



the 2016   
Connection

The Alabama-West Florida  
United Methodist Conference

January 20, 2016

Dear Sisters and Brothers:

Our collective ministry in the Alabama-West Florida Conference provides a beautiful example of our calling and service in the name of Jesus, and offers fruit expressing the compassion, kindness, meekness, and patience identified by the Apostle Paul in his letter to the church at Colossae. It was in this same letter that Paul confessed his desire to complete whatever may be lacking in the life of the church and for this reason he “became a minister according to the divine office” which was given to him for us – “to make the word of God fully known” (Col 1:24-25).

We truly serve Kingdom of the Heavens when we immerse ourselves into the means of grace and offer to others the means of mercy. These acts of mercy are reflected in the covenant set within the framework of our missional budget and placed before us by our sisters and brothers who have offered each area of our work to the Annual Conference as an expression of our faithfulness, like Paul, to affirm our personal declaration to “become a minister according to the divine office...to make the word of God fully known.” For this reason, I give thanks for every congregation who discovers they can be missional and invitational regardless of their location or size. Our faithfulness to our divine office is mirrored in the faithfulness to embrace the financial offerings put forth by our colleagues.

Once again, I want to offer a word of Thanksgiving to each church for their faithful support of these ministries. Every congregation can now use our conference “calculator” to identify every ministry and its purpose for being embraced as a part of our Annual Conference budget. Please use this calculator as a means of informing the members of your church as to the nature of our missional commitments. The more they know and understand the specific areas of our service, the more likely they will be to speak with confidence the many ways we serve in connection with other United Methodist Churches within our district and conference.

This year’s budget is the lowest budget recorded in 16 years and yet, we have offered more ministry and engaged more people than ever. This simply means we have been more intentional and strategic in the use of our offerings as we seek to serve Christ in the world.

Our “2016 Connection” is distributed and offered as a tool which can help enlighten our understanding of the ministries embraced by our Alabama-West Florida Conference. I pray for our clergy and congregations to be fruitful in our ministry, and I need your prayers as I continue to serve the Church. My wife, Janet and I, make personal contributions to the ministries of the Alabama-West Florida Conference in addition to our weekly offering to our local church where Janet has placed her membership. We do this to model our own covenant.

Again, it was the Apostle Paul, who reminded the Colossians (Col 1:29), “This is why we toil (work and labor), striving with all the energy which He mightily inspires within me.” There is no greater reward and fulfillment to our ministry – this is why we labor, this is why we toil, this is why we work – to make “to make the word of God fully known.”

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul Leeland". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the name.

Bishop Paul Lee Leeland  
Resident Bishop, Alabama - West Florida Conference  
The United Methodist Church

# 2016 Covenant Ministries

**Apportionments, your church's "fair share" support for United Methodist missions and ministries, should not be a mystery to you.**

Read here how you are part of a worldwide service to Christ through The Connection!

- **Not one local church has the combined resources of our United Methodist connection.** Our institutions, colleges, hospitals, seminaries, missionaries and ministers throughout the state, nation and world are efficient channels through which your missional dollars provide effective ministry.

- **Stewardship is a spiritual matter.** Through our missional giving, we give to God, trusting His servants to use our gifts wisely. The Alabama-West Florida Conference is a good steward of your offerings. You are asked to continue your good stewardship.

# Benevolence Funds

The United Methodist *Book of Discipline* calls this the “First benevolent responsibility of the church.” (¶ 247.14)

## WORLD SERVICE

**\$1,715,103**

**World Service:** This is the heart of our denomination’s ministry, underwriting Christian mission around the world. It empowers our evangelism work, stimulates church growth, and supports local church programs.

## CONFERENCE MISSIONAL GIVING FUND **\$7,452,900**

**Conference Benevolence:** Our Annual Conference supports a myriad of ministries, missions, programs and administrative tasks. These items in the Conference Budget are combined and funded based upon the approved budget. “Prior claims” items are paid first. The remaining funds are distributed based on the percentage each line is of the combined total budget. (For details on any of the following, contact your district superintendent or the Conference Resource Center). This fund for 2016 includes:

### 1. Connectional Ministries/Communications

**\$674,100**

The Connectional Ministries and Communications Staff serve the districts and local churches by providing resources and leadership to help grow more vital, fruitful, healthier congregations. Your connectional giving supports salaries, benefits and expenses for six (6) program staff and two (2) support staff. Your giving also supports general office expenses including telephone, printing, mailing, computer and miscellaneous expenses.

### 2. Mission and Ministry Fund

**\$536,000**

This fund supports eight (8) of the Boards related to the Conference CORE Team. They are Discipleship, Advocacy and Ethnic Ministries, Higher Education and Campus Ministry, Laity, Church and Society, Global Ministries, Town and Country, and Hispanic Ministries. The Mission and Ministry Fund also provides support for agencies related to the annual conference and new and emerging ministries. Those currently being supported are Dumas Wesley Community Center, Mobile Inner City Metro Ministries, Mary Ellen’s Hearth (Nellie Burge Community Center), The Ark (formerly Noah’s Ark), Alabama Rural Ministries, Pensacola United Methodist Community Ministries, Milk and Honey, and CIRCLES of Transformation. Support for these boards and agencies/ministries is reviewed annually.

### 3. District Superintendent’s Fund

**\$1,011,850**

Provides salary and travel expenses for our eight district superintendents.

### 4. Conference Claimants Fund

**\$800,000**

This fund provides the church’s pension contributions for full-time and part-time pastors for eligible clergy for whom the Alabama West Florida Conference is the responsible entity as approved by the annual conference. It also provides: disability coverage for full time pastors, death benefits for full-time pastors, spouses, dependent children, and retired pastors and their spouses.

### 5. Health Insurance Fund

**\$1,300,000**

As a self-insured conference, this fund pays the health care claims for eligible clergy for whom the Alabama West Florida Conference is the responsible entity as approved by the annual conference. This includes district superintendents, conference office staff, new church start clergy and Wesley Foundation directors. Premium reduction supplements for retired clergy, spouses and surviving spouses are also funded through this fund. Clergy fully pay the premium equivalent for dependent coverage.

- 6. Equitable Compensation Fund** **\$25,000** \_\_\_\_\_  
 Several small or new churches cannot bear the total expense of a full-time pastor. Under certain guidelines, the Annual Conference temporarily subsidizes a portion of the minister's salary with this fund.
- 7. Conference Administration Fund** **\$664,900** \_\_\_\_\_  
 This fund finances the costs of Annual Conference sessions, printing the Brochure of Reports, and Journal, and the work of the Fiscal Office. It also includes: Moving Fund for Retirees; Board of Ordained Ministry; the Depository of Archives and Historical Materials; and support of the Area Episcopal Office.
- 8. Congregational Development** **\$388,700** \_\_\_\_\_  
 The Congregational Development Fund supports new church development and congregational revitalization. New church pastor's salaries are supported from this fund as well as grants to help new churches with initial ministry needs. In addition, this fund makes possible ministry consultations to existing congregations, Natural Church Development, and congregational revitalization training. Also, revitalization grants to help congregations become more vital and fruitful are available through the Congregational Development Fund.
- 9. Board of Pension & Health Benefits** **\$32,000** \_\_\_\_\_  
 This fund maintains conference-owned homes, including insurance and mortgage payments on homes purchased in the past, for the use of retired pastors or their surviving spouses who are in need. Occupants pay a small amount for rent and a small amount of the maintenance costs to assist this fund. This fund also finances the operation of the Conference Board of Pension and Health Benefit.
- 10. Blue Lake Operations Supplement** **\$191,650** \_\_\_\_\_  
 Use of our extensive facilities at Blue Lake Camp would be too expensive for many without this fund.
- 11. Blue Lake Capital- Improvement/Debt Retirement** **\$97,800** \_\_\_\_\_
- 12. Huntingdon/Birmingham-Southern Colleges** **\$620,850** \_\_\_\_\_  
 This fund is divided between our two United Methodist Colleges by a mutually agreed upon formula between our Alabama-West Florida Conference and the North Alabama Conference. The North Alabama Conference has a similar fund and together these funds affirm our support for faith based liberal arts education.
- 13. Capital and Operating Fund (Trustees)** **\$193,800** \_\_\_\_\_  
 The Conference Trustees administer this fund for property and liability insurance, maintenance of the Conference Episcopal residence, providing conference office space and more.
- 14. Student Aid, Huntingdon** **\$246,450** \_\_\_\_\_  
 This fund provides scholarships for United Methodist students at Huntingdon College
- 15. Wesley Foundations & Campus Ministry** **\$530,350** \_\_\_\_\_  
 The programs and staff salaries for our nine campus ministries depend on this fund. Campus ministry is a key to developing future leaders of our church and our society.
- 16. Homes for the Aging** **\$64,450** \_\_\_\_\_  
 For God's older children who cannot afford to pay the full cost at our homes for the aging in this Conference.
- 17. Academy for Congregational Excellence** **\$75,000** \_\_\_\_\_  
 The Academy for Congregational Excellence is focused on developing the most effective clergy and lay leaders, knowing that effective leadership leads to vital, fruitful congregations. Some of the initial course offerings are Primary Leadership Skills, Preaching Excellence, Building an Effective Leadership Team and Missional Church.

# Southeastern Jurisdictional Funds

- **Southeastern Jurisdictional Admin Fund** \$58,380 \_\_\_\_\_

Just as with General Conference, every four years our lay and clergy delegates attend the Southeastern Jurisdictional (SEJ) Conference. There they decide on programs, emphases, and missions for our region that are funded under this budget item.

## General Church Funds

We join with United Methodists across the country to support these missions.

1. **Africa University Fund** \$52,582 \_\_\_\_\_

The UMC is growing in Africa! Africa University empowers Africans to minister in Africa with these funds. Africa University offers courses in agriculture, management, theology, and education.

2. **Black College Fund** \$234,890 \_\_\_\_\_

We help support the education of future African-American leaders through our 10 historically Black United Methodist related colleges and one medical school.

3. **General Administration Funds** \$207,072 \_\_\_\_\_

This is our share of the cost for General Conference, the quadrennial, worldwide “congress” of Methodism.

4. **Episcopal Fund** \$552,882 \_\_\_\_\_

This fund supports all effective bishops and the Episcopal offices, including salaries, all office and travel expenses, plus pensions of retired bishops or their surviving spouses and minor children

5. **Interdenominational Cooperation Fund** \$46,073 \_\_\_\_\_

We are committed to a dialogue and cooperation with other denominations through this fund. It pays United Methodist expenses and budget supported items.

6. **Ministerial Education Fund** \$588,829 \_\_\_\_\_

One-fourth of this fund directly benefits ministerial students from our conference. The remainder supports both scholarships and operational expenses at United Methodist schools of theology. With the cost of postgraduate education so high, this fund is an essential help.

## District Askings

Your District CORE team directs these funds

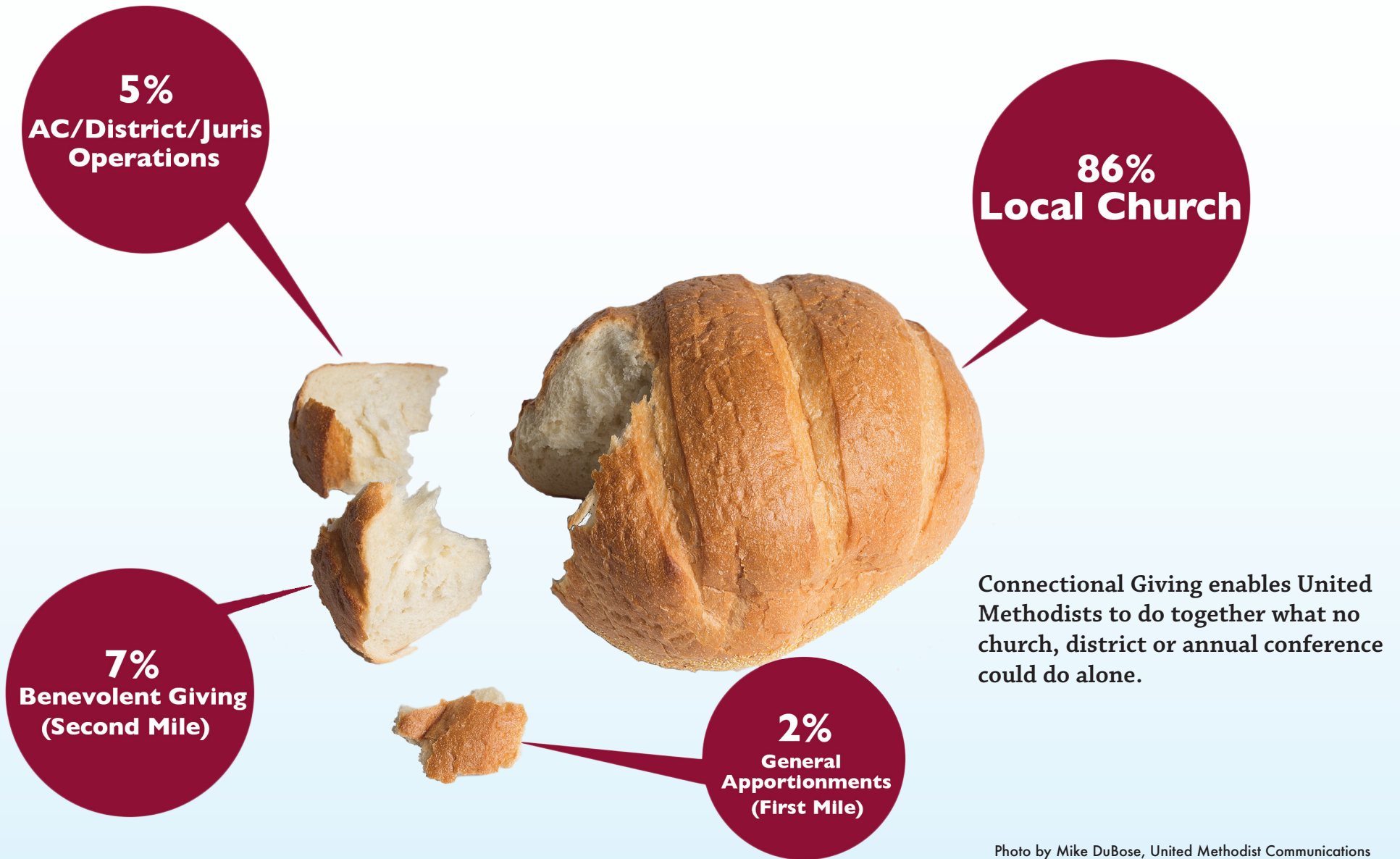
1. **District Administration Fund** \$ \_\_\_\_\_

2. **District Missions Fund** \$ \_\_\_\_\_

3. **Other District Outreach Fund** \$ \_\_\_\_\_

If authorized by your district conference.

# Where Your Dollar Goes In A Typical United Methodist Church



Connectional Giving enables United Methodists to do together what no church, district or annual conference could do alone.

Photo by Mike DuBose, United Methodist Communications

All of this—and so much more—is possible because when we join The United Methodist Church, we promise faithfully to participate in its ministries through our prayers, presence, gifts, service and witness. Paying ALL of our apportionments at 100 percent, and giving faithfully to the six church-wide Special Sundays, we become a part of something big and accomplish wonderful things in Jesus' name!

When you give through your local church or annual conference your gifts expands your church's ministry globally.

# How Your 2016 Fair Share Is Determined

Our **MISSION** is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. Our **VISION** is to cultivate the most fruitful leaders and congregations. Our **PRIORITIES**-

- Develop lay and clergy transformational leaders.
- Plant new faith communities/congregations.
- Cultivate and grow more vital, healthier congregations.
- Engage in ministry with the poor.



The method our Conference uses to determine your church's fair share of missional giving is no secret!

- The overall budget for, the district, conference, jurisdiction and general church ministries, is set by the local church representatives at each level. Those budgets are "apportioned" or divided among all churches using an equitable formula. The formula, set by vote of the Annual Conference, is a ratio of current expense items and the local church membership (as reported in your 2014 Local Church Report to the Annual Conference). The formula excludes amounts paid on principle/interest for capital indebtedness, capital building and improvements, apportionments, direct billing for benefits, and all special giving, such as Advance Specials and Special Sunday offerings. **In other words, it includes only lines 48 through 57 on the Annual Report.**
- Your local church membership is then compared to the overall conference membership (139,463), and the mathematical ratio is expressed as a decimal figure. Your local church financial strength (measured by lines 48 through 57) is then compared to the total of all churches for the conference's financial strength (\$94,865,048), and the mathematical ratio is expressed as a decimal figure. The financial strength of your church is then given a weight of 75%, and membership a weight of 25%, to calculate your total apportionment. Use the following formula for your church.

1. **Local Church Membership / 139,463 = Ratio of Conference membership (Membership decimal: 25%)**
2. **Local Church Financial Strength / \$94,856,048 = Ratio of Conference financial strength (Financial decimal). Financial decimal x 3 = Local church financial strength decimal (Financial decimal: 75%)**
3. **Membership decimal + Financial Strength decimal = Local Church Baseline.**
4. **Local Church Baseline / 4 = Conference decimal.**
5. **Conference decimal x Approved Conference Budget Items = Local Church Fair Share of Conference Missional Giving.**

Need more details?

Call the Conference Fiscal Office at 1-888-873-3127 or [fiscaloffice@awfumc.org](mailto:fiscaloffice@awfumc.org)



## **How To Promote Our Connectional Ministry**

- **Share this brochure with local church officers.** In preparation for charge conference, you may wish to fill in the blanks at the right margins with your church's fair share of the budgeted amounts.
- **Use other materials with this brochure.** The handbooks, "Giving Beyond Ourselves, A Workbook for Pastors and Congregations" and "Sharing God's Gifts," are available from UMCom (1-888-862-3242). Other informational materials are available from Cokesbury (1-800-679-1789).
- **Teach and Practice Biblical Stewardship!**

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*This document is produced by the AWF Conference Fiscal Office.*

*You may download and reprint multiple copies as needed.*