two adult rule** (§ II.C.1, below,) such **assistant** must be an **adult** as herein defined.
4. **Adults** are all persons who have attained the age of majority (19 years in Alabama and 18 years in Florida).
5. **Floater** is an **adult** who acts as an **assistant** to an **authority figure** to monitor covered activities or events (§ II.C.2, below,) in order to comply with the **two adult rule** (§ II.C.1, below,) when achieving such compliance by use of two non-related adults is unfeasible.
6. **Children** are all persons from infants through the fifth grade or sixth grade, as determined by each local church in order to conform with grade-level practices of its local area schools regarding classifications of elementary schools and middle or junior high schools.
7. **Youth** are all persons in the sixth-grade or seventh-grade through the twelfth-grade, as determined by each local church in order to conform with grade-level practices of its local area schools regarding classifications of middle or junior high schools and high schools.
8. **At-risk** or **vulnerable adults** are adults with physical, mental, and/or developmental impairment or disability.

C. Activities

1. **Two adult rule** is a core principle regarding the supervision required for **covered activities** and **overnight events**. This rule means that a minimum of two adults who are not related to each other should be utilized in all programming with **children, youth, and at-risk or vulnerable adults**. However, when unfeasible to staff at buildings and outdoor areas with two non-related adults, there should be at least an additional adult serving as a **floater** with visual and physical access to all areas where such

programming occurs. Visual and physical access means either an open door or door with a window that provides a line of sight enabling the **floater** to see into a room or other building space and to see fully outdoor sites where **covered activities or events** take place.

2. **Covered activities or events** for purposes of this document include all church programming for **children, youth, and at-risk or vulnerable adults**.
3. **Overnight events** are a type of **covered activity or event** which extends through the evening and which may include summer camps, retreats, mission trips, and lock-ins.
 - a. **Room sharing limits** means that adults staying with young people during **overnight events** must be the same gender as the young people and that such adults must not be alone in a lodging room with a young person at any time and must not share a bed with a young person unless he/she is an immediate family member or guardian of such young person and of the same gender.
 - b. **Immediate family member or guardian room sharing exception** means that an immediate family member or guardian of a young person who is chaperoning an **overnight event** is permitted to share a room and bed with his/her child no matter the gender as long as no other young people are sharing the room.
4. **Transportation**
 - a. **Transportation** is a **covered activity** whenever such transportation is provided in a church-owned or leased vehicle (car, SUV, van, bus, etc.) or when a church staff member is the driver of or present in any vehicle used for such transportation. This provision shall not apply to multi-vehicle caravanning transportation. Two adults are not required to occupy each of the private vehicles in a caravan.
 - b. Any such transportation provided for a church-sponsored or church-hosted program of day-care, pre-school, or after-school care that is licensed under the laws of Alabama or Florida shall abide by and conform with the respective state laws and regulations, if any, applicable to such a transportation function.

III. POLICY STATEMENT. In covenant with all United Methodist congregations and the Alabama-West Florida Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church, we endeavor as follows:

- A. We shall strive to provide for physical safety and spiritual growth of all our children, youth, and at-risk or vulnerable adults.
- B. We shall strive to demonstrate the love of Jesus Christ so that each person will be “. . . surrounded by steadfast love, . . . established in the faith, and confirmed and strengthened in the way that leads to life eternal” (*Baptismal Covenant II, The United Methodist Hymnal*, p. 44).
- C. We shall strive to prevent physical, emotional, or sexual abuse of children,

- youth, and at-risk or vulnerable adults involved in any ministry sponsored by our Annual Conference or our local congregation.
- D. We shall strive to provide and facilitate the use of reasonable care and effort in caring for the children, youth, and at-risk or vulnerable adults involved in any ministry sponsored by our Annual Conference or our local congregation.
 - E. We shall strive to minister to and act in the best interests of persons who are experiencing abuse or who have been victims of abuse in the past.
 - F. We shall strive to be aware of and comply with our legal responsibilities regarding the types of abuse addressed in this document.
 - G. We shall strive to screen all current and future staff, and all volunteers for every program that involves children, youth, and at-risk or vulnerable adults.
 - H. We shall strive to acknowledge, respond to, and investigate all questions or reports regarding alleged abuse.
 - I. We shall strive to adhere to biblical church discipline, particularly as recognized in ¶ 2702 of *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church 2016*, which names child abuse, sexual abuse, sexual misconduct, and sexual harassment as chargeable offenses for clergy and lay members.
 - J. We shall commit to observe the Safe Sanctuaries Policy and Minimum Standards.

IV. STANDARDS: THEIR ADOPTION. Local churches within the Conference may adopt their own Safe Sanctuaries Policy and Minimum Standards, provided such standards equal or exceed in strength of protection for children, youth, and at-risk or vulnerable adults the minimum standards here stated. In the absence of such local church action, the minimum standards that shall be utilized in implementing and applying the Safe Sanctuaries Policy and Minimum Standards undertaken in the above-stated covenant with other United Methodist congregations and the Alabama-West Florida Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church shall be as follows:

- A. RESPONSIBILITY FOR IMPLEMENTATION. Implementing the Safe Sanctuaries Policy & Minimum Standards (SSPMS) at a local church shall be the responsibility of the Pastor in Charge, the governing body, and a permanent Safe Sanctuaries Committee (SSC) organized in compliance with the local church's governance process.
- B. SAFE SANCTUARIES COMMITTEE. A Safe Sanctuaries Committee (SSC) shall have the responsibility for developing local church safe sanctuaries policies and minimum standards and procedures; communicating with and educating the congregation concerning those policies and procedures; recruiting, screening, and training paid staff and volunteers; conducting site inspections and making recommendations;

retaining records; and regularly reviewing conference policies and procedures, applicable state laws, and the insurance policy provisions and insurer requirements. Such periodic training and education on Safe Sanctuaries Policy and Minimum Standards and procedures provided by the Alabama-West Florida Conference shall be attended each quadrennium by the local church Pastor in Charge and SSC chairperson or other SSC designated member. Further, it is recommended that attendance at such conference-wide training include at a minimum designees from the local church who will be personally coordinating and conducting safe sanctuaries training for employees and staff within the local church.

- C. MEMBERSHIP OF SAFE SANCTUARIES COMMITTEE. The membership of the Safe Sanctuaries Committee (SSC), in addition to its chairperson, shall include, but not be limited to, the Pastor in Charge, Governing Body chairperson, Lay Delegate to AWF Annual Conference, Lay Leader, Staff/Pastor-Parish Relations Committee chairperson, Board of Trustees chairperson, and may include, if such offices and positions exist, Youth Director, youth leadership team representative, Children's Director, children's leadership team representative, Day Care Director, After School Program Director, and one or two at-large lay members.
- D. ACCOUNTABILITY AND REPORTING. The following accountability and reporting measures shall be developed and employed:
1. Congregational Accountability. The SSC shall report to the Governing Body of the local church congregation at least annually and at such other interim times as circumstances relating to its responsibilities may require. In addition, the SSC shall regularly inform the Governing Body and the congregation at large concerning its efforts to recruit volunteers. Also the Governing Body and congregation shall regularly be informed and reminded by the SSC of the Safe Sanctuaries Policy and Minimum Standards content, and the Standards, Qualifications, and Screening requirements under the SSPMS that are applicable to employment of paid staff and to granting permission for service by volunteer workers. The SSC shall periodically announce and publicize that a church member may at any time upon request to the Pastor in Charge or his/her designee review and/or obtain a personal written copy of the complete policy document.
 2. Infractions/Incidents Accountability. Actions or conduct concerning any personnel and covered activities as defined in this SSPMS document that are observed by or otherwise brought to the attention of a person (paid staff member; volunteer worker; parent or other relative of a child, youth, or at-risk or vulnerable adult; church member, church visitor, or guest; etc.) which is reasonably believed to be an infraction or incident in violation of this SSPMS should be promptly reported

to the Pastor in Charge and to the Safe Sanctuaries Committee chairperson, or in the absence of either or both to their designated staff church employee. Resources and instructions for reporting suspected infractions or incidents constituting abuse (whether of child, youth, at-risk or vulnerable adult) proscribed by this policy document should be conspicuously posted in and about the local church buildings and campus.

E. QUALIFICATIONS REQUIRED FOR SERVING CHILDREN, YOUTH, AND AT-RISK OR VULNERABLE ADULTS FOR VOLUNTEER PERSONNEL.

The qualifications for volunteer service in a local church with duties and responsibilities that include serving children, youth, and at-risk or vulnerable adults shall be as follows:

1. Must have demonstrated an active relationship in the local church where service will occur for a minimum of three months prior to being permitted to serve as an authority figure.
2. Must be competent to work effectively in the served activity as an assistant in the judgment of the supervising staff member or supervising authority figure.

F. SCREENING AND BACKGROUND. The local church shall obtain background checks on all persons serving with children, youth, or at-risk or vulnerable adults. Such persons shall be subject to the following requirements and actions:

1. Complete an Application/Commitment form.
2. Be interviewed by the director of the ministry or program to be served.
3. Have experience and qualifications necessary for the staff position or volunteer service sought.
4. Attend training by the church or annual conference in maintaining the SSPMS; or in the event of an unforeseen circumstance requiring use of a substitute worker who has not had such training, that substitute worker must be briefed on the SSPMS by the director or other supervisor before beginning work.
5. Consent to initiate by the local church of the following background check(s):
 - a. Multi-state criminal and sexual offender check based on social security number.
 - b. Motor vehicle records check (for those who will be transporting children, youth, or at-risk or vulnerable adults). The Alabama-West Florida Annual Conference recommends background checks be run through the Trak-1 Company or other reputable screening company.
 - c. Background checks will be valid for five years unless the individual has been absent for twelve (12) months or longer.
6. The process for conducting the above described background checks and for

handling the results received shall include the following:

- a. Authority to initiate requests for criminal/sexual offender and motor vehicle background checks (see ¶ IV.F.6, above,) shall be limited to the Pastor in Charge or to his/her designated senior non-cleric staff employee.
- b. Upon receipt of background checks documents/data, whether favorable or unfavorable, its confidentiality shall be maintained. For such background check reports concerning a staff member, secure distribution will be made only to the Pastor in Charge, the SSC chairperson, and the Staff-Parrish Relations (Pastor-Parish Relations) Committee chairperson. For such background check reports concerning a volunteer, secure distribution will be made only to the Pastor in Charge and the SSC chairperson. For both categories of persons further actions shall be taken in accordance with provisions in Section G below.

G. UNFAVORABLE REPORTS

1. The individual who has been the subject of a background check, the results of which are unfavorable, shall be so informed in writing with a Notice of Unfavorable Background Check form (see Conference website for forms).
2. If an unfavorable report concerns a volunteer applicant, the Pastor in Charge and another church leader (laity or staff) chosen by the Pastor in Charge shall meet with the volunteer applicant to review and discuss the report.
3. If the unfavorable report concerns a staff applicant, the Pastor in Charge and Staff-Parish Committee chairperson shall meet with the staff applicant to review and discuss the report and shall thereafter take such personnel action as shall be deemed appropriate.
4. Review of unfavorable reports containing any history of criminal charges or convictions or of any reported non-criminal conduct nevertheless suggesting potential unfitness for employment or volunteer status may take into consideration the following factors:
 - a. The nature and seriousness of the crime or conduct
 - b. The relationship of the crime or conduct to the purpose and nature of the church job or program for which employment or volunteer status is sought
 - c. The age of the person at the time of the commission of the crime or conduct
 - d. The time elapsed since the person's crime or conduct
5. Any background check reported charge, conviction, or conduct that deals with sexual abuse or child abuse shall bar the person from working as an employee or volunteer with children, youth, and/or at-risk or vulnerable adults.
6. Documentation of the employment or volunteer decision made shall be placed in the person's application or employee personnel file.

H. RECORD RETENTION.

1. Records from the screening process including Application/Commitment interview forms and information from prior employment, references, and background checks shall be maintained in personnel and application files by individual name for each staff member/volunteer.
2. Both paper and electronic media records shall be kept safe and secure.

I. TRAINING STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS. The local church, within fourteen (14) days of employment or the beginning of volunteer service, shall provide training regarding safe sanctuaries policy, minimum standards, and procedures to such new workers who will work with children, youth and/or at-risk or vulnerable adults. Additionally, regularly occurring (at least annual) continuing education for safe sanctuaries training is required of all such workers (new and old). Attendance at all training programs shall be documented and retained in personnel files of the attendees. Upon completion of the training, attendees will sign an acknowledgement they have received the training and understand the SSPMS. The training should include, but is not limited to, the following:

1. The definitions and signs of child abuse and reporting of child abuse
2. The church's policy and procedures on child abuse and the reasons for having them (i.e. two adult rule, sign-in and sign-out sheets, procedures to follow if an accident occurs, procedures to follow for reporting an alleged incident of child abuse, information on state child abuse laws)
3. The need to maintain a positive classroom environment, including appropriate discipline and age-level characteristics
4. Appropriate behavior for teachers and leaders of child, youth, and at-risk or vulnerable adult events
5. Definitions of appropriate interpersonal boundaries (ways of touching students, appropriate language, etc.)
6. All forms used by the church for application, background checks, reporting, and teacher files

V. **REPORTING AND CHILD ABUSE INTERVENTION RESOURCES.**

Child abuse reporting requirements and procedures for the states of Alabama and Florida and a list of child abuse intervention resources are provided below.

- A. **Reporting abuse or alleged abuse in Alabama.** Alabama's mandatory child abuse and neglect reporting law states that all school teachers and officials, social workers, day care workers or employees, mental health professionals, members of the clergy as defined in Rule 505 of the Alabama Rules of Evidence, or any other person called upon to render aid or medical assistance to any child, when the child is known or suspected to be a victim of child abuse or neglect, shall be required to report, or cause a report to be made of the same, orally, either by telephone or direct communication immediately, followed by a written report, to a duly constituted authority. When an initial report is made to a law enforcement official, the official

subsequently shall inform the Department of Human Resources of the report so that the department can carry out its responsibility to provide protective services when deemed appropriate to the respective child or children.

- B. Reporting abuse or alleged abuse in Florida.** All cases of suspected abuse must be reported to the Florida Abuse Hotline. Initial reports should NOT be made to the county/local branch of the Florida Department of Children and Families. The Florida Abuse Hotline may be reached at 1-800-96-ABUSE. Reports may be faxed in; however, the preferred option for the Florida Department of Children and Families is for persons to call the Florida Abuse Hotline and talk to a Hotline counselor.
- C. Child Abuse Intervention Resources.** Below are child abuse intervention reporting resources and contacts for use by the local church.
1. National Child Abuse Hotline 1(800) 4-A-CHILD
 2. Florida Child Abuse Hotline 1(800) 96-ABUSE
 3. County Department of Human/Children Services
 4. Area Child Protective Services; for Alabama, the appropriate county Department of Human Resources (DHR)
 5. National Committee for the Prevention of Child Abuse
1(312) 663-3520
 6. Parents Anonymous 1(800) 421-0353
 7. Alabama Sex Offender Registry <http://community.dps.state.al.us>
 8. Florida Sex Offender Registry www.flsexoffender.net

RESOLUTION ADOPTED BY THE ALABAMA - WEST FLORIDA
BOARD OF TRUSTEES

WHEREAS, the *2016 Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church* provides that the Annual Conference shall have the authority to determine the manner in which proceeds from the sale of abandoned church assets may be distributed; and

WHEREAS, the Conference Trustees hereby recommend to the Annual Conference that it adopt certain policies and procedures pertaining to discontinued and abandoned church property, real, tangible, and intangible, including, but not limited to, church buildings and furnishings, parsonages and any other church-owned furnishings, cemeteries and records relating thereto, membership, baptismal, and other historic records, Christian and church insignia, and gifts held in trust, assets of any endowment foundations or invested funds; and

NOW THEREFORE, be it resolved and recommended by the Board of Trustees of the Alabama - West Florida Conference that the following policies and procedures be adopted during the next business session of the Annual Conference of the Alabama - West Florida Conference of The United Methodist Church:

REPORT 9 - POLICIES AND DISTRIBUTION OF PROCEEDS FROM THE SALE OF DISCONTINUED OR ABANDONED LOCAL CHURCHES AND THEIR ASSETS

The Annual Conference of the Alabama - West Florida Conference of The United Methodist Church hereby establishes the following policies and procedures for the distribution of proceeds of discontinued or abandoned churches and their assets. In all instances regarding the disposition of the assets of a local church as a result of discontinuance or abandonment of a local church, the current *United Methodist Book of Discipline* shall be consulted and followed along with these policies and procedures, which are designed to provide for the orderly gathering and disposition of said assets:

A. Discontinued Churches

1. The district superintendent initiates the process for the assessment of a local church's potential following the steps prescribed in the current *Book of Discipline*.
2. Upon reaching the conclusion that a local church no longer serves the purpose for which it was organized, the district superintendent shall initiate the process by which the local church may be declared or may declare itself discontinued.
3. When remaining members are available, a charge or church conference will be held for the purpose of approving discontinuance.
4. If there is a cemetery cared for by the trustees of a local church, the local church trustees shall arrange for the incorporation of a Cemetery Association, either among themselves or including other interested persons in the community, and the cemetery shall be deeded to said Cemetery Association. In so doing:
 - A. A separate survey of church and cemetery property will be required.
 - B. The conveyance of the cemetery property must be approved by the church conference or charge conference prior to the conveyance.
5. Any action to discontinue a local church requires an affirmative vote of the presiding bishop and a majority of the district superintendents and the district board of church location and building.
6. When a local church is discontinued according to the above procedures, the district superintendent, relying upon his or her sole discretion in the best interest of the Conference and in compliance with applicable church and civil law, shall be responsible for, and is the legally authorized representative of the Conference for: a) transferring remaining members to other United Methodist Churches, b) obtaining the deed to the property and a legal opinion as to any reversion restrictions in the deed, c) determining which group or persons will be responsible for the upkeep of the building and maintaining insurance premiums, and d) making recommendations for the future use of the property to the Annual Conference. If no

recommendation is made, it shall be deemed abandoned consistent with Paragraph 2549.2(b) of the *2016 Book of Discipline*.

7. District Superintendents will present resolutions for the discontinuance of churches during the next business session of the Annual Conference.

B. Abandoned Churches

1. A local church that is already discontinued, may be further declared to be abandoned. The change in status from “discontinued” to “abandoned” may be made by local church/charge conference action, or at the recommendation of the district superintendent.
2. The following groups must approve the change in status: the presiding bishop and a majority of the district superintendents and members of the district board of church location and building. Upon approval of the change in status from discontinued to abandoned, the district superintendent will so notify the Conference Board of Trustees.
3. It is understood that this change in status means that the church and its assets are available for future sale or disposal by the Conference Board of Trustees.
4. The district superintendent or his/her designee and the Conference Board of Trustees shall cooperatively care for the following details: a) appoint a committee to conduct an immediate inventory of all local church assets; b) prepare a final accounting of outstanding financial obligations of the local church, to include any monies owed to the Conference, including but not limited to, any accrued direct bill obligations and current year apportionments that have not been paid; c) consult and follow the most recent Checklist for the Discontinuance or Abandonment of Local Church Property prepared by the GCFA Legal Department, d) provide all building keys and security codes, if any, to the Conference Board of Trustees, e) remove sacred objects of special value, church insignia and symbols, f) secure the buildings and exercise control over access thereto, and g) secure any gift, legacy, devise, annuity or other benefit that becomes available to the Conference as a result of a church’s becoming abandoned.

C. Sale of Abandoned Churches

1. The Conference Board of Trustees and the district superintendents shall cooperate in the sale of abandoned churches.
The following steps must be followed:
 - (a) An independent appraisal be secured, the cost of which will be deducted from the sale proceeds.
 - (b) All listing agreements shall include the following wording: “The seller is required by *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church* to give consideration to other denominations represented in the Commission on Pan- Methodist Cooperation and Union. The seller reserves the right to reject offers from independent church organizations

not connected with the Commission.”

- (c) The Conference Board of Trustees may hire a real estate agent to list the sale at fair market value, and must provide necessary insurance, utilities, and upkeep of the property pending the sale, the cost of which will be deducted from the sale proceeds.
- (d) All written offers for purchase must be directed to the Conference Board of Trustees.
- (e) For an offer to be accepted, a majority of the Conference Board of Trustees must accept the offer by affirmative vote and authorize all deeds and other legal documents for the transfer of the property.
- (f) The Conference Board of Trustees shall request a written statement from the presiding bishop indicating that the ad interim sale of the abandoned church property has been executed in conformity with Paragraph 2515 of the *2016 Book of Discipline*.
- (g) The Conference Board of Trustees shall report all sales of abandoned church property in a given year at the next business session of the Annual Conference.

D. Distribution of Net Proceeds from the Sale of Abandoned Churches

1. The Conference Board of Trustees shall distribute the net proceeds from the sale of abandoned churches pursuant to Paragraphs 2549.3, 2549.5, and 2549.7 of the *2016 Book of Discipline* and this policy.
2. All proceeds from the sale of abandoned churches located in non-urban centers, as defined in Paragraph 2549.7, shall first be applied to satisfy any and all financial obligations of the abandoned church, including, but not limited to, unpaid pension and health benefits for the current year, any unpaid apportionments for the current year, and any other short-term or long-term liabilities incurred by the abandoned church. The remaining funds shall be distributed as follows:
 - A. One half of the net proceeds shall be distributed to the Emerging Ministry Account of the district trustees in the district where the abandoned church was formerly located. Said proceeds shall be held in trust for use by the district for missional purposes, including, but not limited to places for United Methodist worship, ministry, or faith development; provided, however, in the event that the district trustees fail to use said proceeds in accordance with this provision within three years of receipt, or fail to receive an extension from the Conference Trustees, the said proceeds shall revert to the Conference Trustees to transfer to the Board of Congregational Development to use for new church starts and congregation revitalization within the Conference.
 - B. The remaining half of the net proceeds shall be transferred by the Conference Trustees to the Board of Congregational Development to use for new church starts and congregational vitalization within the Conference.

3. All proceeds from abandoned churches in urban centers of the Conference, after all financial obligations of the abandoned church, including, but not limited to, unpaid pension and health benefits for the current year, any unpaid apportionments for the current year, and any other short-term or long-term liabilities incurred by the abandoned church, shall be distributed to the respective district trustees' Emerging Ministry Account to be used by the District Superintendent in consultation with the Cabinet in the Urban Center in which the sold property is located; provided, however, in the event that the district trustees fail to use said proceeds in accordance with this provision within three years of receipt, or fail to receive an extension from the Conference Trustees, the said proceeds shall revert to the Conference Trustees to transfer to the Board of Congregational Development to use for new church starts and congregation revitalization in Urban Centers within the Conference.
4. The Conference Treasurer shall provide quarterly financial reports to the Conference Trustees and to the Cabinet on the Conference Property Fund with income received and disbursements made for the Conference Property Fund, the District Emerging Ministry Accounts and the Conference Congregational Development Account. The President of the Trustees shall include in the Trustees Report to the Annual Conference a Financial Report on the Conference Property Fund.

REPORT 10 - MINIMUM INSURANCE REQUIREMENTS

The Book of Discipline 2016 Par. 2533.2 requires local church trustees to annually compare the existence and adequacy and report on the adequacy of local church property and liability insurance coverage “to ensure that the church, its properties, and its personnel are properly protected against risks.” Since 1797, the *Book of Discipline* has provided that the property and assets of local churches are held in trust for the benefit of the denomination. Inadequate insurance puts local church property and assets at risk; including the denomination's trust interest therein. Therefore, Trustees of the Alabama-West Florida Conference, representing the denomination's trust interest, have adopted the following minimum insurance requirements for local churches:

COMMERCIAL PACKAGE POLICY, to include the following minimum limits:
Buildings, Pipe Organs & Contents Insured to Replacement Value, “Special Risk” Coverage

All Church buildings should have an updated replacement cost valuation every five (5) years.

The replacement cost valuation must be updated within 180 days if additional square footage is added.

A Church building may be insured on an actual cash value basis where

replacement cost valuation is not an option available to the Church. The Church should understand that it is being insured on an actual cash value basis and use its best efforts to complete the necessary upgrades and renovations required to qualify for replacement cost valuation coverage.

A church building may be insured on a functional replacement valuation basis where it is a desired option on the part of the church or conference. The church should understand it may only do so with the written approval of the conference.

Comprehensive General Liability	Occurrence \$1,000,000 Aggregate \$3,000,000
Pastoral Counseling Liability	Occurrence \$1,000,000 Aggregate \$3,000,000
Hired and Non Owned Auto Liability	Occurrence \$1,000,000 Aggregate \$3,000,000
Employee Benefits Liability (EBL)	Occurrence \$1,000,000 Aggregate \$1,000,000
Medical Payments	\$10,000
Sexual Misconduct Liability	
Church Membership of 500+	Occurrence \$1,000,000 Aggregate \$2,000,000
Church Membership under 500	Occurrence \$250,000 Aggregate \$500,000
Crime / Employee Dishonesty	Occurrence \$25,000

DIRECTORS & OFFICERS (D&O) POLICY, including the following minimum liability limits:

- Directors’ & Officers / Employment Practices Liability \$1,000,000 (including Sexual Harassment)
- Employment Practices Liability – Option 1 \$1,000,000 (including Sexual Harassment)
 - Required for churches with 500 or more members or any church with a preschool, school, or camp
- Employment Practices Liability – Option 2 \$250,000 (including Sexual Harassment)
 - For churches with fewer than 500 members that do not have a preschool, school, or camp

WORKERS’ COMPENSATION POLICY, including supply clergy

- | | | |
|-----------------------------|---------------|-------------|
| • Bodily Injury by Accident | Each accident | \$1,000,000 |
| • Bodily Injury by Disease | Policy limit | \$1,000,000 |
| • Bodily Injury by Disease | Each employee | \$1,000,000 |

COMMERCIAL AUTOMOBILE LIABILITY, applicable only if the church owns an automobile; to include the following minimum limits:

- Limit of Liability \$1,000,000

UMBRELLA POLICY (Excess Liability)

An Umbrella policy is suggested for all churches and required for those with

a membership of five-hundred (500) or more.

If applicable, this excess policy must extend over Commercial General Liability, Pastoral Counseling, Employee Benefits Liability, Owned Auto, Hired & Non-Owned Auto and Workers Compensation. A higher per occurrence limit may be appropriate based on specific risk characteristics such as church size and/or scope of operations and ministries.

REPORT 11 – ANNUAL CONFERENCE CONFLICT OF INTEREST POLICY

Article I

Purpose

The purpose of this conflict of interest policy is to protect the Alabama West Florida Conference of the United Methodist Church’s (a nonprofit organization, hereafter referred to as the “Conference”) interest when it is contemplating entering into a transaction or arrangement that might benefit the private interest of an officer or director of the Conference or another Interested Person as defined below, or might result in a possible excess benefit transaction. This policy is intended to supplement but not replace any applicable state and federal laws governing conflict of interest applicable to nonprofit and charitable organizations.

Board members or other Interested Persons as defined below have a fiduciary duty to exercise good faith in all transactions involving the Conference or one of its Affiliates as defined below. A rule of honest and fair dealing shall apply to transactions between Interested Persons and the Conference. They shall not knowingly use their positions or knowledge gained therefrom to materially or financially benefit, so that a conflict of interest may arise between the Conference’s interest and that of any Interested Person.

Article II

Definitions

1. Interested Person

Any director, principal officer, employee or member of a committee with governing board delegated powers, who has a direct or indirect financial interest, as defined below, is an Interested Person. If a person is an Interested Person with respect to any board, committee or corporation controlled or wholly elected by the Conference (“Affiliate” or “Affiliates”), he/she is an Interested Person with respect to the Conference and any other of its Affiliates for the purposes of this policy.

2. Financial Interest

A person has a financial interest if the person has, directly or indirectly, through business, investment, or any family member of such person:

- a. An ownership or investment interest in any entity with which the Conference has a transaction or arrangement,

- b. A compensation arrangement with the Conference or with any entity or individual with which the Conference has a transaction or arrangement, or
- c. A potential ownership or investment interest in, or compensation arrangement with, any entity or individual with which the Conference is negotiating a transaction or arrangement.

For the purposes of this Policy, “compensation” includes direct and indirect remuneration as well as gifts or favors that are not insubstantial, and the term “family member” includes the person’s spouse, brothers, sisters, ancestors and lineal descendants.

A financial interest is not necessarily a conflict of interest. Under Article III, Section 2, a person who has a financial interest may have a conflict of interest only if the appropriate governing board or committee decides that a conflict of interest exists.

Article III

Procedures

1. Duty to Disclose

In connection with any actual or possible conflict of interest, an Interested Person must disclose at the earliest possible time the existence of the financial interest and be given the opportunity to disclose all material facts to the directors and members of committees with governing board-delegated powers considering the proposed transaction or arrangement.

2. Non-participation in Decisions

Any person who is required to disclose a conflict of interest pursuant to this policy shall not participate in any deliberations, consideration, discussion, or determination of any matter in which such person has a conflicting interest and shall not vote at any stage of such proceedings. Such person will be excused from the meeting room at all times that such matter is being discussed or voted upon by the remaining members of the board or committee.

3. Determining Whether a Conflict of Interest Exists

After disclosure of the financial interest and all material facts, and after any discussion with the Interested Person, he/she shall leave the governing board or committee meeting while the determination of a conflict of interest is discussed and voted upon. The remaining disinterested board or committee members shall decide if a conflict of interest exists.

4. Procedures for Addressing the Conflict of Interest

- a. An Interested Person may make a presentation at the governing board or committee meeting, but after the presentation, he/she shall leave the meeting during the discussion of, and the vote on, the proposed transaction or arrangement involving the possible conflict of interest.
- b. The chairperson of the governing board or committee shall, if appropriate, appoint a disinterested Person or committee to investigate alternatives to

the proposed transaction or arrangement.

- c. After exercising due diligence, the governing board or committee shall determine whether the Conference can obtain with reasonable efforts a more advantageous transaction or arrangement from a person or entity that would not give rise to a conflict of interest.
- d. If a more advantageous transaction or arrangement is not reasonably possible under circumstances not producing a conflict of interest, the governing board or committee shall determine by a majority vote of the disinterested directors whether the transaction or arrangement is in the Conference's best interest, for its own benefit, and whether it is fair and reasonable. In conformity with the above determination, the governing board or committee shall make its decision as to whether to enter into the transaction or arrangement.

5. Violations of the Conflicts of Interest Policy

- a. If the governing board, committee or management has reasonable cause to believe an Interested Person has failed to disclose actual or possible conflicts of interest, it shall inform the Interested Person of the basis for such belief and afford the Interested Person an opportunity to explain the alleged failure to disclose.
- b. If, after hearing the Interested Person's response and after making further investigation as warranted by the circumstances, the governing board, committee, or management determines the Interested Person has failed to disclose an actual or possible conflict of interest, it shall take, or shall refer to the appropriate body to take, appropriate disciplinary and corrective action.

Article IV

Records of Proceedings

The minutes of the governing board and all committees with board delegated powers shall contain:

- a. The names of the persons who disclosed or otherwise were found to have a financial interest in connection with an actual or possible conflict of interest, the nature of the financial interest, any action taken to determine whether a conflict of interest was present, and the governing board's or committee's decision as to whether a conflict of interest in fact existed.
- b. The names of the persons who were present for discussions and votes relating to the transaction or arrangement, the content of the discussion, including any alternatives to the proposed transaction or arrangement, and a record of any votes taken in connection with the proceedings.

Article V

Compensation

- a. A voting member of the governing board who receives compensation,

directly or indirectly, from the Conference for services is precluded from participating in the discussion of, and voting on, matters pertaining to that member's compensation.

- b. A voting member of any committee whose jurisdiction includes compensation matters and who receives compensation, directly or indirectly, from the Conference for services is precluded from participating in the discussion of, and voting on, matters pertaining to that member's compensation.
- c. No voting member of the governing board or any committee whose jurisdiction includes compensation matters and who receives compensation, directly or indirectly, from the Conference, either individually or collectively, is prohibited from providing information to any committee regarding compensation.

Article VI

Dissemination of Policy

The Conference Treasurer's Office shall be responsible for ensuring that a copy of this Policy is provided to each employee of the Conference and its Affiliates and to each Interested Person as defined above on an annual basis.

Article VII

Periodic Reviews

To ensure the Conference operates in a manner consistent with its charitable and religious purposes and does not engage in activities that could jeopardize its tax-exempt status, periodic reviews shall be conducted. The periodic reviews shall, at a minimum, include the following subjects:

- a. Whether compensation arrangements and benefits are reasonable, based on competent survey information and the result of arm's length bargaining.
- b. Whether partnerships, joint ventures, and arrangements with management organizations, if any, conform to the Conference's written policies, are properly recorded, reflect reasonable investment or payments for goods and services, further charitable purposes and do not result in inurement, impermissible private benefit or in an excess benefit transaction.

Article VIII

Use of Outside Experts

When conducting the periodic reviews as provided for in Article VII, the Conference may, but need not, use outside advisors. If outside experts are used, their use shall not relieve the governing board of its responsibility for ensuring periodic reviews are conducted.

REPORT 12 – PROCEEDS FROM SALE OR DISAFFILIATION OF CLOSED CHURCHES

During 2022, the following list of churches paid disaffiliation commitments in the following amounts:

Church Name	GCFA ID	Conf ID	Amount	ReceivedSource
Canoe Church	240763	1055	\$ 24,782.07	2019 Disaffiliation Process
Holly Grove	235254	1170	\$ 37,374.70	2019 Disaffiliation Process
Frazer	240001	6160	\$4,332,510.00	6/2022 Disaffiliation Payout
Mt. Hilliard	243232	6270	\$ 13,554.00	6/2022 Disaffiliation Payout
Pentecost	239957	6315	\$ 22,268.00	6/2022 Disaffiliation Payout
Simpson Chapel	951420	2400	\$ 13,220.00	6/2022 Disaffiliation Payout
Abbeville	236783	3010	\$123,410.00	11/12/22 Disaffiliation Payout
Bethlehem	242294	2035	\$ 11,479.00	11/12/22 Disaffiliation Payout
Brent	241723	2275	\$ 35,734.00	11/12/22 Disaffiliation Payout
Chumuckla	241494	8062	\$160,173.00	11/12/22 Disaffiliation Payout
Community Life	229297	8073	\$ 919,322.00	11/12/22 Disaffiliation Payout
Compass Lake	237696	4090	\$ 12,273.00	11/12/22 Disaffiliation Payout
Ebenezer	238714	5100	\$ 25,356.00	11/12/22 Disaffiliation Payout
Fairview	239707	7140	\$ 52,072.00	11/12/22 Disaffiliation Payout
Grace	237982	4150	\$ 31,633.00	11/12/22 Disaffiliation Payout
Hatchechubbee	243391	6185	\$ 13,765.00	11/12/22 Disaffiliation Payout
Heiberger	241962	2200	\$ 22,091.00	11/12/22 Disaffiliation Payout
Liberty (Dothan)	242977	3200	\$ 30,009.00	11/12/22 Disaffiliation Payout
Liberty (MTOB)	240114	6225	\$ 60,049.00	11/12/22 Disaffiliation Payout
Mae Edwards	240934	8150	\$ 22,352.00	11/12/22 Disaffiliation Payout
Mt. Carmel	237468	3240	\$ 34,290.00	11/12/22 Disaffiliation Payout
Mt. Nebo	241825	7280	\$ 22,505.00	11/12/22 Disaffiliation Payout
Murphy's Chapel	243471	6280	\$ 17,405.00	11/12/22 Disaffiliation Payout
Notasulga	240160	6295	\$ 24,975.00	11/12/22 Disaffiliation Payout
Old Center	237504	3055	\$ 25,412.00	11/12/22 Disaffiliation Payout
Pace	241370	8200	\$248,318.00	11/12/22 Disaffiliation Payout
Parker	238086	4245	\$111,018.00	11/12/22 Disaffiliation Payout
Petrey	242818	6325	\$ 11,487.00	11/12/22 Disaffiliation Payout
Pinckard	237344	3285	\$ 25,783.00	11/12/22 Disaffiliation Payout
Pine Forest	241381	8215	\$255,575.00	11/12/22 Disaffiliation Payout
Pine Level	243106	6345	\$ 16,675.00	11/12/22 Disaffiliation Payout
Pleasant Grove	241778	7385	\$ 2,722.97	11/12/22 Disaffiliation Payout
Pondville	241563	2370	\$ 5,782.00	11/12/22 Disaffiliation Payout
Resurrection	240887	1090	\$514,956.79	11/12/22 Disaffiliation Payout
Samson First	235744	3345	\$ 70,266.00	11/12/22 Disaffiliation Payout
Sardis	239970	6390	\$ 50,308.00	11/12/22 Disaffiliation Payout
Thorsby	242283	7480	\$ 8,626.00	11/12/22 Disaffiliation Payout
Troy First	243323	6465	\$294,744.00	11/12/22 Disaffiliation Payout
Verbena	242328	7510	\$ 36,180.00	11/12/22 Disaffiliation Payout
Walnut Creek	241791	7520	\$ 51,793.00	11/12/22 Disaffiliation Payout
Zion	951145	2505	\$ 36,401.00	11/12/22 Disaffiliation Payout

Total 2022 Receipts

\$7,828,649.53

**REPORT 13 – JUDICIAL COUNCIL DECISION 1421 AND
MEMORANDUMS 1433 AND 1441 ARISING FROM ANNUAL
CONFERENCE 2021 RULING OF LAW**

Following in full text are the Judicial Council decisions and amendments relating to the 2021 ruling of law given by Bishop David Graves at the 2021 Annual Conference session. Decision No. 1421 is followed by Memorandum No. 1433 which clarifies Judicial Council Decision 1421. Also included is Memorandum No. 1441.

**JUDICIAL COUNCIL OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
DECISION NO. 1421**

[Docket No. 1021-8]

IN RE: Review of a Bishop’s Ruling on Questions of Law in the Alabama-West Florida Annual Conference Concerning the Legality of the Actions Taken by the Conference Board of Trustees Regarding the Disaffiliation of a Local Church Without the Required Vote of the Annual Conference pursuant to Judicial Council Decision 1379 and ¶ 2529.1(b)(3) of the *Discipline*.

DIGEST

The annual conference as the basic body in the Church has the reserved right to make final decisions regarding the disaffiliation of local churches within its boundaries. The Conference Board of Trustees acted unlawfully by closing the sale of the property of Woodlawn United Methodist Church prior to ratification of the disaffiliation agreement by the Alabama-West Florida Annual Conference. The execution, delivery, and filing for record of any deed to property cannot be accomplished prior to such ratification. Where permitted by local laws, the Conference Board of Trustees may enter into a non-disclosure agreement as part of the negotiated settlement under ¶ 2553.4. The bishop’s Decision of Law is reversed in part and modified in part.

STATEMENT OF FACTS

During the 2021 session of the Alabama-West Florida Annual Conference, on June 8, 2021, at 11:56 am, shortly before the Conference Board of Trustees presented their report, a lay member [hereinafter Movant] rose to ask the following Question of Law:

I move for a bishop’s decision of law as to the constitutionality of the action of the Annual Conference Board of Trustees with regard to sale of the property known as Woodlawn United Methodist Church to Woodlawn Pcb Church, Inc. and entering into a non-disclosure agreement prior to the ratification of the disaffiliation agreement by

the Annual Conference in light of ¶33 of the Constitution of the United Methodist Church, and Judicial Council decision 1379 which states, “under ¶33 of the Constitution, the annual conference as the basic body in the Church has the reserved right to make final decisions regarding the disaffiliation of local churches within its boundaries.”

Despite the presiding bishop’s request for time to consult with legal counsel, the Movant insisted on the issuance of a ruling the same day. Bishop David W. Graves agreed to Movant’s wish and, within an hour, at 1:00 pm, issued the following Decision of Law, which reads in relevant parts:

During the break, I conferred with the conference chancellor and conference leadership. One item that puzzled me was the reference to paragraph 33 of the Constitution which, when read, does not read the way it is stated in the motion. I returned at 1 :00 p.m. to rule that the action of the Annual Conference Board of Trustees with regard to the sale of Woodlawn United Methodist Church was constitutional. This is my rationale for the decision.

The 2019 Alabama-West Florida Annual Conference approved a disaffiliation agreement based on the GCFA template for such agreements. There was little to no discussion on the additions added to that agreement by our annual conference during the 2019 session. Over the last two years, I was informed as our Trustees moved forward with negotiations on all disaffiliations, including the disaffiliation of Woodlawn United Methodist Church. I was also involved in going to Woodlawn UMC for in-person meetings early in the process. The trustees have followed the disaffiliation agreement precisely with all disaffiliating churches. They had followed it precisely in this conference year and to the point of my ruling when there was remaining conference business related to disaffiliation (Report of the Cabinet).

On Wednesday morning of our annual conference this year, Rev. June Jernigan rose to give the report of the cabinet at 10:04 a.m. Her report included all the disaffiliating churches, as it did in 2020. There were no objections to the report. The report of the cabinet passed 438 to 4. To my understanding, this vote by the annual conference on the disaffiliating churches is the final piece of ratification needed to complete the disaffiliation agreement. Our conference chancellor was prepared to discuss in detail the confidentiality agreement with Woodlawn with the elected body. However, no objections were raised.

I believe that I was more than gracious with Mr. Roane. I had 30 days to rule, but I felt my ruling would have been the same in 30 days as it was

on Tuesday, June 8. I believe that the Conference Board of Trustees and chancellor of our conference have acted in accordance with what they have been entrusted to do through the disaffiliation agreement. Hence, I find their actions constitutional. I do not believe that the trustees have taken away any of the authority of the annual conference as the basic unit of the church. The annual conference approved the disaffiliation agreement, the trustees carried out the process set by annual conference, and the annual conference ratified the disaffiliation of Woodlawn UMC.

The record submitted shows that the disaffiliation resolution for Woodlawn United Methodist Church was not included in the Trustees report but was part of the Cabinet Report, which was presented the *following* day, on June 9, and approved by a vote of 438 to 4.

Jurisdiction

The Judicial Council has jurisdiction pursuant to ¶ 2609.6 of *The Book of Discipline 2016* [hereinafter *Discipline*].

Analysis and Rationale

The two questions presented in this case are whether (1) the sale of the property known as Woodlawn United Methodist Church to Woodlawn PCB Church, Inc. prior to ratification by the annual conference was lawful and (2) the Conference Board of Trustees was authorized to enter into a non-disclosure agreement [hereinafter NDA] with the disaffiliating local church as part of the negotiated settlement.

As to the **first question**, the information provided is sketchy in terms of timeline. While the official minutes imply that the sale of the property took place, they do not say when it was executed. The Disaffiliation Resolution for Woodlawn United Methodist Church states that “the church has met the financial requirements for disaffiliation.” *2021 Annual Conference Minutes*, June 9, 2021, p. 26. The following paragraph from the Chancellor’s Report indicates that the transaction was completed sometime *before* ratification by the annual conference:

Because the Annual Conference had previously approved the form disaffiliation agreement and since the AWFC did not change the required provisions but added additional protection for the Conference, and also received payment for church property, it was believed that any ratification required by the Annual Conference would be largely perfunctory in that the Conference would be better protected with the agreement entered into with Woodlawn than it would have been if we had relied only upon the original agreement. Again, the parties had been in negotiations for a year and Woodlawn wanted a resolution before the end of 2020. Accordingly, the property was deeded to the church and the church was told the disaffiliation would have to be voted on at annual

conference.

*Report of the Chancellor on the Woodlawn United Methodist Church
Disaffiliation*, p. 2
[emphases added].

We construe this statement to mean that the property was deeded (i.e., transferred), and consideration paid before the annual conference voted to approve the disaffiliation of Woodlawn United Methodist Church because “it was believed that any ratification required by the Annual Conference would be largely perfunctory...” In other words, the members of the annual conference were presented with a *fait accompli* and expected to rubber-stamp it.

Further, Exhibit 5 of Movant’s Opening Brief is a public record, entitled “Special Warranty Deed,” that was executed on January 11, 2021 by Woodlawn United Methodist Church in favor of Woodlawn PCB Church Inc. for the parcel of land on which said church is located.

In JCD 1379, this Judicial Council ruled that “the disaffiliation agreement [must] be ratified by a simple majority of the members of the annual conference present and voting.” This means that the sale of the church property cannot be completed until *after* that vote if the annual conference is to have more than a “perfunctory” role in the ratification process. Viewed in totality, the Disaffiliation Resolution, Chancellor’s Report, and Exhibit 5 show that the Conference Board of Trustees closed the real estate deal before it was presented to the Alabama-West Florida Annual Conference for ratification, thereby violating ¶ 2529.1(b)(3) and our holding in JCD 1379.

The bishop’s ruling of law that the sale of the Woodlawn UMC church property was constitutional was incorrect as a matter of Church law in that the execution and delivery of the deed and the payment of and receipt of the consideration therefore was accomplished well before the ratification of the disaffiliation agreement on June 9, 2021. However, as a matter of Florida property law, the train has left the station, and we lack any jurisdiction to entertain challenges to the validity of the deed.

Further, we note that the bishop did not answer the **second question** regarding the use of NDAs. In passing the Modified Taylor Disaffiliation Plan (Petition 90066) in 2019, the General Conference specified that “the terms and conditions for that disaffiliation shall be established by the board of trustees of the applicable annual conference, with the advice of the cabinet, the annual conference treasurer, the annual conference benefits officer, the director of connectional ministries, and the annual conference chancellor.” ¶ 2553.4 [emphasis added]. In JCD 1420, we construed this legislative statement as “express[ing] the intent of General Conference to delegate to the Conference Board of Trustees the exclusive authority in establishing the terms and conditions of a local church’s departure from The United Methodist Church.” Nothing in ¶

2553 or elsewhere in *The Discipline* would prohibit the Board of Trustees from adding an NDA to such terms and conditions.

The Movant cited JCD 1379 in support of his assertion that the Board of Trustees acted unlawfully. In that decision, however, we also stressed that “the terms and conditions...of the agreement between the annual conference and the exiting local church be established by the conference board of trustees in accordance with applicable church law and civil laws.” JCD 1379 [emphasis added]. See also JCD 315. *The Discipline* enshrines the principle whereby “[a]ll provisions of the *Discipline* relating to property...are conditioned upon their being in conformity with the local laws, and in the event of conflict therewith the local laws shall prevail.” ¶ 2506.1. Where local laws allow NDAs to be included in negotiated settlements, Church law must conform to such command. However, the specific question of whether NDAs are permitted under the laws of the state of Alabama is outside the purview of the Judicial Council. The bishop’s decision is modified by addition of this second part.

Ruling

The annual conference as the basic body in the Church has the reserved right to make final decisions regarding the disaffiliation of local churches within its boundaries. The Conference Board of Trustees acted unlawfully by closing the sale of the property of Woodlawn United Methodist Church prior to ratification of the disaffiliation agreement by the Alabama-West Florida Annual Conference. The execution, delivery, and filing for record of any deed to property cannot be accomplished prior to such ratification. Where permitted by local laws, the Conference Board of Trustees may enter into a non-disclosure agreement as part of the negotiated settlement under ¶ 2553.4. The bishop’s Decision of Law is reversed in part and modified in part.

February 7, 2022

Separate Opinion

I write separately because although I concur with the majority on the first question, my analysis differs somewhat. In these matters of ¶ 2553 disaffiliation the primary action sought by the local church is the ability to sever its relationship to The United Methodist Church while preserving its ownership of its church facilities and real property, albeit subject to the terms and conditions defined by the 2019 Special Session of the General Conference and construed by subsequent Judicial Council Decisions.

As such, the more relevant legal instrument that bears most directly in this matter and is of greater import (than the deed from Woodlawn U.M.C. Inc. to Woodlawn PCB Church, Inc.) is the ***Quitclaim Deed & Release of Trust Clause***, from the Alabama-West Florida Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church to the Woodlawn PCB Church, Inc., executed on behalf of the Annual Conference by the Chairperson of the Conference Board of Trustees on **January 4, 2021**.

It was five days thereafter, on **January 11, 2021**, that representatives of the Woodlawn congregation executed a *Special Warranty Deed* conveying its title as a United Methodist Church to that of a non-denominational church (Woodlawn UMC, Inc., to Woodlawn PCB Church, Inc.).

In this matter, it is the conduct and actions of some members of the Annual Conference's leadership that is at issue. Specifically, it was the January 4, 2021, execution of the *Quitclaim Deed & Release of Trust Clause* that was improper given that the disaffiliation of the Woodlawn United Methodist Church had not been authorized by action of the members of the Annual Conference meeting in session. The authority to determine a congregation's change in relationship to the Annual Conference rests exclusively with the voting members of the Annual Conference and that authority may not be delegated by, nor usurped from, the Annual Conference. See, e.g., Decisions 78, 79, 380, 400, 584, 590.

Similarly, the Annual Conference must have access to all information concerning a congregation's proposed disaffiliation. The annual conference cannot make a fully informed decision or authorization without full disclosure and without an opportunity to make inquiries and have their questions satisfactorily addressed. Furthermore, our polity values a spirit of openness and accountability [¶ 722]. In those rare instances wherein a matter requires, as a matter of law, that some aspect of a matter be confidential, then the remedy is to discuss that limited portion in an executive session of the Annual Conference (laity and clergy) otherwise the Conference lacks the ability to make a well-informed and reasoned decision and also impedes the safeguarding role of the Annual Conference within our system of checks and balances the Annual Conference ensures that each body is acting within the confines of its role and authority. Paragraph 722 sets forth in pertinent part:

Great restraint should be used in closing meetings; closed sessions should be used as seldom as possible. Subjects that may be considered in closed session are limited to real estate matters; negotiations, when general knowledge could be harmful to the negotiation process; personnel matters; 12 issues related to the accreditation or approval of institutions; discussions relating to pending or potential litigation or collective bargaining; communications with attorneys or accountants; deployment of security personnel or devices; and negotiations involving confidential third-party information. ...

A report on the results of a closed session shall be made immediately upon its conclusion or as soon thereafter as is practicable. [¶ 722 *Discipline*]

Beth Capen
February 7, 2022

**JUDICIAL COUNCIL OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
MEMORANDUM NO. 1433**

IN RE: Clarification of Judicial Council Decision 1421

DIGEST

For the purpose of clarification, the Judicial Council on its own motion modifies its ruling in JCD 1421 as follows:

The language of the Digest and Ruling of JCD 1421 is hereby replaced with the following:

The annual conference as the basic body in the Church has the reserved right to make final decisions regarding the disaffiliation of local churches within its boundaries. The Conference Board of Trustees acted contrary to ¶ 2529.1(b)(3) of the *2016 Book of Discipline* and Judicial Council Decision 1379 by closing the sale of the property of Woodlawn United Methodist Church prior to ratification of the disaffiliation agreement by the Alabama-West Florida Annual Conference. The execution, delivery, and filing for record of any deed to property cannot be accomplished prior to such ratification. Where permitted by local laws, the Conference Board of Trustees may enter into a non-disclosure agreement as part of the negotiated settlement under ¶ 2553.4. The bishop's Decision of Law is reversed in part and modified in part. This holding shall be prospective and not affect the actions taken by the Alabama-West Florida Annual Conference concerning the Woodlawn UMC at its 2021 session.

March 15, 2022

End of Memorandum No. 1433

**JUDICIAL COUNCIL OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
MEMORANDUM 1441**

IN RE: Request for Reconsideration of Judicial Council Decision 1421

Request for reconsideration is denied but see Memorandum 1433 which modifies the ruling in Decision 1421.

March 28, 2022

End of Memorandum 1441

REPORT 14 – DISAFFILIATION PROCESS

AWFUMC Procedures and Processes for Local Churches Seeking to Disaffiliate under ¶2553 of the *Book of Discipline*.

Effective June 5, 2023

This document outlines the procedures, processes, terms, and conditions by which a local church in the Alabama-West Florida Conference (AWFC) can exercise the limited right to disaffiliate from the United Methodist Church under ¶2553 of *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church*.

This policy will also apply to churches seeking to exit the denomination between January 1, 2024 until March 15, 2025 under ¶2549 as specified in the October 6, 2022 meeting of the AWF Trustees.

1. Process

The decision to disaffiliate from the denomination is solemn and consequential; as such, the process to be followed shall be careful, thoughtful, respectful, and prayerful. The importance of clear, accurate, respectful, and transparent communication and information dissemination, broad involvement, and diligent and proper execution is paramount.

2. Eligibility for Exercising the ¶2553 Limited Right of Disaffiliation

A local church is allowed to exercise the limited right established in ¶2553 of the *Book of Discipline* to disaffiliate from The United Methodist Church only for reasons of conscience under the conditions stated in ¶2553.1 which reads: “*Basis – Because of the current deep conflict within the United Methodist Church around issues of human sexuality, a local church shall have a limited right, under the provisions of this paragraph, to disaffiliate from the denomination for reasons of conscience regarding a change in the requirements and provisions of the Book of Discipline related to the practice of homosexuality or the ordination or marriage of self-avowed practicing homosexuals as resolved and adopted by the 2019 General Conference, or the actions or inactions of its annual conference related to these issues which follow.*”

The following changes in the requirements and provisions of the *Book of Discipline* relating to the practice of homosexuality or the ordination or marriage of self-avowed practicing homosexuals were resolved and adopted by the 2019 General Conference:

- (1) Amendment to ¶304.3: In particular, footnote 1 of ¶304.3 was amended to broaden the scope of relationships or activities that were encompassed in the definition of “self-avowed practicing homosexuals” who, under ¶304.3, are “not to be certified as candidates, ordained as ministers, or appointed to serve in The United Methodist Church.”
- (2) Amendment to ¶304.5: Prohibitions have been added against approvals and recommendations by the district committee on ordained ministry and the Board of Ordained Ministry of persons who did not meet the qualifications in ¶304, including ¶304.3 (see above), and specified added instructions for the clergy session presiding bishops to rule that the unqualified candidate to be out of order and ineligible for the appointment.
- (3) Amendment to ¶415.6: Amended to prohibit bishops from consecrating bishops, from commissioning persons on the deacon or elders track, and from ordaining deacons or elders if any of them are self-avowed practicing homosexuals.
- (4) Amendment to ¶2702.1(b): Amendment to footnote 1 of ¶304.3 (see above) affects the usage of the term “self-avowed practicing homosexual” in the list of chargeable offenses related to clergy (viz., “being a self-avowed practicing homosexual; or conducting ceremonies which celebrate homosexual unions; or performing same-sex wedding ceremonies”)

Paragraph 2553 requires that at least two-thirds (2/3) of the professing members present at a church conference, properly held under the *Discipline*, have actual “reasons of conscience” regarding either: (1) one or more of the above-listed changes in the requirements and provisions of the *Book of Discipline* related to the practice of homosexuality or the ordination or marriage of self-avowed homosexuals or (2) the subsequent actions or inactions by the Alabama-West Florida Conference related to issues of human sexuality.

The foregoing provisions of this Article 2 shall be included verbatim in the District Superintendent’s call for a church conference pursuant to Section (c) of Article 6 below.

The Church Conference of the local church that seeks to disaffiliate must adopt a statement of eligibility that demonstrates the current and specific disagreement(s) that the local church has with the changes to the *Book of Discipline* made in 2019. This statement must specifically say what “change in the requirements and provisions of the 2019 *Book of Discipline* related to the practice of homosexuality or the ordination or marriage of self-avowed practicing homosexuals as resolved and adopted

by the 2019 General Conference,” delineated above, and/or their “reasons of conscience” related to the “actions or inactions” of the AWF Annual Conference related to the ordination or marriage of self-avowed practicing homosexuals. Eligibility cannot be based on other reasons not specified in ¶2553. If such provisions are included in the call for a church conference, and if the resolutions and motions for disaffiliation required pursuant to Section (c) of Article 6 below are duly adopted by at least two-thirds (2/3) of the professing members present at a church conference, held fairly and in conformance with the Book of Discipline, then the local church shall be deemed eligible after cabinet and conference trustees approve.

AWF Trustees will not be required to inquire into reasons of conscience, and will generally not do so except in circumstances where information is presented raising serious concerns about the eligibility of a church to disaffiliate pursuant to ¶2553.

3. Procedures:

(1) Local Church May Enter Disaffiliation Process after a Majority of Church Council Votes to Proceed under ¶2553

The Church Council must adopt an eligibility statement. This statement must specifically say what “change in the requirements and provisions of the 2019 *Book of Discipline* related to the practice of homosexuality or the ordination or marriage of self-avowed practicing homosexuals as resolved and adopted by the 2019 General Conference,” delineated above, and/or their “reasons of conscience” related to the “actions or inactions” of the AWF Annual Conference with which they disagree.

A copy of the official minutes from the church council meeting during which the vote was taken to enter the disaffiliation process shall be shared with the District Superintendent and AWF Trustees. The minutes shall include the total number of possible church council votes, how many were present, and how many voted for and against the actions. The church shall also provide all other actions, motions, minutes, and petitions presented to the church council.

If a church council considers a motion to enter the disaffiliation/discernment process and the motion fails to receive a majority vote, that local church is prohibited from taking another vote to enter the disaffiliation/discernment process for twelve months.

(2) Discernment and Assessment Period

a. Local Church Discernment Period

The local church shall undertake a discernment period between the time

the District Superintendent responds, and the church conference to vote on disaffiliation is held. This discernment period shall be at least 75 days. The window of discernment begins when the District Superintendent responds to the local church's request to begin the process. This discernment period will include at a minimum:

1. One town hall meeting called and led by the District Superintendent so there can be openness and transparency in sharing facts around disaffiliation. The date and time of the town hall must be advertised a minimum of ten days before the meeting (including two Sundays). During this period, the DS and the pastor are to make clear the eligibility requirements to the church council in writing, and the expectations of an open and fair process. The town hall meeting(s) will be open to the full professing membership of the local church and anyone else who is interested in attending. During these sessions, the District Superintendent will share accurate and up-to-date information about disaffiliation from the United Methodist Church. The input of these attending constituents shall be solicited and recorded in writing by a recording secretary. The local church's request for seeking disaffiliation under ¶2553 will be presented during the town hall meeting. The town hall(s) shall be convened and presided over/led by the District Superintendent (or his/her designee). The town hall must include a spokesperson from the United Methodist Church that is not the District Superintendent chairing the Church Conference. This spokesperson shall be selected by the DS from a select team of people trained by the AWF Trustees for this task. The town hall(s) shall not be led or facilitated by the pastors, the hired or appointed staff and employees, or any member or constituent of the local church, its ministries or missions, or anyone else not designated by the District Superintendent.
2. A minimum period of 40 days of congregation-wide prayer and fasting shall be conducted within the membership of the local church to seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit in these weighty matters.
3. The local church shall provide a complete list with full names, email addresses, and mailing addresses of all full professing members of the local church, preferably electronically and in Excel format.
4. The distribution of information in writing via email and/or USPS to all members about disaffiliation prepared by the AWF Conference and provided by the District Superintendent.

The discernment process shall not include the following:

1. Disinformation about the UMC or information that does not apply to the church's eligibility statement.
2. References to seeking disaffiliation because it is a financial opportunity to "own" your building and get out of the historic trust clause. Only the specific limited rights contained in ¶2553 may be used as the reason to disaffiliate.
3. Presentations by any groups or individuals discussing or sharing information regarding alternatives to remaining a United Methodist Church. The decision to disaffiliate is not a choice between alternatives but a limited right.

Any church violating these restrictions may become ineligible to disaffiliate.

b. District Superintendent Assessment Period

During this period, the District Superintendent initiates assessments of the impact of a ¶2553 disaffiliation upon the local church, its members, the community, the district, and the annual conference. These assessments will come from at least the district Board of Church Location and Building, the District Superintendent, Cabinet, Treasurer, and Benefits Officer. This assessment shall include the process described in ¶213, and is not limited to the assessment of the strategic missional, economic, and ministries impact of the local church and effects of its potential ¶2553 disaffiliation.

The assessment process shall include an assessment of whether actions and communications evidence a fair process with accurate information that reflects a good faith effort to satisfy this procedures and process document as opposed to false, misleading statements and/or coordinated efforts likely to harm or disrupt the ministry of the church.

(3) Church Council Votes to Request Church Conference

Upon completion of the discernment and assessment period and proceedings, if the local church council wishes to proceed toward disaffiliation, the next steps are as follows:

- a. The Church Council must attest to the previously adopted eligibility statement. This statement must specifically say what "change in the requirements and provisions of the 2019 Book of Discipline related to the practice of homosexuality or the ordination or marriage of self-avowed practicing homosexuals as resolved and adopted by the 2019 General Conference," delineated above, and/or their "reasons of conscience" related to the "actions or inactions" of the AWF Annual Conference with which they disagree.

- b. Additionally, a completed and notarized good faith and fair process form must be received by the District Superintendent before a Church Conference may be called by a District Superintendent. The signatories on the form shall certify and agree that, to the best of their knowledge, the discernment process as outlined in this document has been followed fairly and in good faith. The discernment period has not included any of the following:
- i. Disinformation about the UMC or information that does not apply to the church's eligibility statement.
 - ii. References to seeking disaffiliation because it is a financial opportunity to "own" your building and get out of the historic trust clause.
 - iii. Presentations by any groups or individuals discussing or sharing information regarding alternatives to remaining a United Methodist Church
 - iv. The process shall include an assessment of whether actions and communications evidence a fair process with accurate information that reflects a good faith effort to satisfy this procedures and process document as opposed to false, misleading statements and/or coordinated efforts likely to harm or disrupt the ministry of the church.

The eligibility statement provided by the local church and the good faith form provided by the District Superintendent must be signed by all elders, deacons, or local pastors appointed to or serving the church seeking to disaffiliate, and the church's Lay Leader, Church Council/ Administrative Board Chair, Trustee Chair, SPRC Chair, and Finance Chair. If any of these persons cannot in good faith sign such a form, they must attach a signed statement explaining the reason(s). When the completed form is received by the DS with all other required signatures and/or statements, the DS will also sign the document or provide a signed statement.

- c. The Church Council may request its District Superintendent to call a church conference pursuant to ¶248 of the *Book of Discipline* to consider and vote on the request for ¶2553 disaffiliation. A copy of the official minutes from the church council meeting during which the vote was taken requesting the DS to call a church conference shall be shared with the DS and AWF Trustees. The minutes shall include the total number of possible church council votes, how many were present, and how many voted for and against the motion.
- d. If a church council considers a motion to request a church conference vote and the motion fails to receive a majority vote, that local church

must wait twelve months to restart the discernment process if they wish to pursue disaffiliation in the future.

(4) Conference Trustees Pre-Clearance

Prior to the DS calling a church conference and within 30 days of receiving the request from a local church and all the required documentation, assessments, and forms, the Trustees will notify the DS as to whether or not the local church may continue in the process. If the Trustees pre-clear a church, no representation is made by the Trustees that they will eventually approve a local church when presented.

(5) District Superintendent Decision to Call Church Conference

After receiving notification from the Trustees and within 30 days from receiving the notification that a church has been pre-cleared by the Trustees the DS will determine whether a church should move forward to a Church Conference.

(6) Church Conference and Vote

Pursuant to ¶2553.3: “The church conference shall be conducted in accordance with ¶248 and shall be held within one hundred twenty (120) days after the District Superintendent calls for the church conference. In addition to the provisions of ¶246.8, special attention shall be made to give broad notice to the full professing membership of the local church regarding the time and place of a church conference called for this purpose and to use all means necessary, including electronic communication where possible, to communicate. The decision to disaffiliate from The United Methodist Church must be approved by a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of the professing members of the local church present at the church conference.” The notice of church conference be sent to all professing member households and must include the reason for the Church Conference, the specific eligibility statement adopted by the church council that will be voted on, and an explanation of the decision being made at the Church Conference, which will be provided by the District Superintendent.

The resolutions or motions for approval of the local church’s ¶2553 disaffiliation presented at this church conference shall, at a minimum, include the following statements:

- a. The church conference of the local church hereby certifies to the Alabama-West Florida Conference the following: The local church is eligible for disaffiliation under the provisions of ¶2553.1, which reads: “Basis – Because of the current deep conflict within the United Methodist Church around issues of human sexuality, a local church shall have a limited right, under the provisions of this paragraph, to disaffiliate

from the denomination for reasons of conscience regarding a change in the requirements and provisions of the *Book of Discipline* related to the practice of homosexuality or the ordination or marriage of self-avowed practicing homosexuals as resolved and adopted by the 2019 General Conference, or the actions or inactions of its annual conference related to these issues which follow.”

- b. The specific local church statement of eligibility adopted by the church council at the beginning of the process shall be read aloud.
- c. The following changes in the requirements and provisions of the *Book of Discipline* relating to the practice of homosexuality or the ordination or marriage of self-avowed practicing homosexuals were resolved and adopted by the 2019 General Conference:
 - (1) Amendment to ¶304.3: In particular, footnote 1 of ¶304.3 was amended to broaden the scope of relationships or activities that were encompassed in the definition of “self-avowed practicing homosexuals” who, under ¶304.3, are “not to be certified as candidates, ordained as ministers, or appointed to serve in The United Methodist Church.”
 - (2) Amendment to ¶304.5: Prohibitions have been added against approvals and recommendations by the district committee on ordained ministry and the Board of Ordained Ministry of persons who did not meet the qualifications in ¶ 304, including ¶304.3 (see above), and specified added instructions for the clergy session presiding bishops to rule that the unqualified candidate to be out of order and ineligible for the appointment.
 - (3) Amendment to ¶415.6: Amended to prohibit bishops from consecrating bishops, from commissioning persons on the deacon or elders track, and from ordaining deacons or elders if any of them are self-avowed practicing homosexuals.
 - (4) Amendment to ¶2702.1(b): Amendment to footnote 1 of ¶304.3 (see above) affects the usage of the term “self-avowed practicing homosexual” in the list of chargeable offenses related to clergy (viz., “being a self-avowed practicing homosexual; or conducting ceremonies which celebrate homosexual unions; or performing same-sex wedding ceremonies . . .”) Paragraph 2553 requires that at least two-thirds (2/3) of the professing members present at a church conference, properly held under the *Discipline*, have actual “reasons of conscience” regarding either: (1) one or more of the above-listed changes in the requirements and provisions of the *Book of Discipline* related to the practice of homosexuality or the ordination or marriage of self-avowed homosexuals or (2) the subsequent actions or inactions by the Alabama-West Florida

Conference related to issues of human sexuality.

The local church shall provide documentation to the District Superintendent that verifies the adoption of the required resolution by the church conference and the results of the ¶2553 disaffiliation vote taken at the church conference. Such documentation shall be in the form of a certificate of an authorized officer of the local church and shall be included as an exhibit to the agreement to disaffiliate between the local church and the annual conference (“Disaffiliation Agreement”) which shall be provided to the annual conference delegates before the annual conference vote on approval of the disaffiliation and the Disaffiliation Agreement.

(7) Cabinet Approves or Disapproves

Once the church conference vote has been taken and if at least $\frac{2}{3}$ of the voting members present for a duly announced and called Church Conference have voted to disaffiliate per ¶2553, then the Cabinet will review all required documentation and decide whether the church is properly before the Trustees for the next step of the process.

(8) Trustees Approve or Disapprove

Once all prior steps have been completed, AWF Trustees shall review the eligibility statement, DS assessment, notarized good faith form, and results of the church conference vote and any other documents and information the Trustees deem to be relevant to the review. AWF Trustees have final approval on whether a local church is properly before the Annual Conference for ratification of the local church disaffiliation.

A church will not be properly before the Annual Conference for disaffiliation unless the preceding steps have been followed.

(9) Disaffiliation Agreement

If the church conference of the local church has voted approval of a ¶2553 disaffiliation from The United Methodist Church, a Disaffiliation Agreement shall be formulated. The terms and conditions for the disaffiliation shall be established by the AWFC Board of Trustees, with advice of the AWFC Cabinet, Treasurer, Benefits Officer, Director of Connectional Ministries, and Chancellor. It will be memorialized in a binding Disaffiliation Agreement between the AWFC annual conference and the trustees of the local church, on behalf of its members, in accordance with ¶2553.4 of the *Book of Discipline*.

The Disaffiliation Agreement shall include, but not be limited to, the terms and conditions of the Standard Form for Disaffiliation Agreements developed and promulgated by the General Council on Finance and

Administration (GCFA) in accordance with ¶2553.4(a) and that was adopted in 2019 by the AWFC, as well as the additional standard terms developed and adopted by the annual conference in 2019 and as amended by the AWF Trustees that are not inconsistent with GCFA's Standard Form for Disaffiliation Agreements. Also included will be the disaffiliation resolution presented to the church conference and the results of the ¶2553 disaffiliation vote taken at the church conference, both of which have been authenticated and certified by an authorized officer of the local church.

The Disaffiliation Agreement shall specify (1) that the effective date for the ¶2553 disaffiliation ("Disaffiliation Date") shall be the date that the Disaffiliation Agreement is ratified and approved by the AWFC, (2) that the delegation of the local church shall not be entitled to vote upon any matters coming before the AWFC after such ratification and approval, and (3) that the closing date for consummation of the transactions contemplated by the Disaffiliation Agreement shall be a date that is subsequent to, and no more than, 60 days after the date that the Disaffiliation Agreement is ratified and approved by the AWFC.

(10) Annual Conference Vote

The Disaffiliation Agreement shall include a provision stating that the parties' respective rights and obligations under the Disaffiliation Agreement are subject to and conditioned upon the approval and ratification of the ¶2553 disaffiliation and the Disaffiliation Agreement by the AWFC. Therefore, before any ¶2553 disaffiliation and any terms, conditions, or obligations under that Disaffiliation Agreement applicable to the AWFC are effective and authorized to be undertaken by the AWFC or any AWFC leader, official, entity, or agency, "the disaffiliation agreement [shall] be ratified by a simple majority of the members of the annual conference" at a duly called session of the annual conference. This means that the sale and conveyance of any church or annual conference property, the annual conference's waiver of the Trust Clause, and any other acts or duties required to be accomplished by the annual conference under the Disaffiliation Agreement cannot be undertaken and completed until after the vote of the annual conference approving and ratifying the ¶2553 disaffiliation and the Disaffiliation Agreement.

When the resolution for approval of the Disaffiliation Agreement and the local church's ¶2553 disaffiliation is provided and presented to the annual conference delegates, the resolution shall be accompanied by the complete and accurate copy of the Disaffiliation Agreement and the exhibits and schedules. The assessments and recommendations from the AWFC entities and agencies that were developed and presented during the discernment and assessment period are available. Also included are the disaffiliation resolution presented to the church conference and the results of the ¶2553 disaffiliation vote taken at the church conference, both of which have been certified by an authorized officer of the local church.

No later than fifteen (15) days before the commencement of the annual conference sessions of the Alabama-West Florida Conference the annual conference shall be provided and given access by the AWFC Secretary to the Church Conference Resolution, Disaffiliation Agreement, and information described in the previous paragraph.

While the United Methodist Church's polity values a spirit of openness and accountability, in those rare instances where circumstances require that some aspect of an action, issue, or matter presented to the annual conference and its delegates be confidential, then the required remedy is for the annual conference and the Bishop to be timely informed of the confidential matters or issues and their convening an executive session of the annual conference (laity and clergy) to discuss that limited confidential portion. This executive session remedy is to be used to ensure that the annual conference and its delegates do not lack the ability to make a well informed and reasoned decision without impeding the safeguarding role of the annual conference and its delegates within the United Methodist Church's system of checks and balances.

The annual conference's approval and ratification of a disaffiliation agreement is completed by a vote up or down by the members of an annual conference but does not include the right to amend.

The following required payments must be paid within 60 days of the Annual Conference vote, or the deed will not be transferred to the disaffiliated local church.

1. Unfunded pension liability and post-retirement medical liability as determined by GCFA/AWF formula
2. All apportionments since January 1, 2019 plus an additional 12 months of apportionments
3. All clergy compensation, housing benefits, and other benefits through the current appointment year (for any appointed clergy who is/are remaining with the AWFUMC)
4. Any grants, loans, or gifts from the conference or district received in the last five years

Submitted by,
Reverend Olivia Poole, President
Conference Board of Trustees

Conference Connectional Ministries

July 2022 – June 2023

This past year was full of times of great joy and excitement, coupled with times that were a bit hard and difficult. Despite it all, there was a continued focus on mission and ministry – even if that meant doing mission and ministry in a different way. We kicked off this conference year with a transition of leadership in Connectional Ministries as Rev. Ashley Davis moved to the role of Assistant to the Bishop after serving as the Director of Connectional Ministries for four years. This transition was almost seamless as I, Deaconess Celeste Eubanks, who previously served as the Director of Leadership Strategies, moved into the role of Director of Connectional Ministries.

We hit the ground running in August as Bishop Graves held regional meetings throughout the conference. These meetings presented a great opportunity to share with clergy and laity the great ministry efforts taking place throughout the conference. We wanted to show how despite all that was going on around disaffiliations, our focus remained on mission and ministry.

The work of our cohorts continued this year and once again proved to be effective. The Normalizing Next® cohort led by Olu Brown wrapped up after meeting for a full year. Our age-level cohorts continued their monthly virtual meetings, and each cohort held a special event. The Children's Ministry Cohort held the first ever EQUIP training event in Pensacola, FL. Attendees were able to take part in workshops with topics ranging from Safe Sanctuaries to advent boxes to being connectional. Likewise, the 50 Plus Older Adult Ministry cohort held a virtual event with author, Amy Hanson. At this event, Amy Hanson spoke on topics from her book *Baby Boomers and Beyond: Tapping the Ministry Talents and Passions of Adults Over 50*. Also this year, the Female Clergy of Color cohort had the opportunity to go on a retreat as a result of being awarded a grant from the Intentional Growth Center (IGC). Eight women from this cohort had a weekend of rest and spiritual renewal at a facility in Gulf Shores, AL.

Our Teaming with Tanzania partnership was a prime example of how we were adaptive in our leadership this year. While there were plans for a leadership development team to travel to Tanzania in August 2022, erring on the side of caution with continued COVID-19 travel restrictions, the decision was made to do the training virtually. While this presented some technological challenges of its own, it was a great success. Clergy and laity for our conference led sessions on topics such as time management, personal boundaries and sabbath time, and financial management. This virtual training was attended by 30 pastors across three districts in Tanzania.

Connectional Ministries continued its work assisting with the planning of the Bishop's Time Apart virtual gatherings and Bishop's Day Apart in-person gatherings. In partnership with the South Georgia Conference, we hosted Tod Bolsinger for a virtual event in September. This past March we were excited to host the first in-person Bishop's Day Apart post-COVID in which Rev. Dr. Ronald "Ron" Bell, Jr. led a session on healing and resilience. Dr. Bell led the clergy through practices to help them deal with trauma and grief that they are experiencing during this season in our denomination.

As we continue to focus on clergy mental health as a priority, we were able to form a mental health task force that has the sole purpose of discovering what the needs and desires are of our clergy in the conference when it comes to mental health offerings. Jennifer Guffin, a mental health professional, gifted her services to the Conference and conducted voluntary interviews around experiences with stress with clergy in our conference. The results from these interviews will aid us in our work moving forward ensuring that we are offering things that are wanted and needed around mental health.

While making sure we are equipping clergy with the tools they need to succeed, our office has also insured we are continuing to provide leadership development opportunities for laity. We were able to kick off 2023 with eight virtual training workshops that covered topics around grant writing, payroll recordkeeping, cyber security, human resources, and faith based financial solutions. Many of these sessions were recorded and will serve as a continual training tool for laity.

As you can see, it has been a great year as we continue to focus on mission and ministry throughout our annual conference. In this report as well as in other reports throughout this year's *Book of Reports* (especially the report from our Disaster Response Ministry), you will see the great ways that we are doing mission and ministry in our respective corners of the world. It is truly a blessing to do this work and ministry and to do it with the great people of the Alabama-West Florida Conference of The United Methodist Church.

Celeste Eubanks, Deaconess
Director of Connectional Ministries

Conference Disaster Response and Recovery

Tornadoes 2021 and spring 2022:

Disaster Case Management is wrapping up for the survivors of the tornadoes in Hale and Perry counties for 2021 and spring 2022. Currently there are four brand new homes with safe rooms in construction, funded by an United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) grant and AWFC donations. In addition, disaster case management has been provided in Hale County at the request of the long-term recovery group, and those survivors have received over \$100,000 from the Governor's Emergency Relief Fund, which would not have been possible without the advocacy and hard work of the AWFC disaster team. In addition, we have started 4 new builds with safe rooms (leveraged \$40,000) in Hale and Greene counties, completed 25 cases and 9 repairs through leveraged funds (\$55,000).

United Way of Southwest Alabama (UWSWA) – contracted to provide disaster case management for 34 families resulting in 14 repairs using 100% leveraged funds.

November 2022 Tornadoes:

On November 30, 2022, approximately 30 tornadoes touched down across Alabama. Many of these caused damages in the Alabama West Florida Conference. Two fatalities occurred with dozens of homes and apartments damaged and several homes destroyed. These disasters have not been federally declared therefore no FEMA awards were received. ERT teams deployed and over 100 tornado buckets were distributed as well as tarps in needed cases. A \$10K grant was received from UMCOR and it was spent on food, building materials, emergency electricity relief, and tarps for several families in need in the Tibbie, Fruitdale, and Montgomery areas. Other affected areas included rural Hale County and an apartment building in Greene County. Currently, screening of survivors is underway to assess unmet needs for full recovery of these families.

Next steps:

AWFC has applied for an UMCOR grant to assist with disaster case management, home repairs, new home builds, and other unmet needs for the underinsured/uninsured families. The disaster team anticipates collaboration with several agencies such as local United Ways, other religious disaster teams, the State of Alabama, and additional nonprofits with whom we have worked in the past. The goal is to stretch the dollars granted by leveraging as many other funds as possible through these collaborations. We anticipate needing volunteers in the future, in but until the grant is provided, case management cannot begin, and it takes time to get to the point of construction.

Current ways to support disaster missions:

- Donations can be made to UMCOR, AWFUMC
- Become an ERT - Email DisasterResponse@awfumc.org
- Collect clean up buckets - Email DisasterResponse@awfumc.org
- Current ERTs are needed - Email DisasterResponse@awfumc.org

Submitted by

Rev. Chris Ackerman

Director of Conference Disaster Response and Recovery

Dumas Wesley Community Center

**Please note: The below programs and activities reflect average numbers served during regular programming. Throughout the pandemic, Dumas Wesley has continued to provide essential services safely, based on guidelines and recommendations by the CDC and the Mobile County Health Department. The Dumas Wesley staff look forward to fully reopening programs as specific health measurements advised by the CDC have been achieved in Mobile.*

The Dumas Wesley Community Center (DWCC) is a neighborhood based non-profit organization located in the Crichton community of Mobile, Alabama. DWCC was founded in 1903, by the Woman's Society of Christian Service (present day United Methodist Women). The agency's original mission was to serve poor women and children who worked in the cotton mills of the Crichton community.

Over the years DWCC evolved to meet the changing needs of the community, becoming a multi-service center offering after school programs, senior services, neighborhood outreach, transportation services and transitional housing for homeless families.

The majority of households served by the Center are headed by single mothers with an average household income of less than \$20,000 per year.

Mission Statement

The mission of the Dumas Wesley Community Center of Mobile, Alabama is to EDUCATE, EMPOWER and ENRICH our local community through collaborative programs of Christian service that: Provide for immediate human needs, Strengthen family life, Develop leadership and encourage personal responsibility.

Neighborhood Outreach

The intent of our Neighborhood Outreach and Advocacy program is to implement and foster trust and belief in the residents of Crichton, thus serving as a catalyst for the advocacy and betterment of the community. Our major goals are:

- Rehabilitation of family life through education and services that enhance awareness of the needs of self, other family members and neighbors.
- Improve the lives of disadvantaged and underserved area youth, families and senior citizens by ensuring adequate nutrition, healthcare, preventative education, and referrals to area social service agencies and resources.
- A renewal of community interest in the neighborhood as a place of pride, resulting in increased personal self-esteem and security in the home environment.

Youth Programs

The After School Achievement Program (ASAP) provides a safe environment for community youth to participate in age-appropriate activities. Specific programs include:

- STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math) curriculum
- 7-week Robotics curriculum
- Sports - Teens participate in church and city basketball leagues each year.
- “Safe Haven” Daily Recreation - This program gives our community youth a safe place to go after school. We offer two game rooms, outside play and basketball.
- Summer Recreation and Camp – Our summer recreation program offers sports, arts and crafts, a variety of field trips, and a week-long camping experience at Camp Blue Lake.
- Tutoring – Provides weekly tutoring assistance for program participants of all ages.
- Computer lab- Provides weekly supervised access to our computer lab for homework studies, college prep work and games.
- Music Lessons: Provides weekly piano and choir classes for youth.
- Youth Empowered Wednesdays – Led by the Junior League of Mobile, this program offers weekly workshops, speakers, arts and crafts and sports activities led by local volunteers.
- You Still Have a Choice Program: Led by the Mobile Police Department, this program offers dialogue about choices and consequences. The program is designed to reduce recidivism for juvenile criminal offenders.

Sybil H. Smith Family Village Transitional Housing Program

The Sybil H. Smith Family Village transitional housing program began serving homeless families in July, 1999. To date, the Center has served over 2,300 (formerly homeless) individuals from seven Alabama counties, the Mississippi coast area and the Florida panhandle. This unique program provides homeless families with the tools to establish and maintain self-sufficiency. It combines transitional housing of up to 24 months with on-site support services as well as referrals to other community agencies and institutions. 87% of our clients successfully complete the program, become gainfully employed and remain in permanent housing. This percentage is well above the national average (64%) for similar transitional housing programs.

Senior SAIL Program

The Dumas Wesley Senior Activities for Independent Living (SAIL) Program provides daily activities and a hot, nutritious meal Monday through Friday for an average of 40 seniors daily. Participants enjoy a variety of activities, including games, sing-alongs, nutrition education, speakers, health checks and field trips. Trips to the grocery store are provided one day per week. Information referrals are made on health and wellness issues, Medicare, Social Security, Fair Housing

and other social services. For qualified seniors, Dumas Wesley delivers meals to over 70 homebound seniors.

Transportation- The purpose of the program is to provide seniors with transportation to doctors, hospitals and other health facilities. There is no set fee, but donations are accepted. 81 percent of those served live alone and are dependent upon Dumas Wesley for this much needed service. Transportation is also provided to Dumas Wesley's S.A.I.L. program daily.

Monitoring of Home Day Care Feeding Program - Dumas Wesley staffs the monitoring of the feeding program in 59 home daycares in Mobile and Washington Counties. This program plays a vital role in improving the quality of day care and making it more affordable for local low-income families. Homes must be licensed and approved in order to qualify for meal reimbursements. Dumas Wesley monitors each provider through quarterly on-site visits, in-home trainings and annual workshops.

Other Partner Programs:

The Joseph Project: A Community Food Pantry

The Joseph Project, named for the Joseph story in Genesis 41, is a partnership between the Ashland Place United Methodist Church and the Dumas Wesley Community Center. Serving an average of 100 unique households each week, the food pantry is open for all in need and completely volunteer-supported and operated.

Assistance to Refugee and Immigrant Populations: Attorney Perry Noble has brought pro bono legal services to Dumas Wesley, serving immigrant and refugee families and individuals. Assistance is provided on by appointment only.

How can you participate in the ministry of Dumas Wesley Community Center?

For over a century we have been proudly serving our community. We have a well-established reputation for quality service among our multi-generational client base. We serve hundreds of needy families every year. That is really special to us - our programs meet the whole family's needs. We want to continue to meet these needs for generations to come, but without your support our programs wouldn't be possible! We ask for your continued prayers, monetary support and sharing of your talents and skills through volunteerism. Thank you and God bless!

Yours in Service,
Kate Carver
Executive Director
Dumas Wesley Community Center

Embrace Kids

It is Still Time to Care

We were born when a Methodist pastor took the time to care about the needs of one vulnerable child in 1890, launching a movement that created a longstanding ministry. And since that momentous day, we have chosen to keep on caring.

Tremendous Growth

We have experienced tremendous growth (serving 1798 individuals in 2022) in ministry as a direct result of the compassion of “the people called Methodists.” We are proud to partner with you in the care of God’s children as an extension of your ministry as a United Methodist Church.

Telling Our Story

We are thankful to the Alabama West Florida Conference and each United Methodist Church that has made the decision to support us over the years, and we ask that you continue to partner with us through allowing us to tell our story in front of your people on Sunday mornings in many different forms – preaching, ministry moments, written material, and of course, through the White Christmas Offering.

Focus and Mission

Discovering, developing, and deploying spiritual leaders to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world is the mission of the United Methodist Church. We assist the churches of the Alabama West Florida Conference in accomplishing this mission by embracing and nurturing vulnerable children and families through homes, healing, and hope.

Join Us in 2023

We are opening a new Higher Education Home in Pensacola! Our Higher Education Homes allow students in foster care or alternative living situations to continue their educations while living in stable, supportive, and loving environments. The Pensacola Higher Education Home will be the third Higher Education Home in our ministry. In Alabama, we have 2 Higher Education Homes, located in Tuscaloosa and Florence, which also provide essential wraparound support that give students the same opportunities as their peers. With your help, we look forward to being the “hands and feet of Jesus Christ” for generations to come. If you have questions, please feel free to contact us. Your church’s partnership with us is important to every individual we serve.

Respectfully submitted,
Dr. Blake Horne, Executive Director

Hinton Rural Life Center

Hayesville, North Carolina

Our Mission: Inspired by Jesus Christ, Hinton Center serves individuals, congregations, and rural communities through retreat ministries, educational opportunities, and missional outreach.

In 2022, Hinton Rural Life Center served conferences in the Southeastern Jurisdiction through equipping clergy and local churches (particularly small, rural churches) and offering opportunities for individuals and church groups to serve in Safe and Healthy Home Repair and firewood ministries and/or to come for retreats and renewal time, experiencing God's presence and blessing at our 33-acre campus in the Appalachian Mountains. Here are some of the year's highlights:

- Launched Theotokos Confirmation Retreats, providing a United Methodist confirmation experience for 314 young people from 20 different churches. It was so well received, we added an additional weekend for 2023! www.hintontheotokos.org
- Developed and provided Theotokos Connections, a digital confirmation resource that is small church relevant, but meaningful for all ministry settings. We received orders from 55 churches in 2022 and continue to receive orders.
- Provided 388 children living in poverty with new clothes at Christmas through Christmas Care.
- Entered our House on Wheels (HOW) mobile teaching unit in multiple parades and community resource events to promote home safety awareness and practices.
- Hosted 17 individuals participating in webinars for rural clergy.
- Facilitated poverty simulations for 550 people, helping those serving in missions to better understand the dynamics/challenges of rural poverty and what it means to "walk alongside" our neighbors in need.
- Completed 186 home repair projects on 48 different homes, prioritizing and addressing the health and safety of homeowners.
- Hosted over 725 mission participants. Mission team participants and local volunteers recorded 16,760 hours, a value of \$501,962 to our community!
- Provided over 700 loads of firewood to families/individuals who heat primarily with wood, a value of \$179,240.
- Trained 21 individuals in Mental Health First Aid online offerings, helping to remove stigma and create awareness of the signs and symptoms of mental health crises and best responses for connecting with help.
- Awarded \$1.8 million in grant dollars, with the majority of funds

focused on our Safe and Healthy Homes initiatives. This will include the design and construction of an educational tool barn, where community members and mission volunteers can learn more about the direct connection between poor health and inadequate housing.

- Continued to provide missional and leadership training for young people through our Staffers-in-Training event, Summer Mission Outreach Service Ministry Leaders opportunity (for college-age summer staff), and the 12-week Leadership Chatuge Community Builders course, which is primarily for adults, but open to high school students. Clay County resident Lauren, one of the high school participants, was grateful for her experience: “This program has largely affected how I view business and economics. It gave me the opportunity to gain new connections with business owners. Also, it opened my eyes to all that our area has to offer in resources.”

Respectfully submitted,

Jacqueline Gottlieb
CEO and President
jackie@hintoncenter.org
www.hintoncenter.org

Methodist Homes for the Aging: Kindness and Compassion

Dutch priest and theologian, Henri Nouwen, wrote - “When we honestly ask ourselves which person in our lives means the most to us, we often find that it is those who, instead of giving advice, solutions, or cures, have chosen rather to share our pain and touch our wounds with a warm and tender hand.”

Amen. The value of caregiving cannot be understated. One of the most revealing insights gleaned from the worldwide pandemic was the profound devastation caused by being physically separated from loved ones. It didn't matter if you were living in Albania, Algeria or Alabama. The pandemic exposed our deep need for touch and presence that technology, with all its benefits and uses, simply cannot replace.

In Ephesians 4, Paul speaks about unity among the believers in Christ, the gifts given to each of us through Christ, and instructions for applying those gifts to our daily lives. The chapter ends with a call to “Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.” For an organization and ministry that is built on kindness and compassion, Methodist Homes appreciates and values its caregivers.

In the setting of each Methodist Home, brave and compassionate caregivers show up day after day, shift after shift, even amid personal uncertainties, and continue to be present in the lives of those they pledge to care for. When family members can't sweep mother's bangs up off her eyebrows, or place father's water cup to his lips... caregivers are there. Though no one can actually replace family, caregivers have become much more like family in a deeper sense than ever before.

Wesley Place on Honeysuckle in Dothan began pioneering a familial model of care – the household model – well before the pandemic, where caregivers and residents function much like family members in a setting that resembles home. And we are continuing that effort in earnest to help our residents live life to their fullest, with dignity, enjoying the simple daily pleasures of life. Even now, as the senior living industry struggles with workforce stability, you will find caregivers at our communities who have served in that capacity for 15, 20, even 40 years.

With more than 800 hearts and hands in two states, caregiving at Methodist Homes is accomplished in a variety of settings by multiple professional disciplines. Whether at Wesley Place on Honeysuckle, Wesley Gardens, Wesley Haven Villa, Mathison or Fair Haven, or at one of our affordable housing apartments for seniors in Alabama or Northwest Florida, within our mission is a call to service excellence for all older adults who call a Methodist Home their

Kindness and compassion continues to flow through the Fountain of Love Fund as well. Your gifts provide financial assistance for Methodist Homes residents who have exhausted their own resources and now need help meeting their monthly expenses. In 2022, that amounted to more than \$326,000 to help people continue to live in the place they call home. With your help, we continue to say, “No one has ever been asked to leave a Methodist Home due to their inability to pay.”

We deeply appreciate your prayers and support.

Christopher W. Tomlin
President & CEO

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Class of 2026

Rev. John I. Baxter

Rev. Ed Deabler

Mrs. Elizabeth Huber

Dr. John Ed Mathison

Mrs. Jennifer Piver

United Methodist Connectional Federal Credit Union

Your United Methodist Connectional Federal Credit Union began in 1960 serving pastors of the North Georgia and South Georgia Conferences. Today we are open to ALL UNITED METHODISTS in the North Georgia, South Georgia, Florida and Alabama West Florida Conferences.

The Board of Directors, Management and Staff have emerged from the pandemic with financial stability and strength, and we have served our members with the best service possible.

The 2020-21 period saw an unexpected opportunity arise to serve churches with the Payment Protection Program loans. In all, over \$5,000,000 in loans were granted and forgiven to our member churches. Even so, 2022 has seen further loan growth of 10% over 2021 while our assets and expenses have remained stable.

We also gave back to the Annual Conferences through our scholarship program and through numerous sponsorships and donations to many agencies and churches, including UMCOR and the many United Methodist affiliated children's homes.

Every United Methodist is eligible to be a member of the United Methodist Connectional Federal Credit Union and financially benefit from our low cost services which include:

- Low interest credit cards
- Auto loan buying service with incentives
- Mortgage Loans
- Church Loans and Accounts
- Financial counseling to help manage one's budget

Your United Methodist Connectional Federal Credit Union exists to SERVE YOU with financial systems that promote Christian stewardship. Your Board of Directors, Management and Staff are working everyday to ensure the success and stability of YOUR CREDIT UNION now and in the future.

United Methodist Development Fund

The United Methodist Development Fund for the Conference provides sources of financing for church and church organizations' building projects, renovation projects, and property purchases. These loans are made possible by deposits from local churches, agencies, and church members looking for both competitive rates on liquid funds and the opportunity to participate in church building and growth.

Development Fund Loans:

The Development Fund makes low-interest loans for up to \$1 million to United Methodist churches and agencies in the AWF Conference (contact us for loans larger than \$1 million, we have the ability to negotiate with other Foundations for larger loans) for new church construction, purchasing property, and large renovation projects. The Development Fund helped finance one new church building projects in 2022. Loans are only offered on a first mortgage basis or by assigning assets already held through the United Methodist Foundation and currently offers a rate of 4.75%. The Development Fund has competitive rates, loan terms up to 15 years, and does not charge points or closing costs for establishing a loan; however, there are certain normal filing requirements. The Development Fund staff works diligently to respond promptly to the needs of the church and works as a consultant to determine the financial impact of the debt amount on the church. To learn more about Development Fund loans, contact the United Methodist Foundation office or visit www.alwfumf.org/loans.

Development Fund Investing:

Any church or individual can invest in the United Methodist Development Fund accounts. Applications are available through the United Methodist Foundation office or on our website, www.alwfumf.org/churches/investing. Interest on the deposits, currently earning 1.50%, is paid and reported quarterly and is earned from the day of the deposit to the day of the withdrawal. All or part of your investment may be withdrawn with a written/signed request at any time. There is no penalty, fee, or loss of interest when withdrawing funds. Individuals can also choose to have the interest reinvested each year. *Investments are not FDIC insured. Investments are secured by the assets of the Fund and the first mortgages of the churches. No investor in the Fund has ever lost any part of their investment or interest earned.

For information on rates and availability of funds, please call or email Terri Turner at the Foundation office at (334) 793-6820 or foundation@alwfumf.org.

Board Actions:

The Development Fund's Board of Directors voted to continue providing deposit accounts to United Methodist churches and organizations as well as organizations that share either current or past Wesleyan common bonds and connections with

The United Methodist Church. The Development Fund is taking steps to provide a stable and smooth transition for the UMC and the Non-UMC while “doing no harm” to any group. The Development Fund board of directors voted at their April 2023 meeting to make the following amendments to the By-Laws and Articles of Incorporation:

- **Change 1:** Specifically to function as an institution of the Alabama - West Florida Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church (and any successor or successors to the Annual Conference, the General Conference, or the Southeastern Jurisdictional Conference of the United Methodist Church) as well as organizations that share either current or past Wesleyan common bonds and connections with the United Methodist Church. (Approved 4/5/2023)
- **Change 2:** Resolved, that the Articles of Incorporation and the corporate By-laws of the United Methodist Development Fund shall be amended where applicable to provide that the Board of Directors shall be made up of at least 75% United Methodist Church members with the remaining Board members belonging to organizations that share either current or past Wesleyan common bonds and connections with the United Methodist Church. (Approved 4/5/2023)

We appreciate the hard work of our Board of Directors and their commitment to providing the services vital to church growth in our Conference. We endorse and recommend the following board and officers.

President: Henry Hooks

Executive Director: Terri H. Turner

Board of Directors: Clay Carnathan, Ben Barron, Howard Adams

Conference Treasurer: Suzanne Krejcar Jones

Director of Connectional Ministries: Celeste Eubanks

Conference Lay Leader: Gene Floore

Resident Bishop: Bishop David L. Graves

U.M. Foundation President: Jeff Outlaw

Cabinet Representative: Rev. Jeff Wilson

United Methodist Foundation

The United Methodist Foundation was created with churches in mind, and our commitment remains unwavering to help your church with financial services, planned giving, investment management, donor development, and more. These services have taken years to perfect to meet the specific needs of our churches, and as those needs continue to evolve, we will continue to look for ways to aid your church.

The Foundation has remained self-sustaining for over 43 years charging only a small administrative fee, much lower than commercial options. These lower fees allows us to provide many of the Foundation's services and gifts below.

2022 Generosity Report

- Scholarship Dollars Awarded in 2022: \$271,973.02
- Funds Disbursed Back Into Churches for Ministry in 2022: \$9,447,460.11
- Foundation Assets Currently Under Management \$114.6 Million at 12/31/2022
- Schedule a Meeting with the Foundation: We developed a portal to encourage productive conversations around your vision for your church moving forward. To schedule a call, visit www.alwfumf.org/meetings.
- Board Actions: The Foundation provides necessary fiduciary responsibilities in response to the intent and commitments of our donors and churches. Continued management of these funds are an ongoing example of good stewardship to future generations. As a result, the Foundation's Board of Directors voted to continue serving United Methodist churches and organizations as well as organizations that share either current or past Wesleyan common bonds and connections with The United Methodist Church. As a committed partner to all donors and account holders, the Foundation is taking steps to provide a stable and smooth transition for the UMC and the Non-UMC while "doing no harm" to any group. The Foundation board of directors voted at their November 2022 meeting to make the following amendments to the By-Laws and Articles of Incorporation:
 - Change 1: Specifically to function as an institution of the Alabama - West Florida Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church (and any successor or successors to the Annual Conference, the General Conference, or the Southeastern Jurisdictional Conference of the United Methodist Church) as well as organizations that share either current or past Wesleyan common bonds and connections with the United Methodist Church. (Approved 11/9/2022)
 - Change 2: Resolved, that the Articles of Incorporation and the corporate By-laws of the United Methodist Foundation shall be

amended where applicable to provide that the Board of Directors shall be made up of at least 75% United Methodist Church members with the remaining Board members belonging to organizations that share either current or past Wesleyan common bonds and connections with the United Methodist Church. (Approved 11/9/2022)

- **Eight Free Educational Events:** We offered eight free educational events and webinars in 2022, and have already completed four in 2023 with more coming throughout the year. These events address a number of financial solutions for common problems in the church. With Terri Turner as the host, we invite a variety of guest speakers to present this helpful content. All leaders, clergy, and lay are invited to attend these 1-hour events for free. To learn more and register for these events, visit www.alwfumf.org/events.

Our Services

Church Planned Giving/Endowment Programs

Planned Giving Programs help encourage and facilitate planned gifts and endowments to the church. Interest has peaked for teaching leaders how to establish and cultivate permanent and reserve sources of income to support and sustain church ministry programs. We offer a step-by-step guide designed to encourage and support future financial needs of the church.

Free Resources

As a result of our partnerships with churches and agencies, we provide free resources and services to encourage good stewardship. These resources include newsletters, handouts, bulletin inserts, social media posts, holiday resources, news, events, and stories on churches through our email list and social media accounts. Like us on Facebook at facebook.com/alwfumf, follow us on Instagram and Twitter at [@ALWFUMF](https://twitter.com/ALWFUMF), and ask to be added to our email list at foundation@alwfumf.org.

Investment Services

Our investment services are uniquely created to provide diversified, low-cost investment options for managing church and agency funds with competitive historical returns. The Foundation staff assists in developing a custom investment plan for each participating organization or donor.

Fund Administration Services

We provide trust fund accounting, regular disbursements, all other fiduciary administration services, and report this information to you on easy to read statements. Foundation statements are mailed and available online for authorized church members.

Scholarships

The Foundation facilitated over \$270,000 in scholarships in 2022. Scholarships are available from numerous sources for both Ministerial and Lay students (www.alwfumf.org/individuals/scholarships). The Foundation's Scholarship Committee (unless otherwise designated by the donor) determines which applicants meet the criteria for available scholarships based on information provided on the application.

Educational Events and Workshops

In 2022 we offered several educational webinars on generosity and financial development. These programs, workshops, and events (www.alwfumf.org/events) foster a better understanding of giving and stewardship as both an act of worship and discipleship. Pastors also have the opportunity to earn CEU credits at most Game Changing Leadership events.

Legacy Gifts Consulting

We offer one on one meetings with individuals who are looking to do something generous for their church. We provide a variety of legacy and planned giving options and can help you plan and set up these gifts to accomplish your specific goals for leaving a legacy in the church.

To learn more about the Foundation's services, email Terri H. Turner at foundation@alwfumf.org, call (334) 793-6820, or visit www.alwfumf.org.

The Board of Directors unanimously endorses and recommends the following board and officers.

Board of Directors

Officers

President: Jeff Outlaw
 Vice President: Mark Davidson
 Treasurer: Steve Burch
 Executive Director: Terri H. Turner

Ex-Officio Members

4 District Superintendents
 Resident Bishop
 Conference Lay Leader

Class of 2023

Tommy Boyd – Mty/Pratt
 Mike Tucker – Mar/PC
 Olen Kirby – Demopolis
 Bryan Poole – Mty/Opelika
 Henry Hooks – Mar/PC
 Mac McCorquodale – Demopolis

Class of 2023 Continued

Ed Reifenberg – Mty/Pratt
 Tony Mallini - Pensacola

Class of 2024

Bill Hill – Mty/Pratt
 Jana Simmons – Baypines

Class of 2025

Chris Beam – Pensacola
 Laureen Lynn – Mobile
 Jana Ealum – Mty/Pratt
 John Bullard, Jr. – Mty/Pratt
 Howard Meadows – Mty/Pratt

United Methodist Inner City Mission

The United Methodist Inner City Mission is a community ministry serving low income families who make up 81.2 percent of the residents in our Historic Oakdale-Maysville community of Mobile.

We are most appreciative of your generous funding that has allowed us to continue to serve in the times of Covid-19 and beyond. Your contributions enabled us to continue to serve the Oakdale-Maysville area by supporting seniors who were confined to their homes due to covid. Our staff members make regular calls and numerous trips to pick up groceries and medicine to meet their needs. For some of the seniors our staff members were the only contact they had during these challenging times and still remain today.

And thanks to your support we were able to continue our afterschool tutorial program that became pivotal because of virtual learning. Our certified teachers were available to navigate students through those times. We also continued with our summer enrichment program providing educational and recreational activities along with two meals.

Meet CLARENCE COLEMAN: Our Rising Star

Clarence lives in our community and has been attending the program at Taylor Park for many years. Clarence has risen above his circumstances and excels in school and at the park.

This summer Clarence participated in the Taylor Park Summer Job Program where each student was given the opportunity to develop a company. Carter Tax Service facilitated the program and paid for an LLC for all students who were interested. Clarence developed a lawn service company and received an LLC. Today he is the proud owner and operator of “Dukes Lawn Care” and he was also awarded “Young Entrepreneur of the Year” by The Grind.

The Inner City Mission is proud of Clarence and grateful for the opportunity to invest in his life.

The Mission provided emergency funding for those residents who needed assistance with their utility bills and rent.

These programs and the services we provide could not be as successful without the compassionate consideration and generosity of the churches and groups of the Alabama West Florida United Methodist Conference. And on behalf of the United Methodist Inner City Mission we say THANK YOU for your continuous support and partnering with us as we continue to share God’s unconditional love with those we serve.

Rev. Charlotte Greene, Chairperson
United Methodist Inner City Mission

United Women in Faith

PURPOSE

United Women in Faith shall be a community of women whose Purpose is to know God and to experience freedom as whole persons through Jesus Christ; to develop a creative, supportive fellowship; and to expand concepts of mission through participation in the global ministries of the church.

The United Methodist Women (United Women in Faith) is the official women's organization of The United Methodist Church. Our membership is voluntary and open to all women committed to and engaged in mission who affirm and Pledge to this Purpose.

MISSION

We seek to connect and nurture women through Christian spiritual formation, leadership development, creative fellowship and education so that they can inspire, influence and impact local and global communities.

FUNDING

Still feeling the repercussions of the pandemic and the new results of disaffiliation, the Alabama-West Florida United Women in Faith members forwarded \$84,533 Pledge to Mission funds to the National organization. Our mission dollars continue to journey throughout specific projects and to help in establishing Methodist Women's societies in other countries and include help with hospitals, schools and assists with agriculture projects. Additionally, many Local Units forwarded extra funds and any requested items to AWF conference and district agency destinations within our local church communities. These funds and purchased items combined would exceed any Pledged amounts.

SPECIAL CELEBRATIONS and GATHERINGS

It was a blessing to be able to host the 2022 Spiritual Enrichment Retreat at Blue Lake. Attendance was almost back to pre-COVID numbers. Inspiring workshops and worship were exactly what we needed! Our 50th United Women in Faith Annual Day was held at New Hope UMC in Theodore. Mission u was offered in July with virtual and in-person events. We continue to celebrate the election of Betty Helms, National Director representing the Alabama West Florida Conference of the Southeastern Jurisdiction and Barbara Carroll, Southeastern Jurisdiction Chairperson Committee on Nominations.

FOCUS

Leadership Development Days, our annual officer training, went on as scheduled virtually. These workshops were developed for specific leadership roles and provided opportunities to network with other United Women in Faith leaders. We annually train our leaders within the Districts and Local Units to support our mission vision and our own personal transformation to help transform the world.

Conference and District Executive Mission Teams

Our conference and district leaders continued attentiveness to the scope of

planning and organizing the mission work for the support of our Purpose within the Local Unit (at the Church). We met in person and used a combination of conference calls, emails, and ZOOM meetings to organize and administer the policies for the stewardship of funding our mission for women, children, and youth. Due to several issues, UWFatih districts have merged into four districts: The Central District (Montgomery), Mariana-PC-Dothan, Pensacola, South West. New membership opportunities are being offered for those whose churches have disaffiliated.

Cooperative Mission u and District Mission Studies

The Cooperative Mission u training prepares facilitators to present the studies to the Local Unit members. For 2023, planning has already begun with Mission u offered in person at Aldersgate UMC Montgomery in July. This year's study is Living the Kin-dom: Exploring the Lord's Prayer as a Spiritual Practice for Social Transformation.

Reading Program

The Reading Program is a cherished tradition that brings together members to explore, share and discuss books. Study opportunities generate discussions of the diverse range of books in categories of Education for Mission, Nurturing for Community, Social Action, Spiritual Growth and Leadership Development which expose us to concepts of mission in advocacy and service. Book Talk & Workshop is an opportunity to hear from an author of one of the books in the Reading List. Voices From the Field by Mary Beth Coudal are Zoom conversations which offer a "window to the world." Listeners meet women who are making real and positive changes in their communities, around the block, and around the world. We continued the focus and special emphases on Climate Justice and Criminalization of Communities of Color & Mass Incarceration.

GOALS

With God's help, we will seek to continue our journey to hold our annual meeting in the districts where we can encourage and invite ALL women in the church to "listen and learn" about our United Women in Faith heritage and missional outreach work.

Our plan is to implement new initiatives that will focus our vision of turning faith, hope, and love into action on behalf of the agencies that assist women, children and youth in our communities and around the world.

2023 Report prepared by
Debbie G. Bracewell President, 2021, 2022, 2023
Alabama-West Florida United Methodist Women

[Resources: "On a Path for Mission" brochure, www.umwmissionresources.org/ / AWF-UMW workbook]

Africa University

United Methodists worldwide celebrated an ‘Ebenezer’ moment in the ministry of Africa University in 2022, marking 30 years of faithfulness, generosity, growth, and impact within and beyond The United Methodist Church.

God’s presence and provision in the life of Africa University are evident, thanks to the prayers and generous support of the Alabama-West Florida Conference. In 2022, the Alabama-West Florida invested 70.68 percent of its share of general church giving to support the day-to-day operations of Africa University. Thank you!

Supported by Alabama-West Florida United Methodists and others across the denomination, Africa University embraced new opportunities as it emerged from pandemic-related restrictions in 2022.

- Enrollment: Strategic recruitment and retention initiatives, including blended learning options, technology upgrades, and additional mental health support and financial aid, helped Africa University achieve a total enrollment at 2,791 students in August 2022. Female students comprised 58 percent of the student population and 23 African nations were represented.
- Academic Growth: Africa University launched its first new academic unit in almost twenty years—The School of Law—with a pioneer cohort of 20 students pursuing the Bachelor of Laws (Honors) (LL.B.) degree program. The institution s currently implementing five new undergraduate and graduate programs approved by the Zimbabwe Council for Higher Education (ZIMCHE), the national accreditation and quality assurance agency.
- Infrastructure expansion: A new residence hall for female students at Africa University is under construction, funded by the East Ohio Conference’s \$1.5 million Teach * Reach * Bless campaign. Once completed, the building will boost the available on campus housing for students to around 1200 beds.
- Outcomes: 712 graduates from 18 African countries became Africa University alumni in June 2022. The university’s almost 11,000 graduates to date are making vital contributions as clergy, educators, agriculturalists, health professionals, entrepreneurs, and innovators. Faculty and student research efforts to address endemic challenges such as malaria and tuberculosis, food insecurity, and climate change are gaining continental attention and significant international funding.

- Africa University's year-long 30th anniversary program culminated in October 2022 with a gathering of more than 3,000 people at its main campus in Mutare, Zimbabwe. Amidst the commemoration and joyful thanksgiving livestreamed to the world, the Rev. Dr. Peter Mageto was installed as the fifth vice chancellor (president) of the institution.

Mageto, a Kenyan and academician specializing in theological ethics, echoed the gratitude of the students, faculty, staff, trustees, and alumni of Africa University for the incalculable sum of answered prayers that is the Africa University story. His inaugural address highlighted the optimism and commitment to purpose that are the foundation of the university's unfolding vision.

"Today, Africa University turns thirty. The number 30 is a blessed figure. Thirty was the age of our Lord Jesus Christ when he commenced his ministry here on earth. It gives us great faith to be walking resolutely towards the fourth decade," Mageto said.

Thank you, Alabama-West Florida Conference, for nurturing change leaders and building an enduring legacy through the ministry of Africa University. Let us continue to journey together—learning, leading, and serving God, all the time, everywhere.

*James H. Salley, President and Chief Executive Officer
Africa University (Tennessee) Inc. &
Associate Vice Chancellor for Institutional Advancement
Africa University*

Schools of Theology

Boston University School of Theology

I am profoundly grateful for your partnership, prayers, and support in these challenging times. A year like 2022 makes even more relevant BUSTH's historic and ongoing commitments to peace and justice in equipping transformational leaders. We remain hopeful and vigilant in our continued partnership with you.

BREAKING NEWS:

- **Students:** Our academic year 2022-23 entering class was among our most diverse, with 88 new students enrolling, 34% of whom are international students.
- **Faculty:** In September we welcomed three new faculty members: James McCarty, Assistant Clinical Professor of Religion and Conflict Transformation; Eunil David Cho, Assistant Professor of Spiritual Care; and Peng Yin, Assistant Professor of Ethics.
- **New Online Degree First Cohort:** BUSTH's first fully online master's degree—the Master of Religion and Public Leadership (MARPL)—welcomed its first students in fall 2022. MARPL seeks students who wish to be prepared for leadership roles that creatively engage the challenges of public life. Learn more at bu.edu/sth/marpl.
- **Faculty Research:** Prof. Filipe Maia was awarded a Louisville Institute book grant in April, and Prof. Luis Menéndez-Antuña was awarded a grant from the Catholic Biblical Association in August. Other large grants continue to move forward, including the Trauma Responsive Congregations Project led by Prof. Shelly Rambo and supported by the Lilly Endowment, and the Positive Psychology and Formation-Based Flourishing grant led by Prof. Steven Sandage and supported by the Peale Foundation.
- **Scholarships:** This year, we announced free tuition for all residential master's candidates. We continue to offer free tuition to UMC-registered candidates for ordained ministry and leadership fellowships that support students in ethnic, gender, and sexuality studies. New funds include the Research & Teaching Fund and Affirmation & Empowerment Fund as well as the following endowed funds: DEI, Theology & the Arts, and Doctor of Ministry.
- **Accreditation Visit:** BUSTH just welcomed the United Methodist University Senate Review team on February 1-3 for our re-accreditation visit.
- **Online Lifelong Learning:** BUSTH offers online courses for professional and spiritual enrichment of religious leaders. Recent offerings include “Ethics and Video Games,” and “Spiritual Mending for Helping Professionals.” To learn more, visit bu.edu/sth/oll.
- **Development:** Recent accomplishments include endowing the Faith and

Ecological Justice Fund, and new funding for student scholarships and academic programs.

COMMITMENT TO JUSTICE and COMPASSION:

- BUSTH’s Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion offers webinars on timely inclusion efforts, such as “Increasing Participation of Students of Underrepresented Backgrounds.”
- This year’s Lowell Lecture topics explore the spiritual dimension of artistic expression. This fall, Dr. Emmett G. Price III highlighted the brilliant resilience and demonstrative hope of Black folk through the lens of two exceptional spiritual beings: Nina Simone and John Coltrane. A diverse panel response fostered rich conversation.
- Work continues to improve accessibility, sustainability, and responsible investing. BUSTH is the first certified Green School at BU and is active in the Green Seminary Initiative.

With faith and gratitude,
G. Sujin Pak, Dean

Candler School of Theology

Since 1914, Candler School of Theology at Emory University has educated faithful and creative leaders for the church’s ministries throughout the world. An official seminary of The United Methodist Church, Candler holds true to the Methodist value of ecumenical openness, enthusiastically welcoming students from more than 42 denominations, with nearly half of Master of Divinity students coming from the Wesleyan tradition, including United Methodist, African Methodist Episcopal, African Methodist Episcopal Zion, Christian Methodist Episcopal, Wesleyan, Free Methodist, Church of the Nazarene, and others. Our student body reflects the diversity and breadth of the Christian faithful, with an enrollment of 417 from 16 countries and 33 states, and 43% persons of color. This diversity is a blessing, enriching our life together and providing a “learning laboratory” for ministry in the 21st century—ministry that cultivates community across difference, welcomes all to contribute and belong, and embodies Christ’s love in and among us.

Candler offers six single degrees and ten dual degrees, most of which are available in hybrid or online formats so students can remain rooted in their home communities as they pursue their degrees. Our new hybrid Master of Divinity blending online classes and in-person intensives launches in Fall 2023, and our successful Doctor of Ministry—with its high 87% completion rate—is 90% online. Hybrid and online options are also available in the Master of Religious Leadership and the Master of Religion and Public Life programs. Plus, Candler’s Teaching Parish program allows student pastors to earn contextual education

credit as they serve their churches. We are excited that these flexible learning formats make a first-rate Candler education possible for even more people who are called to ministry.

Alleviating student debt through generous financial aid is a top priority for Candler. In 2021-2022, we awarded \$7.3 million in scholarship support, with 100% of MDiv students receiving aid. All MDiv students who are certified candidates for ordained ministry in the UMC receive full-tuition scholarships, and all MDiv, MTS, MRL, and ThM students receive a scholarship covering at least 50% of tuition. MDiv students also complete a financial literacy program to strengthen their financial and budgeting skills and reduce debt.

Candler was recently honored as one of 16 theological schools to receive a “Pathways to Tomorrow” grant from Lilly Endowment Inc. The \$5 million grant will support Candler in establishing a set of initiatives to create an interconnected continuum of offerings for the education of pastoral leaders. This will position Candler as a hub of theological learning with multiple entry points, including The Candler Foundry, our innovative program to make theological education accessible to the public, the United Methodist Course of Study, undergraduate classes, and a new venture, La Mesa Academy for Theological Studies. Set to launch in Fall 2023, La Mesa Academy will offer diplomas in pastoral leadership via a two-year hybrid program with courses in Spanish and English. An optional third year of study will be offered to those aspiring to continue to a graduate professional degree at Candler.

This year, we welcomed the Rev. Dr. Brett Opalinski as Assistant Dean of Methodist Studies, a position made available by the retirement of the Rev. Dr. Anne Burkholder. Brett is an elder in full connection in the Florida Annual Conference and most recently served for nine years as senior pastor of Christ Church United Methodist in Ft. Lauderdale. In addition to other pastoral appointments, he has held a variety of leadership roles in the Florida Conference, including chair of the Board of Ordained Ministry. He is deeply committed to working with students in discerning their call, spiritual formation, and guiding them through the commissioning and ordination process.

Candler’s ability to fulfill our mission to provide the church with the faithful and creative leaders it needs depends upon your prayers, partnership, and support. Thank you for the countless ways you advance this essential ministry in the life of our denomination. We invite you to visit us online at candler.emory.edu.

—Jan Love

*Mary Lee Hardin Willard Dean and Professor of Christianity and World Politics
Candler School of Theology, Emory University*

Drew University Theological School

Drew educates and mentors pastors, preachers, deacons, activists, teachers, thought leaders, and change agents. In Fall 2022 Drew welcomed 77 new students, and as of February 2023 Drew has a total enrollment of 408 students. Many Drew students are just beginning their ministry, while others come to graduate theological education with substantial ministry experience. The latter reflects a growing trend among all theological schools in the United States and Canada. During 2022, Drew classes met on campus in Madison, New Jersey, but also some classes met exclusively online, while other met in hybrid fashion, i.e., partially online, partially in-person. This was also the case with chapel worship. This reflects both our ongoing emergence from the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown, but also Drew leaning into what it means to be a global school with a global student population. With 35% of students coming from 28 different countries Drew Theological School is truly global and diverse in theology, vocations, age, as well as racial, ethnic, national, and international identities. Drew's interdisciplinary degree programs foster out-of-the-box thinking, provide real-world apprenticeships, promotes adaptive leadership skills, and encourages innovation through a team-taught core courses reflecting the integration of the theological disciplines and practices characteristic of the life of faith. The faculty articulated shared values are infused across the teaching and learning at Drew: a commitment to anti-racism; gender and sexual-identity equality; eco-sustainability and environmental justice; and interfaith understanding and cooperation. The Theological School has seen an increase in United Methodist students. Moreover, Drew has many United Methodist Global Fellows who chose to pursue education for ministry at Drew. UMC graduates are serving in conferences across the United States as well as in our regional conferences in Greater New Jersey, Eastern Pennsylvania, and New York Annual Conference.

Edwin David Aponte, Dean

Duke University Divinity School

Duke Divinity School has been blessed to be part of the fresh work of the Holy Spirit this year and to participate in “little Pentecosts”—signs and foretastes of the hope we profess and the calling we follow.

The school has continued in its commitment to form ministers of the gospel who will seek God's justice and mercy. Our faculty have been leaders in the Duke Climate Initiative participating with colleagues from the Nicholas School for the Environment in the event “Pastoral Care for Climate Change: Weaving Together Science and Theology for Justice,” at the Duke University Marine Lab. Divinity faculty have also co-taught a university course titled “Let's Talk about Climate Change,” and welcomed 30 young faith leaders from various religious traditions to understand better how to engage their faith communities in the fight for our

climate.

The Office of Black Church Studies, commemorating its 50th anniversary year, hosted “Justice Ministry Reimagined: Reentry Simulation” for pastors, students, and lay leaders to learn more about how to support people reentering the community after incarceration. We launched the Prison Engagement Initiative with the Kenan Institute for Ethics. Divinity faculty taught a “Trauma Engaged Duke” seminar and led the team Developing Best Practices for Trauma-Informed Teaching and Learning. These programs and events complement the ongoing work of field education and ministerial formation that puts our students in contexts ranging from rural churches to hospital chaplaincy to farm ministry, and more.

We welcomed 226 entering students from 35 different states and eight other countries. The Master of Divinity program gained 88 residential students and 42 in the hybrid program. The Master of Arts in Christian Practice enrolled 13 new students; the Doctor of Ministry, 28; Master of Theology, six; Master of Theological Studies, 22; the Doctor of Theology welcomed six residential, and one special student has enrolled. The Certificate in Theology and Health Care welcomed four residential students and 16 in the hybrid program. Across all degree programs, 30 percent of the incoming class identified as a race or ethnicity other than white. Black students made up 18 percent of all students; Latinx students, six percent; Asian students, five percent; and American Indian students, one percent. Fifty-seven percent of students in the incoming class are female. DDS continued to build on its rich tradition of ecumenical engagement, with Dean Colón-Emeric participating in the Methodist-Roman Catholic International Commission Dialogue meeting with Pope Francis at the Vatican. Student Eliza Love, M.Div.’23, was awarded the \$10,000 Bossey Institute scholarship from the United Methodist Church Council of Bishops to attend the World Council of Church Ecumenical Institute.

Three new associate deans have accepted appointments: Daniel Castelo, William Kellon Quick Professor of Theology and Methodist Studies, as associate dean for Academic Formation; Jung Choi, a consulting professor and director of the Asian House of Studies, as associate dean for Global and Intercultural Formation; and Sangwoo Kim, a consulting professor and senior director of the Methodist House of Studies and the Wesleyan Formation Initiatives, as associate dean for Vocational Formation. Linda Coley has also joined as the executive director for the Ormond Center.

Several new programs demonstrate Duke’s sustained commitment to connecting with churches and ministers. The Ormond Center launched the Community Craft Collaborative to create resources for equipping lay and congregational leaders. The Certificate in Conflict Transformation and Reconciliation, facilitated by

leading scholars and practitioners in the fields of conflict transformation and reconciliation, provides a learning opportunity for pastors and other church leaders seeking theological and practical skills to foster reconciliation in their congregations and surrounding communities. We celebrate the expansion of our connection to UMC colleges through a partnership with Wesleyan College in Macon, Ga., to enable qualified undergraduates to take courses through the Duke Accelerated Pastoral Formation Program.

Convocation & Pastors' School returned to an in-person format for the first time since 2019 with the theme, *Creativity & Courage: From Trauma to Tough Hope*. Professional dancers, visual artists, musicians, and scholars guided participants in facing brokenness and sin honestly, as they offered glimpses of "the beauty of holiness." NY Times Best Selling Author & Associate Professor of Christian History, Kate Bowler kicked off the event with a live taping of her *Everything Happens* podcast with over 1000 registered participants.

Duke Divinity School continues to be grateful for our ongoing participation in The United Methodist Church and partnership with this annual conference. 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

Gammon Theological Seminary

Gammon Theological Seminary is the Interdenominational Theological Center's United Methodist constituent member in Atlanta, Georgia. The Interdenominational Theological Center (ITC) is a Christian Africentric ecumenical consortium of seminaries and fellowships that educate students to commit to practicing justice and peace through a liberating and transforming spirituality to become leaders in the church and local/global communities. Gammon was founded in 1883, bearing the name of the Rev. Elijah H. Gammon, a generous clergyman, businessman, and philanthropist. Rev. Elijah H. Gammon invested and endowed the founding of Gammon Seminary in partnership with Bishop Henry Warren and the Freedman's Aid Society. Gammon has educated Black Clergy for almost 140 years, with graduates serving every level of the church, including Bishops, Superintendents, General church leaders, Conference staff, and Clergy in every jurisdiction. Today, Gammon Theological Seminary is the only predominately Black Seminary of the thirteen approved United Methodist-related Theological Institutions. The ITC's accreditation is with the Association of Theological Schools and the Southern Association of Colleges

and Schools Commission on Colleges. Gammon/ITC offers the following degree programs: the Master of Divinity, the Master of Arts in Religion and Education, and the Doctor of Ministry. The support given to The United Methodist Ministerial Education Fund by United Methodist Conferences continues to enable Gammon students to be grounded in the Wesleyan tradition of theological education. Our 17th President/Dean, Rev. Dr. Candace M Lewis, is the first woman to lead the Seminary in our 139-year history. Dr. Lewis and the Gammon staff team continue to lead innovatively in chartering a “Brand New Day” for Gammon’s recruitment, retention, research and resources, fund development, and scholarship endowments in her first two years of service.

Our new initiatives and celebrations this year, 2022-2023, at Gammon include:

- We established The Rev. Walter H. McKelvey Endowed Scholarship Fund with the South Carolina Methodist Foundation. Dr. McKelvey was Gammon’s 14th President/Dean, serving from 1997-2010. Under Dr. McKelvey’s leadership, Gammon’s enrollment and graduation rate increased, and buildings were renovated. Our initial goal is to raise \$100,000.00. We have already received a matching fund pledge of \$50,000.00 from Dr. Loretta F. McKelvey (wife of the late Rev. McKelvey).
- Spring 2023 – International Student travel. Gammon students traveled to Belfast, Ireland, with the North Georgia Conference as a part of the Rethinking Conflict experience. Gammon students also traveled to Johannesburg, South Africa, on the Doctor of Ministry Immersion experience.
- Commissioned two National Research Projects, the first one related to the Impact of COVID on UMC BIPOC Clergy in partnership with Wespeth Benefits and Investments – CFWI – Clergy Financial Wellbeing Initiative. The second research project is “Perspectives” The Future of Blacks in the United Methodist Church—public release of research reports of the Gammon Research Institute scheduled for Summer 2023.

The greatest challenge facing Gammon Seminary is the rising cost of theological education and the significant debt our students incur as they answer their call to full-time ministry. Therefore, Gammon is committed to raising a million dollars in the next two years to offer full-tuition scholarships to students called and committed to full-time ministry in the United Methodist Church. We are grateful to this Annual Conference for your support of theological education and your commitment to ensuring pastoral leadership is theologically trained to lead us forward in the Wesleyan tradition.

Respectfully submitted, Rev. Dr. Candace M. Lewis, President-Dean

Methodist Theological School in Ohio

Thank you for this opportunity to bring you news from MTSO.

International Institute on Theology and Disability Meets at MTSO

MTSO was pleased to host the four-day international Institute on Theology and Disability in June 2022. Founded in 2010, the institute celebrates, explores and investigates the ways that disability impacts many dimensions of religious life; theology and practice mutually inform and support one another; and diverse perspectives enrich and inform theological formation and religious practice.

MTSO and WomanPreach! Share \$1 million Lilly Endowment Grant

Lilly Endowment Inc. has awarded MTSO a grant of \$1 million to support prophetic preaching through a partnership with WomanPreach! Inc. The grant period extends from Nov. 1, 2022, to Dec. 31, 2027. WomanPreach! was founded 12 years ago by MTSO Dean and Vice President for Academic Affairs Rev. Valerie Bridgeman, Ph.D., who serves as the organization's CEO. It provides practical training and nurturing community spaces that empower preachers across the country. Begun as a way to train women, WomanPreach! has since grown to include programming for people of all genders. Its numerous programs include the biennial Jarena Lee Preaching Academy, a week-long intensive academy that equips women of the African Diaspora to speak in their own prophetic voices; Sophie's Table: A Conversation Among Siblings, an all-genders program that amplifies voices of people of marginalized genders, women and children; and Chloe's Circle, which gathers women from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds to sharpen preaching that reflects a commitment to justice based in God's call through Jesus.

Mount Union Joins MTSO to Offer 3+2 Program

The University of Mount Union and MTSO have begun offering incoming college students a 3+2 program, leading to a Master of Arts in Social Justice degree in five years of study rather than the six years typically required. Students will begin the program at the University of Mount Union in Alliance, Ohio. After completing the program's requirements at Mount Union, they are eligible to begin two years of study at MTSO, where they will finish requirements for a Mount Union bachelor's degree and earn an MA in Social Justice degree from MTSO. Students in the 3+2 program are eligible for MTSO's exceptional scholarships.

Respectfully submitted,
Danny Russell, Director of Communications

St. Paul School of Theology

Educating tomorrow's leaders by offering on-campus, online, and hybrid learning courses at a FLEXible schedule, Saint Paul School of Theology is a seminary serving a diverse community committed to the formation of people for innovative, creative ministry through rigorous academic life. Grounded in the academic study of faith and ministry, theology is practiced in a traditional classroom and in remote spaces. Our contextual curriculum features Ministry Collaboration Groups, Practicums, Spiritual Formation Retreats, and Seminars. Students learn from dedicated faculty, experienced pastors, and community leaders about best ministry practices leaving our graduates with the tools and first-hand experience necessary to meet the needs of a changing world.

We continue to implement the changes the last few years have integrated into our daily lives. Our weekly chapel service utilizes a hybrid format, where participants may join in-person or online, allowing staff and students to come together as one institution where all are invited to create a sacred atmosphere from wherever they are. In addition, Saint Paul offers weekly Spiritual Formation allowing students to engage in spiritual practices led by Rev. Jen Logsdon-Kellogg. Some practices will take us outdoors or to other sacred spaces, and others will have us connect with community leaders.

Saint Paul welcomed over 30 new students for the 2022-2023 academic year. Enrollment remained solid for the Master of Divinity (MDiv) degree program with promising growth on our Oklahoma campus. With COVID-19 restrictions lifted yet monitored, prospective students returned to in-person visits on both campuses, experiencing community meals, worship, and the newly implemented "Hammock ministry" on the Oklahoma campus. The Admissions team continues to expand travel to meet new students, including the Carolinas, Washington, D.C., and various parts of Texas.

This year we have focused on strengthening the Master of Arts in Christian Ministry by creating two specializations: Women, Society, and Church; and Social Justice and Advocacy. In each case, the student takes 22 hours of MACM required courses, and then the remaining 12 hours of the degree are comprised of courses focusing upon the specialization. The two existing specializations, Prophetic Witness and Service; and Deacon Ministries, will continue to be offered as well. The Women, Society, and Church Studies specialization is also available in the MDiv program, as is a specialization in Wesleyan Studies.

Saint Paul Board of Trustees changed leadership this year as long-time faculty and board member Rev. Dr. Tex Sample concluded his term as chair of the Board. Dr. Amy Hogan, Professor of Education and Dean of the School of Education at Ottawa University, has succeeded him as chair. Dr. Hogan possesses a deep reservoir of experience in teaching, research, and accreditation. In response to

President Neil Blair's announcement that he will retire on December 31, 2023, Dr. Hogan appointed a search committee composed of faculty, staff, students, and trustees charged with identifying Saint Paul's next president. The search committee is currently conferring with Saint Paul's constituent groups to prepare the position prospectus that will describe Saint Paul's needs and aspirations to candidates.

In September 2022, Saint Paul School of Theology hosted a review team from the Higher Learning Commission (HLC), one of Saint Paul's primary accreditation agencies, as part of the Seminary's regular reaffirmation cycle. On November 18, 2022, the Higher Learning Commission notified Saint Paul that the Commission "continued the accreditation of Saint Paul School of Theology with the next Reaffirmation of Accreditation in 2028-2029." The Seminary's Board of Trustees also devoted considerable time to improving its governance capacity. For example, in April 2022, trustees invested a significant portion of their meeting in a facilitated Emotional Intelligence and Trust-Building workshop. The workshop was led by Gail Parker, a noted management consultant who has worked with clients such as KPMG, Goldman Sachs, and Disney, among many others. In October 2022, former executive director of the Association of Theological Schools, Dan Aleshire, offered an overview of demographic and enrollment trends in the nation's seminaries, focusing on how those trends affect institutions' diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives. As these activities suggest, the Board remains deeply committed to enhancing its capabilities to guide Saint Paul effectively and knowledgeably.

Saint Paul School of Theology is blessed to be your partner in ministry and help those seeking to discover more and answer the call. We are grateful for your support of our students and our seminary. May we continue to live into the call of Jesus Christ to be faithful witnesses for generations to come.

United Theological Seminary

United Theological Seminary celebrated rising enrollment in the 2022-2023 academic year. In the previous year, 464 students were enrolled at United; in 2022-2023, the seminary is serving 541 students, a 17% increase. A diverse community of many denominations, races and nationalities, United welcomed students from 36 states, 21 countries, and 43 denominations, with 42% of students identifying as United Methodist.* The Seminary prepared 103 Course of Study students** and served 10 students through the Hispanic Christian Academy, a 3-year online course of ministry program for Hispanic/Latino lay pastors and leaders serving United Methodist congregations.

Houses of Study

In large part, this enrollment growth is a result of the seminary's House of Study

initiative, which is supported by a \$1 million grant from Lilly Endowment Inc.'s Pathways for Tomorrow Initiative. As of 2022-2023, the Seminary has established five Houses of Study that are equipping master's students for the unique ministry needs of the communities, movements and denominations in which they serve:

- Fresh Expressions, directed by Dr. Michael Beck;
- Full Gospel Baptist Fellowship, directed by Bishop Lisa Weah;
- Global Methodist, directed by Rev. Gregory Stover;
- Global Pentecostal, directed by Dr. Cheryl Bridges Johns;
- and Hispanic, directed by Dr. Jorge Ochoa.

The largest of these communities is the Hispanic House of Study (Casa de Estudios Hispana), which is meeting a need for Hispanic/Latino pastors and church leaders ready to pursue a Master of Divinity in their native language. Nearly 50 students from across the United States and Latin America, including students from Mexico, Cuba, Columbia, and Peru, started in the online program in the 2022-2023 academic year.

As United continues to expand its offerings to support church leaders, it is preparing to launch three new Houses of Study in the 2023-2024 academic year: a Korean House of Study, taught 100% in Korean for Korean-speaking students, led by Dr. Seok Jae Jeon; an African Methodist Episcopal Zion House of Study led by Bishop Eric Leake; and a Global Lutheran House of Study led by Dr. Richard Blue, Dr. Tom Thorstad and Dr. Dan Landin.

Doctor of Ministry

The Seminary is also seeing growth in its Doctor of Ministry program. In 2022-2023, the Doctor of Ministry program has grown to 250 students, an increase of 32% over the past five years.* Doctoral students at United are actively engaged in ministry and seeking to become more effective leaders for the Church through a Doctor of Ministry degree. Students identify a need within their congregations or communities and, with the support of a peer group, mentor and United faculty, they develop a model of ministry to address the challenge.

Bishop Bruce Ough Innovation Center

Launched in Fall 2021, the Bishop Bruce Ough Innovation Center, directed by Rev. Sue Nilson Kibbey, is connecting with pastors, ministry leaders and congregational members hungry to bring God's renewal to their faith communities. In the past year alone, the Innovation Center has engaged more than 1,000 participants through more than 40 live webinars, training events and courses. The Innovation Center has also partnered with The Center for Spiritual Formation, a connectional ministry of the Susquehanna Conference of The United Methodist Church, to offer a two-year online training course for those

called to the ministry of spiritual direction. In addition, the Center is partnering with two United Methodist conferences to provide its Breakthrough Prayer Initiative training for all clergy in these conferences. Through these and other new opportunities, the Innovation Center seeks to set the stage for the increased vitality of leaders and congregations everywhere.

Dr. Kent Millard
President

** Student data represent 2022-2023 headcount enrollment, as of March 1, 2023. Denominational figures represent those who responded.*

*** Course of Study figures represent the most recent four terms.*

Wesley Theological Seminary

Wesley Theological Seminary continues to grow and thrive through research, innovation, and equipping Christian leaders for real-life ministries.

Course offerings and support that respond to students' needs

Get the education you need in the format you want.

- Pursue your call in a dynamic community within the corridors of power in Washington, DC, or earn a degree through flexible hybrid and online options from your home! Learn more: wesleyseminary.edu/study/
- Our **FlexMA** is a 36-hour flexible M.A. degree for those preparing for bi-vocational or specialized ministries. Learn more: www.wesleyseminary.edu/flexma/
- **Wesley offers specializations** in African American church leadership, public theology, military chaplaincy, and certifications in Christian studies, children and youth ministry and advocacy, and health ministry. Learn more: wesleyseminary.edu

Wesley provides \$2 million annually in scholarships, including full-tuition scholarships for master's applicants recommended by alums, campus ministers, or Christian service ministries; Next Call in Ministry scholarships for students working 10+ years in a non-ministry setting; and Generación Latinx Scholarships for emerging Latinx leaders in ministry.

Wesley's Doctor of Ministry programs includes relevant tracks such as Church Leadership Excellence, Soul Care, Global Church Leadership, Howard Thurman, and the ground-breaking track on Trauma, Moral Injury, and Christian Life. Journey with a cohort of leaders with online classes and hybrid week-long intensive sessions. Learn more: wesleyseminary.edu/doctorofministry/

Research projects support congregational thriving and envision future ministry.

Over \$11 million in Grants from Lilly Endowment Inc. undergird Wesley's research into and support of congregational thriving and innovation.

- In collaboration with Southern Methodist University Perkins School of Theology, Wesley Theological Seminary is developing professional courses and certificates for pastors.
- The Wesley Innovation Hub brings together diverse congregational cohorts to learn and practice ministry innovations that engage young adults for social change. Learn more: wesleyseminary.edu/wesley-innovation-hub/
- The Wesley Ministry Innovation Fellowship is a one-year, cohort-based experience with community formation, spiritual direction, graduate-level courses, and hands-on experience leading innovation. Each innovator earns a stipend and four graduate academic course credits. Learn more: wesleyseminary.edu/wesley-innovation-hub/design-fellows/
- The Lewis Center for Church Leadership's Religious Workforce Project offers multi-denominational research into current and future needs. Visit religiousworkforce.com/

Enrich your congregational outreach and explore new dimensions of ministry.

The Lewis Center for Church Leadership conducts leading-edge research for the local church. Find the Leading Ideas e-newsletter and Leading Ideas podcast, a weekly resource for over 20,000 leaders, at churchleadership.com.

The Community Engagement Institute embraces a vibrant vision to be the premier center for churches and faith-based organization engaging their communities.

- The online Health Minister Certificate Program prepares congregations for public health work in their parishes. Contact: Dr. Tom Pruski, tpruski@wesleyseminary.edu.
- The Center for Public Theology creates spaces for civil dialogue at the intersection of religion and politics. Visit wesleyseminary.edu/ice/programs/public-theology/.

The Henry Luce III Center for the Arts and Religion explores the intersection of the arts and theology. Visit luceartsandreligion.org.

Stay connected

Contact us at (202) 885-8659 or admissions@wesleyseminary.edu. Follow us on social media— Facebook [wesleyseminary](https://www.facebook.com/wesleyseminary), Instagram [@wesleyseminary](https://www.instagram.com/wesleyseminary), LinkedIn [wesleytheologicalseminary](https://www.linkedin.com/company/wesleytheologicalseminary), and Twitter [@WesTheoSem](https://twitter.com/WesTheoSem).

The Rev. Dr. David McAllister-Wilson
President, Wesley Theological Seminary

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Errors are inevitable in any publication. If they are not corrected, it is probable they will be reprinted in subsequent editions of the Conference JOURNAL.

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2023 Annual Conference Missional Offerings

This year’s missional offering will go to support new church starts and United Methodist places of worship.

Use your smartphone’s camera to scan the QR code below or use this link, www.awfumc.org/2023-missional-offering, to make your donation online. If you wish to donate by check, please make checks payable to Alabama-West Florida Conference UMC with the offering designation noted in the memo blank. Please mail checks to Alabama-West Florida Conference UMC, attn: AC 2023 Offering, 4719 Woodmere Blvd, Montgomery, AL 36106. Checks will also be accepted in person at Annual Conference.

