

Pre-Conference Reports

**for the 53rd Session of the
Oregon-Idaho Annual Conference**

LOVE
NEVER ENDS
2021 OREGON-IDAHO
ANNUAL CONFERENCE SESSION

June 21, 2021
via Zoom Videoconference

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Boards & Agencies of the Oregon-Idaho Annual Conference

The United Methodist Church

Boards & Agencies Related to Program & Mission

Abundant Health Team

Emilie Kroen, Team Leader

“I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.” – John 10:10

Working to positively impact the lives of women and children around the world, Abundant Health, The United Methodist Church’s global health initiative, reported that its goal of reaching one million children and adolescents with health interventions in thousands of communities across Asia, Africa, North America and Central America was achieved as of October 2020.

Since the launch of the Abundant Health Initiative in 2017, United Methodist Global Ministries has invested over \$26 million in 50 countries protecting children from preventable causes of death and disease. Along with our Global Ministries, these programs are supported by government, private sector, nonprofit, and faith-based organizations who are committed to realizing healthier, more productive futures for children, their families, and communities across the world.

Here is just one of the success stories: Naomi Lebbie, a young woman from Southern Province, Sierra Leone, married young and her first two babies died – one at the hands of a traditional birth attendant and the second she miscarried. It was during her third pregnancy that an outreach team from the Jaiama Health Center, a United Methodist facility, visited her village. She enrolled in its prenatal program and, when she developed complications, did not hesitate to stay there for care. A few weeks later, Naomi gave birth to a healthy son. “My dream of becoming a mother has come to reality,” she said.

“We go to places where there is no one else, where no one else wants to go,” Interim Global Health team lead and program manager for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health, Kathleen Griffith said. “When I think of the impact of Abundant Health, I think of the women like Naomi who had a successful pregnancy, people who walk three hours to get to a clinic and the mothers who work so hard to bring their children for immunizations.”

In the Oregon-Idaho Annual Conference, our 63 Abundant Health churches promote mental, physical, and spiritual health within their communities. Our Abundant Health Churches provide a wide variety of Abundant Health-related ministries. While the ways in which ministries are provided may have changed due to the pandemic, they continue and some have been added. Here’s just a small sample: BODY: food pantries, healthy cooking, community meals, backpack buddies, health screenings, immunization and flu shot clinics, community gardens, Crop Hunger walks, walking groups, volley ball games, balance, tai chi, and yoga classes...; MIND: counseling services, “Boost Your Brain & Memory” classes, virtual “Mental Health Monday” talks, GED & ESL classes, school supply distributions, art classes, addiction, suicide prevention and domestic violence classes or sermons...; and SPIRIT: worship, communion offered weekly, bible studies, vacation bible school, care teams, prayer shawls, grief, single parent, and living with chronic conditions support groups, Messy Church...

For a graphic depiction of our Conference Abundant Health Network, see the interactive map of our participating local churches at <https://www.umoi.org/abundanthealth>. You can use this map to find how others are involved and who you may wish to network with, either in your area or across the conference. Click on a church + icon. The text box opens with the Church’s name, location, the contact person’s name, and a brief summary of AH-related ministries.

The team’s focus this past year has been to expand to include gifted and passionate people throughout our Greater NW episcopal area, update and enhance our web presence by providing more resources to our

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churches, submit monthly news articles for publication in our conference newsletters, and to engage more churches in Abundant Health ministries.

Looking forward, our team will continue to invite more churches to join in these life-giving Abundant Health ministries; expand ways in which our churches can connect about various Body, Mind, and Spirit-related ministries; encourage geographically-based learning opportunities; and find more ways to celebrate together the Abundant Health ministries of our local churches. We welcome others with a passion for this ministry to join our team. If interested, contact [Emilie Kroen](#).

Board of Camp and Retreat Ministries **Karen Nelson, Interim Chair**

2020 offered Camp and Retreat Ministries many unique challenges in carrying out our mission of “creating sacred spaces of Christian hospitality and learning.” Along with the challenges came unique opportunities to be involved in local communities and offer our sites to be used in different ways.

Many of us grieved a summer without being onsite at any of our camps. Our staffs were furloughed, and our site directors were put on a 10 hour/week schedule. Some of our sites were able to reach out to the local community to provide transitional housing for a few individuals, meals made at camp and delivered to the local community’s hunger program, or isolation shelter housing. Sites also stayed in touch with previous campers by sending devotional materials/camp journals to be used at home and creating online devotions and meditations to be shared with others. Our site directors did an amazing job and sacrificed a great deal to remain a part of our ministry. We are so thankful for all that they have given in the past year.

The CRM Board began to meet on a monthly basis to stay up-to-date with our changing, and dwindling, finances. In early summer, the Board approved a \$600,000 fundraising campaign to take us through 2020 and into the first half of 2021. And I am so proud and pleased to say that we did it! Through many generous donations, some grant funding, and some Covid-19 PPP funds, more than \$600,000 was raised by the end of 2020.

Now we are busy working on re-opening our sites for summer programming in some format, following Covid safety guidelines and reducing the number of people on site at any one time. It will be good to get back to camp again! Even though there will be new procedures and ways of living together to keep everyone safe, we will gather as communities in our sacred spaces. Staff are gearing up for summer and are busy recruiting the many volunteers that will be needed to help open our camps for this summer. Extra volunteers will be necessary to prepare our sites to reopen, and to serve in a variety of capacities over the summer.

This past year, in consultation with the Board of Trustees and the Cabinet, we sold the property at McCall for \$1,000,000. The proceeds from this sale will be used to assist with short-term needs and long-term stability. The Board has set aside \$250,000 to replenish reserve funds, \$200,000 for 2021 operational needs, \$143,000 for ministry with Communities of Color, \$300,000 to match a grant application to fund a Director of Development position, and \$64,000 for future years operational needs. Approximately \$41,000 was spent on closing costs, realtor, and legal fees related to the sale.

The board has been working with our Executive Director, Todd Bartlett, on creating a land acknowledgement document for each of our sites, identifying the indigenous people to whom the land originally belonged. We have also engaged in Sacred Ground Dialogue Circles, a ten-week program to help people understand racism’s history and impact on our lives and our institutions and to begin to find ways to change the systems that create white supremacy. This work is helping us to engage in new ways to be in partnership and ministry with the BIPOC community.

I have been honored to serve as the interim chair for a year. I have been so impressed with the board’s extra efforts to be at zoom meetings, to think in new ways and stretch ourselves, and to commit to the future of Camp and Retreat Ministries.

Christian Unity and Inter-religious Relationships **Barbara Nixon and Mike Holloman, Co-coordinators**

Due in large part to the pandemic, there has been no formal activity rising from Christian Unity and Inter-religious Relationships this past year. It should be noted, however, that leadership from our conference is involved with The Common Table – an interfaith leg of Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon. Tim Overton-Harris, from the OR-ID Conference staff, is a member of The Common Table. From this network has risen a year-long, twice monthly gathering of faith communities from all around the state doing the work of reckoning with Oregon’s racism. Several United Methodist churches as well as Claremont School of Theology are participating. I am involved with this effort and would be happy to share more with anyone at any time.

We would like to have a better sense within our Conference of what sorts of activities, both ecumenical and interfaith, involve our congregations. You can share what is happening in your community with Mike Holloman on the east side of our Conference or me in the more western part of our Conference. You can also talk with either of us if you’d like to explore/brainstorm ideas for how to build more interfaith relationships in your community. If we hear of good ideas and interesting opportunities, we will pass those along through our conference newsletter.

Communications **Kristen Caldwell, Communications Manager**

As communications manager for the Oregon-Idaho Conference and a member of the Greater Northwest Area communications team, it has been a privilege and honor to work as the connecting force among clergy, laity, conference leadership, partners in ministry and the public in the last year.

The communications staff (primarily myself, with tremendous support and assistance from Sally Blanchard) has been busy trying to help elevate Bishop Elaine JW Stanovsky’s stated missional priorities of fighting COVID-19, dismantling racism, disaster response coordination, the future of The United Methodist Church and embracing the Western Jurisdiction’s “Where Love Lives” initiative. We’ve assisted with articles, website updates, social media presentations, emails and newsletters that uplift these priorities and help tell the stories of the local churches as they work with these priorities.

This department continues to live into a collaborative work model with Pacific Northwest Conference Communications Director Patrick Scriven and Alaska Conference communicator, Rev. Jim Doepken. Meeting on a weekly basis, we discuss priorities and strategies for communicating messages, particularly as they apply to the whole Area.

As the pandemic has continued to keep our churches closed to in-person worship, this team of communicators has been working to add digital resources to our various websites for all our churches to use. In addition, we have assisted with positive news coverage of the church’s cautious posture during the coronavirus pandemic, featured by [KGW News](#) and [Bishop Stanovsky’s editorial](#) in news outlets such as the Idaho Statesman.

Each communicator is a liaison to two or more of the six missional priority workgroups, participating in discussions and offering strategic advice on how to improve messaging. It has led to stories on how the pandemic, then wildfires have disproportionately devastated migrant Hispanic communities across the GNW Area. It has led to conversations and honest, raw writings about the state of LGBTQ+ inclusion in the full life of the church ministry. It has meant providing a post-Easter worship service for our churches across the GNW. As wildfires wreaked havoc on communities up and down the I-5 corridor in Oregon, the communications team helped to tell the stories of our churches responding through homeless sheltering, hygiene kit distribution, assessing the needs for long-term recovery teams and more – receiving daily updates from Dan Moseler, our interim Oregon-Idaho Conference disaster response coordinator.

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In September, we held our first-ever fully online laity session. The Board of Lay Ministry organized the event and communications worked to support the Zoom webinar, which featured countless videos from churches around the Conference telling their stories.

As the Western Jurisdiction Where Love Lives campaign unfolded, communicators from across the jurisdiction began meeting twice a month to discuss each month's theme and plan for content. We have also been discussing communication strategy around the future of the denomination and the jurisdiction.

As the lead communicator for the Oregon-Idaho Conference, my primary goal is management of [our website](#) as well as oversight management of the Brick River database, which is critical to our church records and local ministry settings. We are currently undergoing an internal audit of our website on how to make it more accessible and visually appealing (note the brand-new search function), while developing a strategy for its future use. We continue to post stories to our GNW collaborative news site [www.greaternw.org/news](#) as well as pulling them onto the OR-ID website. Additionally, this department provides content for the [www.greaternw.org](#) website. We are also available on social media, including Facebook, Twitter & Instagram.

Again, it is an honor and privilege to serve the people of the Oregon-Idaho Conference as your communicator as you work to be the hands and feet of Christ in your communities.

Congregational Development Team

This past year has been one that has presented many challenges, as we all are dealing with the Covid-19 Pandemic. We have had to pivot a lot of our work online and shrink our budget by a significant percentage. We have added a number of planters of color over the past two years and given the racial complexities around Black Lives Matter, mass killings, and harsh treatment of many in the Asian community this work and our leaders of color have had to live with many harsh realities.

We have put in place a few more support systems for planters of color. We have created many online resources for community and leaders to use over this past year. We have engaged more coaching, and online worship resources. Our planters have continued to engage their community with projects and ongoing partnerships. We continue to see growth even in a challenging year.

We are thankful for Keren Rodriguez, a leader of color, who has now become the chair of CDT and look forward to her leadership.

--Director of Innovation, Leroy Barber

This has been a challenging year for the Congregational Development Team. COVID caused us to limit ourselves to only one new project getting approved. We have also faced a transition in leadership and are grateful to Duane Anders for his service as chairperson for the past few years. After I did a very brief stint as the interim convener of the CDT, we were excited to welcome Keren Rodriguez as our new chairperson in April. Keren will help us seek to adopt better practices around accountability, responsibility, and authority. In addition to Keren, we are also excited to welcome new team member Ria Galo to the Congregational Development Team.

--Cabinet Representative, John Tucker

It is a pleasure to serve as the chair of the Congregational Development Team for the Oregon-Idaho conference. For over 10 years I have served in the United Methodist Church at national, jurisdictional, and conference levels. It is now a privilege for me to serve the Oregon-Idaho conference in this capacity.

Coming from a background of organizing, racial justice, and more I am intrigued, energized, and passionate about the work that lies ahead. I began to serve as Congregational Development Chair in April 2021. The first months serving as chair I have realized that there is a lot of listening that I need to do. The goal is simple: to support all the parties involved in this process. This includes but is not limited to the Congregational Development Team members, Church planters, and IV staff for our Oregon-Idaho Conference. I believe that working together is the answer to questions of processes, and more. Some of the values that I hope to bring in this role are accountability, transparency, inclusion, and participation.

--Congregational Development Chair, Keren Rodriguez

Conference Board of Global Ministries/Outreach **Jim Frisbie, Conference Secretary of Global Ministries**

The past year has been a challenge for all of us, and this is particularly true for those involved in mission and outreach. With restrictions on travel, both Volunteer in Mission (VIM) and Early Response Teams (ERT) have been unable to go to and work on site. But with the 2020 spring floods in the Pendleton area, the wind storm and fires in September, and the ice storm of February 2021 there has been an increased need for a missional response to crises within the bounds of our Annual Conference. In many ways, though we have had to meet remotely and work through others, our Mission Team has been more active than in the previous year. One benefit of the on-line communication has been our enhanced connection with mission leaders and teams from our sister conferences in the Northwest and the Western Jurisdiction. It seems I am involved in one or more Zoom meetings with our team mates each week.

It is our hope that as things open up we will be able to translate that connectiveness into coordinated action as we address the needs that have emerged and are emerging.

Itineration

The world-wide nature of the pandemic has facilitated communications via Zoom and other electronic means with missionaries and mission projects around the world. If anything, there seem to be more conversations happening than in the past. We hope that sets the stage for both continuing the electronic communication and future itineration in person.

UMVIM & ERT ([See report](#))

Abundant Health Initiative ([See report](#))

Disaster Preparedness and Response

The year was dominated by responses to flooding, COVID-19, and wildfires. Flooding occurred during the period of February 5-9, 2020, in Northeast Oregon and Southeast Washington impacting Umatilla, Union, and Wallowa Counties and the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation. UMCOR Cleaning and Hygiene Kits were ordered and distributed to survivors who temporarily occupied three shelters. A Presidential Disaster Declaration (DR-4519-OR) was made on April 3, 2020, for the flooding as the world began to come to grips with the COVID-19 Pandemic. The Blue Mountain Region Long-Term Recovery Group was established to help manage the expected multi-year recovery effort. Limitations imposed during the pandemic have heavily impacted response to the flooding disaster, restricting the formation of volunteer teams to aid in recovery, and leaving much work undone more than a year after the flooding. Compounding these challenges, our Conference Disaster Response Coordinator, Larry Johnson, was hospitalized in August and had to step down. Dan Moseler stepped back in as Interim while we search for a more permanent replacement in this challenging time.

As we continued to learn and adjust to the COVID crisis, wildfires began to impact much of Western Oregon during the period of September 7-November 3, 2020. A Presidential Disaster Declaration (DR-4562-OR) was made on September 15, 2020, which eventually encompassed 20 counties. Overall, 21 wildfires consumed over one million acres in the Cascades region from the Northern to Southern borders of the State. Over 4,000 homes were lost, and over 1,300 survivors remain sheltered in non-congregate shelters due largely to an already tight housing market. Volunteers have distributed UMCOR Cleaning, Hygiene, and School Kits requested by churches in Douglas and Jackson Counties. Counties approved for FEMA Individual Assistance include Clackamas, Douglas, Jackson, Klamath, Lane, Lincoln, Linn, and Marion. All are currently in various stages of forming long-term recovery organizations to help manage the expected multi-year recovery effort.

There will be a need for sustained multi-year giving to UMCOR and the Conference Disaster Fund to help support these recoveries. Equally important will be the need for volunteer leaders and workers in the various recovery groups, and the expected need to host volunteer teams expected to come in from outside the Conference to aid in recovery. The various groups forming need this help now, and there will be a need for replacements in upcoming years for what is expected to be a 6-to-8 or more year recovery in some areas.

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Connecting Neighbors

The Connecting Neighbors program is a specific process whereby a congregation can engage in study, planning, and implementation of ways that they as a church can respond to the emerging needs in a community. The Lake Oswego United Methodist Church has taken the lead on this under the leadership of Sally Blanchard and can provide a model for other congregations to get involved. This concept is spreading and being explored by a number of other congregations.

Our Global Ministries Team believes that participation in missions is a key element in the growth and vitality of each local church. We are dedicated to providing opportunities for all who share a heart for the world to get involved in meaningful ways. We believe that the neighbors we are called to love exist both next-door and halfway around the world. No matter who you are, God is calling you to step into the journey of mission.

Holy Land Task Force Dee Poujade, Chair

The Holy Land Task Force was created at Annual Conference 2013. See the annual conference website for a [list of current members](#). Laurie Day serves as advisor. Sadly, one of our founding members, Karen McAllister, died this past year.

Since its inception, the membership of the Task Force has changed and, at present, it could use a few more members who would like to work on this issue. The time commitment is relatively modest – four or five meetings a year (in person at the Conference Office in Portland or via Zoom/conference call from wherever!), sharing information on what is happening in the Holy Land with members of individual congregations and the District, and advocating for justice in whatever manner possible. Those interested can contact [Dee Poujade](#) or talk to any Task Force member.

The initial charge of the Task Force was to identify and study companies affecting the Palestinian people in the Occupied Territory in harmful ways, and to develop information sheets on companies that conduct their business in a manner harmful to Palestinians.

In subsequent years, the Oregon-Idaho Annual Conference passed additional resolutions relevant to the Task Force's work, including:

- 2014 - Encouraging churches to study the [Kairos Palestine Response](#)
- 2015 - [Divesting from stock in Caterpillar, Motorola and Packard](#) until these companies end their involvement with the illegal occupation of Palestine
- 2017 - [Opposing any state or federal legislation that seeks to restrict the right to address injustice](#) through boycotts, divestment and sanctions.
This legislation included a provision that letters be written to legislators expressing the Conference's opposition to so-called "Anti-BDS" Legislation. [Read the letter](#).
- 2018 - [Child Incarceration and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#)
- 2018 - [Human Rights and the Incarcerated Children](#)
- 2018 - [Aligning Investments with Values Regarding Palestine and Israel](#)
- 2018 - [Supporting Middle East Peace Efforts](#)

Pending legislation for AC 2021 includes renewal of the resolutions opposing BDS legislation and Supporting Middle East Peace Efforts.

The Covid restrictions of the past year have greatly limited our ability to do outreach to churches and community organizations; however, individual members continue to advocate through participation in on-line webinars, including those presented by [United Methodists for Kairos Response](#), and writing letters to legislators to express opinions on legislation involving Palestinian human rights.

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The Task Force continues to provide educational resources and speakers to local churches and other venues as requested. [The Kairos Document](#) is recommended as a primer for those wishing to learn more about this issue, and copies of it – or any other information on this topic – are available from Task Force members.

Task Force members are also willing and eager to help coordinate educational programs on Palestine/Israel in any way that is needed. Additionally, [United Methodists for Kairos Response](#) a national group working to support an end to the illegal Occupation of Palestine is a recommended resource.

Up to date information and resources links can be found on the [Task Force's web page](#). We look forward to our continued work with the churches of the OR-ID Annual Conference in seeking peace and justice in the Holy Land.

Innovation Vitality Team **William Gibson, Team Lead**

Like many of you, reflecting on 2020 and the run-up to the 2021 Annual Conferences is a unique experience. In this instance, hindsight may not be 20/20. Nevertheless, like you, the GNW Innovation Vitality Team (IV Team) made adjustments and pivoted into the work at hand. If anything, the year+ long experience of the pandemic has forever changed the way the church interacts in and with its many mission fields.

One of our significant pivots during the pandemic was connected to the established recruitment pipeline, which in the past had begun with face-to-face engagement at conferences, trainings, and other gathered events. In order to continue to maintain our national reach, we shifted to online workshops that were led by national speakers and experts in their fields. Workshops featured Alexia Salvatierra, Mark Charles, Soong-Chan Rah, Jonathan Brookes, and Melvin Bray. This strategy helped maintain connection points between the IV Team's recruitment efforts and interest that continued to build across the nation.

Like so many of our local churches, the IV Team also pivoted its resourcing strategies online. During early 2020, the IV staff worked to develop the new IV Net, an area-wide intranet platform designed to support planters/innovators, District Superintendents, and Cabinet members. The IV Net was rolled out in August 2020 as a central point of entry for peer learning, information on projects, and support. The IV Team has continued monthly cohort gatherings on-line to support planters/innovators. These cohorts include the BIPOC cohort, designed to support planters/innovators of color, and the sustainability cohorts, which are designed to resource planters/innovators in the area of financial sustainability, social enterprise, and strategic planning.

As a team, we have developed and led a number of online webinars, focusing on anti-racism, anti-blackness, the IV Team change theory, intercultural competency, strategic planning, nonprofit development. Additionally, at the request of district superintendents, we have engaged local churches in a number of context-driven consultations and trainings around the work of inclusion, innovation, and multiplication.

In response to the pandemic, we built upon an Oregon-Idaho Conference crisis response initiative, which provided families with grocery gift cards, sparking a collaborative funding effort of more than \$500,000. From the learnings of this effort, the IV Team developed the Funds for Families crisis response across the PNW Conference that included both a crisis response in collaboration with the Commission on Ethnic Ministries, and a more contextual approach to the long-game support that we knew would emerge in late 2020 and early 2021. The effort resulted in more than \$450,000 being made available for support, and seeded new relationships on the ground between local churches and partners in their communities. The grant funds provided by the PNW Conference were accessible by local churches who completed the required [online webinars](#) conducted by the IV Team.

Though the pandemic's presence was felt at every corner, like yours, our work continued. After launching three new projects in the PNW Conference in July 2020, we continued our collaboration with district

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superintendents to develop new opportunities for launch in 2021. After months of development and assessment work, which included community assessment, planter/innovator assessment, and community development planning with some local churches, we were able to move forward with our district superintendents to recommend to the various funding bodies and cabinet new and vitality projects and new planters/innovators. The projects launched in 2020 and 2021 are as follows:

New and Vitality Projects Commenced in 2020 and 2021:

1. Acts On Stage (HUB) SeaTac Missional District (PNW, 2020), Pastor Michelle Lang-Raymond
2. South Park Neighborhood Church, SeaTac Missional District (PNW, 2020), Pastor Coté Soerens
3. Yesler Neighborhood Project, SeaTac District (PNW, 2021), Rev. Dr. Troy Lynn-Carr
4. Oak Grove UMC/Storyline Project, Columbia District (OI, 2021) Pastor Anna Hoesly
5. Vashon UMC Vitality Project, Puget Sound Missional District (PNW, 2021), Rev. Dr. Mark Wagner

During 2020/2021 we ended a number of new or vitality projects across the area. We celebrate the work of these projects, the leadership teams, and the planters/innovators. Learnings from these efforts have informed current and emerging strategies toward future growth, financial sustainability, and community engagement.

New and Vitality Projects Ended in 2020 and 2021:

1. CrossPoint, Sage District (OI, launched 2017), Rev. Dana Hicks
2. Create Commons, SeaTac Missional District (PNW, launched 2017), Rev. Nathan Hollifield
3. Pinoy Van-Port Ministries, Vancouver and Columbia Districts (PNW and OI, launched 2017), Pastor Lyn Rush
4. God's New Generation (East Campuses), Seven Rivers Missional District (PNW, launched 2014), Revs. Alex and Sally Perez
5. God's New Generation (West Campuses), Seven Rivers Missional District (PNW, launched 2016), Revs. Alex and Sally Perez
6. New Harvest Fellowship, Seven Rivers Missional District (PNW, launched 2015), Revs. Eli and Sarahi Martinez
7. New Meadows UMC/NW Abbey, Sage District (OI, launched in 2019), Rev. Jon Umbdenstock
8. SPAAC Church, SeaTac Missional District (PNW, launched 2017), Rev. Thomas Yang
9. Haven Fellowship, Seven Rivers Missional District (PNW, launched 2017), Rev. Zach Taylor

Finally, we would like to report that the IV Team and a number of stakeholders pulled together by the bishop spent a significant amount of time and energy over the previous six months to work on a detailed report, in response to a letter ("Call for Budget Transparency and Accountability") submitted to CF&A at the PNW Annual Conference Session of 2020. This written report offers significant details on how the IV Team does its work and how the monies of the Alaska, Oregon-Idaho, and PNW Conferences are being used to cultivate vitality, in addition to learnings over the last 4+ years. For more details on the work of the IV Team, please [reference this report](#), which was released to the annual conference members of Alaska, Oregon-Idaho, and Pacific Northwest in March 2021.

Board of Lay Ministry **Jan Nelson, Conference Lay Leader** **Emilie Kroen, Associate Lay Leader, Lay Servant Coordinator**

The Board of Lay Ministry began the year by hosting a virtual laity session as part of the virtual annual conference in September of 2020. The session was an inspiring collection of videos highlighting local church ministries led by lay people. The pandemic has brought out a lot of creativity in keeping our congregations connected with each other and serving in their communities.

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All our meetings this year were held on Zoom. We welcomed new district lay leaders in the Sage, Crater Lake, and Columbia districts. We continue to encourage lay members to be active leaders and to remind the annual conference leadership of the importance of laity in planning and decision-making in all aspects of ministry.

Lay Servant Ministries is one of the most significant lay leadership development programs available within the United Methodist connection. Through this equipping and empowering system, lay servants have the opportunity to grow as disciples of Jesus Christ who then go and make other disciples.

During this past year our LSM program taught courses on Zoom, allowing students to take courses without leaving home. Three sessions of *Introduction to Lay Ministries: The BASIC Course* were held, graduating 38 students. The advanced courses, *Rediscovering Our Spiritual Gifts* and *Living Our Beliefs* were each completed by 15 students.

In addition, we began collaborating with the Pacific Northwest, Alaska, and Mountain Sky Annual conferences, which is allowing us to provide more course opportunities throughout our region. This summer we anticipate offering the Basic course in Spanish. Watch our conference newsletter and our United Methodist [OR-ID Laity Facebook](#) page for future course announcements.

Ministry Leadership Team **Laurie Day, Director of Connectional Ministries**

The Ministry Leadership Team is charged with the responsibility of providing ongoing oversight for the mission and ministry of the Oregon-Idaho Annual Conference within the Greater Northwest Area's vision and strategies.

The strategic missional priorities of the Conference have guided the Ministry Leadership Team's conversations and decisions. These priorities include:

- Fighting COVID-19 – doing no harm by adapting ministries to keep our communities safe
- Dismantling Racism – becoming anti-racist and creating beloved community
- The Future of The United Methodist Church – understanding and deepening our relationships across the connection, now and in the future
- Innovation/Vitality – deepening our inclusion, innovation and multiplication work
- Disaster Response – responding in love to recent wildfires and flooding
- “Where Love Lives” – creating a fully inclusive United Methodist Church

The Opportunity Fund is a reserve fund of the Ministry Leadership Team to be used to support opportunities in need of financial support that further the mission of the Oregon-Idaho Annual Conference. This past year four grants were given and one commitment for funding was extended.

- **Leaven Community Land and Housing Coalition** received grants of \$70,000 each for the 2020 and 2021 funding years. This project develops and implements a community organizing structure to support faith communities building affordable housing. In January 2019 MLT approved funding \$70K for one year with opportunity to renew for two additional years for a total of \$210K over three years. The continuation of the grant has been dependent on the satisfactory identification of clear multi-year benchmarks and the positive movement toward reaching them. These grants for 2020 and 2021 complete the funding commitment for this project.
- **Community Vitality Through Sacred Organizing** received a grant of \$15,000 for the 2021 funding year. This project supports a partnership with the Oregon Synod of the ELCA for the reorganized Transformational Leadership Initiative, now called Community Vitality Through Sacred Organizing. This project accompanies and cultivates faithful leaders at the intersection of church and community, with a focus on sacred organizing as a fundamental praxis of transformational leadership. In April 2019 MLT approved funding \$15K for one year with an opportunity to renew for an additional year with satisfactory progress on outcomes. This 2021 grant of \$15,000 completes the funding commitment for this project.

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- **BIPOC leadership support** within the Oregon-Idaho Conference was funded for the 2020-2021 appointment year and a commitment was made for the 2021-2022 appointment year. This provides financial support for Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) pastoral ministry leadership in local churches. This action established a strategic funding work group to coordinate financial support and assure complete funding for these two appointment years and works to create more sustainable and long-term funding solutions. Overall funding for this leadership support comes from a variety of grants, conference askings, conference entities, fundraising, and the Opportunity Fund.

In March, the Ministry Leadership Team had intentional conversations about conference finances. The team discussed the reserve funds and operating budget. It looked at historical apportionment receipts, spending plans, and “conference askings.” It also examined how the apportioned budget has changed over the past 15 years and the impact on local churches, ministries and apportionment receipts from those various changes. Given this assessment the Ministry Leadership Team recommended to the Council on Finance and Administration that the 2022 apportioned conference budget remain similar to the 2021 amount.

Future work of the Ministry Leadership Team will continue to be guided by our Conference strategic missional priorities. The COVID-19 pandemic, the need to actively dismantle racism, and questions about the future of The United Methodist Church significantly impact the work we must do as local churches and the Oregon-Idaho Conference. We cannot ignore these pressing issues and our responsibility to faithfully and actively engage them in our ministries, decision-making, resource allocation, and leadership.

Peace with Justice **Claudia Roberts, Peace with Justice Coordinator**

Well, this has been a year like no other! We have dealt with the COVID-19 Pandemic that delayed the much-anticipated General Conference that has now been postponed twice and pushed us all into new ways of doing ministry together. In the Columbia District, where I live, there are only four churches that are having in-person church services as I write this, and they are all in Eastern Oregon.

In spite of all of the bumps and roadblocks, the Peace with Justice Program has continued receiving and processing grant requests, Sponsoring Peace with Justice Sunday and working on new and revised legislation for us to consider in June.

In October, we received a grant request from Collister UMC in Boise, Idaho. They worked with their local school district and some other community partners to produce YouTube videos with local BIPOC celebrities reading children’s books. The reason for choosing BIPOC readers was to provide a positive experience around diversity in this pretty homogenous community. The project became “Turning Pages Boise” and I will let Rev. Jenny Hirst tell you about it in her own words:

“The Oregon-Idaho Peace with Justice Grant provided the seed money and encouragement to embark upon a new initiative, sparked by the partnership between Collister UMC in Boise, and their neighborhood Title 1 school, Taft Elementary. The vision of this project came from a desire to invite voices and stories of Boise’s BIPoC (Black, Indigenous, Persons of Color) role models to share some of their personal journey of pursuing dreams and overcoming challenges, along with elevating the importance of literacy and books that inspire and help celebrate who they are. The primary audience is elementary students, grades K-6. We worked with the Taft Elementary teaching staff and administration to create episodes and content that would support their efforts in the classroom. Turning Pages launched in early February. Each ten-minute episode includes the reader’s introduction of their personal journey, examples of overcoming barriers, celebrating who they are, and how each selected book has enriched, inspired, and encouraged them. Episodes were released every two weeks, until April when episodes were released weekly.”

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Rev Hirst has assured me that they would be willing to help other churches who would like to start a similar project in their community. They are also willing to share the link to the YouTube channel so you can view the episodes yourself and share them with others. This was the only grant applied for and granted during this strange year but it had a tremendous impact.

As churches are figuring out how to do church during and after the Pandemic, I would urge you to start new outreach ministries that address needs you see in your community. There are grant funds available to help get these started. For information on how to apply contact [Claudia Roberts](#).

Commission on Religion and Race June Fothergill, Chair

The purpose of the Oregon-Idaho CORR is the same as that of the General Commission on Religion and Race. According to ¶ 2002 of the 2016 Book of Discipline, “the purpose... shall be to challenge, lead, and equip the people of The United Methodist Church to become interculturally competent, to ensure institutional equity and to facilitate vital conversations about religion race, and culture.”

This year your Conference CORR has worked to end racism in our church and world. We granted \$2,400 to Collister UMC, a small church in Boise, Idaho. They described their project this way, “Collister UMC in partnership with Taft Elementary School of Boise School District, Rediscovered bookstore and StoryFort will produce a 12 episode Youtube series featuring local BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and People of Color) leaders reading children’s books” and sharing their stories. This online resource will be available to local school and churches.

We have also met monthly on zoom to share resources and mutual support for the work we each do for racial justice in our individual lives and communities and to plan our work in the conference. We developed a letter to all the pastors and lay leaders announcing the small grants opportunity and inviting persons to join us in CORR’s work.

This spring three of our members offered online studies for church folks. One used the resource, *Dismantling Racism: A Workbook for Social Change Groups*, by Kenneth Jones and Tema Okum called “Unlearning White Supremacy Culture.” Two facilitated the reading and discussing of Drew Hart’s book, *Trouble I’ve Seen: Changing the Way the Church Views Racism*. We are also coordinating with the GNW Area Cabinet’s work on dismantling racism.

If you would like to help with this work of identifying and dismantling racism in our church, supporting racial ethnic ministries, and educating about racism, [please let me know](#). We welcome new members on the commission.

United Methodist Volunteers in Mission (UMVIM) Louise Kienzle, UMVIM Coordinator

In this year of world-wide pandemic, mission has happened! Locally, churches have reached out to help neighbors—holding food drives or taking meals and groceries to those afraid to venture out or in quarantine. You have also reached out to partners around the world through your donations and prayers; continuing to build relationships so important in mission.

One way that UMVIM has been able to stay connected with world-wide partners is through Virtual Missions. A virtual mission is the same as a “regular” mission, but different. Just imagine the possibilities as you set the team, plan a week of mission, learn, explore, connect, and partner with project sites around the world! Find out how they work, how they can be adapted and [more here](#).

My work has continued as I have taken the role of Volunteer Co-Coordinator for the Blue Mountain Region Long-Term Recovery Group. This group was organized to focus on supporting individuals and

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families and their recovery following the February 2020 flood-related damage in northeast Oregon and Washington; including Walla Walla, Columbia, and Umatilla counties, and the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation.

Long-term recovery groups are also forming after massive wildfires consumed western Oregon last fall. I have been in contact with some of those groups and will provide help as needed for volunteer management and recruitment. If you are looking for a way to serve within our conference, [contact me](#) to learn more about the needs of these groups and how you can get involved.

Now that vaccinations are ramping up, I anticipate we will be able to “go out in mission” again. Are you ready to get started? Do you feel led to learn more about UVMIM? If so, contact me at UMVIM@umoi.org. Learn more about [UMVIM in the Oregon-Idaho Annual Conference here](#).

LEADING PRACTICES OF UVMIM TEAMS:

- Pay attention to spiritual formation at every stage of the journey,
- Make a commitment to grow in intercultural competency,
- Have an UVMIM-trained team leader,
- Serve with an UVMIM-vetted project,
- Register your team with your conference UVMIM Coordinator,
- Comply with conference Safe Sanctuaries policies, and
- Obtain insurance coverage through UVMIM-WJ.

We believe that the neighbors we are called to love exist both next door and halfway around the world. No matter who you are, God is calling you to step into the journey of mission.

United Methodist Women Rebecca Warren, President

United Methodist Women has taken advantage of virtual technology to hold fall Annual Meetings in every District and in the Conference. In spring we enjoyed Every Member Enrichment Events in districts and a Columbia/Cascadia Districts Spiritual Retreat, a bilingual event, led by Keren Rodriguez, Pastor at Aloha UMW, and Carly Hodge MDiv., Chaplain. The theme, “Come to Me, All Who are Weary,” was relevant and inspiring.

On April 23 the UMW Conference Leadership Team will decide Mission u’s format for 2021. At the present time three schools are planned with locations in Boise, Albany, and Portland. Study topics are: *Pushout: The Criminalization of Black Girls in School* (Book by Monique W. Morris); *Bearing Witness in the Kin-dom: Living into the Church’s Moral Witness through Radical Discipleship* (Book by Darryl W. Stephens); and *Finding Peace in an Anxious World* (Book edited by Erin James-Brown).

Members have continued to study and respond to legislative priorities. Through Climate Justice webinars and a Climate Justice Legislative Day, members not only learned more about the inequitable impact of climate change but were able to talk with congressional staff about pending legislation. On May 22 Oregon UMW members will participate in the Legislative Advocacy Day sponsored by Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon.

The Reading Program has expanded to include Faith Talk podcasts and movies, specifically *Pushout*, *Just Mercy*, and *The Hate U Give*. Book groups exist throughout the conference, including one organized by the Committee on the Charter for Racial Justice Policies, whose selections feature systemic racism, dysfunctional theology, and the spiritual practice of lament. Books read are *So You Want to Talk about Race* by Ijeoma Oluo, *How to Be an Antiracist* by Ibram X. Kendi, and *Unsettling Truths: The Ongoing, Dehumanizing Legacy of the Doctrine of Discovery* by Mark Charles and Soong-Chan Rah.

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The deadline for nominations for the Charter for Racial Justice Award and for applications for the Isobel F. Zimmerman Fund Grants has been extended to Sunday, May 30th. Criteria and forms are available on the United Methodist Women Oregon-Idaho website.

While the Pledge to Mission has been reduced to \$90,000, remittance to National for the first quarter was 24% of the pledge. The need to support missions both nationally and globally reflects the heart of United Methodist Women.

Boards & Agencies Related to Finance and Administration

Archives and History Nancie Peacocke Fadeley, chair

The Oregon Archives, located in the MICA building at 1st United Methodist Church in Salem, has seen great change at the beginning of 2020. At first we thought we were going to have to move because of the expansion of Claremont School of Theology into the MICA building. After getting most of the Archive material boxed up and ready for storage, we were told we could continue using our original two rooms plus the larger one next door. Now our big goal is to get help to organize the Archives using the new space. The COVID 19 is hampering this goal.

Boxes of closed churches material keep coming to the Archives. The largest amount came from the Conference Office. There are up to 28 boxes of material to be sorted and inventoried already taking up a lot of space. More will be coming after conference.

It would be helpful if those whose churches are being closed would go through the church records. It would save many hours of sorting by the archivist. We do not need sales slips, canceled checks or unidentified photos.

Since March all of the Archive work has been done by Archivist Shirley Manning Knepp in her home office at Willamette Lutheran Retirement Community in Keizer. Shirley helped two people search for information for books and inventoried five churches, answered requests for information on baptisms, membership, and where ministers have served and made about 400 new files for the material in the archives.

Two of our board members have donated books this year to the archives. Charles Wallace's book is titled *From a Mother's Pen, Selections from the Spiritual Writing of Susanna Wesley*. This was written to commemorate the 350th anniversary of Susanna Wesley's birth. It was published on behalf of the Methodist Church in Britain by Methodist Publishing. Charles Wallace attended a conference in England highlighting Susanna Wesley and other women in ministry. He presented a paper on Susanna Wesley. Patty Meyers graced the archives with her new book.

We are looking forward to getting back to a routine in the archives. There is much to do. We need volunteers and someone to take over the Archivist duties. Shirley is not planning to retire until the 2022 conference but there is so much to learn and do.

Committee on the Episcopacy **Cheryl A. Bittle, chair**

In the fifth year of the quadrennium, the Committee had zoom meetings and participated in joint meetings with the other two Chairs in the Greater Northwest Area to discuss similarities and methods to work toward coordination of function for the Committees. Under the Bishop's direction, the Chairs discussed harmonization of functions as part of the evolution of the Greater NW Episcopal Area. Also in discussion is development of a profile of the Greater NW Area so that the jurisdictional committee will have an overall document that describes the Episcopal Area. The Bishop also asked committees to develop transition plans for the Area, including moving and orientation for a new Bishop. These discussions were to prepare the Chairs for the Bishop's retirement announcement. The Oregon-Idaho committee has begun discussion for celebration of the Bishop's service and the steps when a new Bishop is assigned to the Area, whether as interim or other.

Commission on Equitable Compensation **Daryl Blanksma, chair**

The Commission on Equitable Compensation is recommending a 3% increase in minimum base compensation for 2022. Compensation from the local church includes cash salary, a utilities allowance, and a home for the pastor's use. While we do not determine salary increases for churches paying more than the minimum base compensation, the Commission encourages all churches to consider an increase of at least 3%.

If an adequate parsonage **is** provided for the use of the pastor, we recommend the Oregon-Idaho Annual Conference fix the *minimum* base compensation for 2022 at the following rates:

1. Elder in Full Connection/Associate Member: **\$43,880**
2. Provisional Member: **\$41,686**
3. Local Pastor: **\$39,602**

If an adequate parsonage **is not** available for the use of the pastor, we recommend the Oregon-Idaho Annual Conference fix the *minimum* base compensation for 2022, at the following rates:

1. Elder in Full Connection/Associate Member: **\$60,592**
2. Provisional Member: **\$57,563**
3. Local Pastor: **\$54,685**

Clergy should determine how much of their compensation is to be allocated toward housing/utility costs. This figure should be set at a level which reflects their true housing/utility related costs that is allowed by IRS rules. We encourage clergy and churches to allocate compensation in ways that will allow clergy and their families to retain as great a portion of their income as is legally possible. Moving money out of cash salary and into a utilities/housing allowance could lower the amount clergy pay in taxes. Be sure and seek qualified assistance in making decisions that will affect tax liabilities.

Local churches should note that ¶ 331.10b of *The Book of Discipline* states that deacons who are appointed to a local congregation, charge, or cooperative parish, shall receive a salary from the local church, charge, or cooperative parish not less than the minimum established by the equitable compensation policy of the annual conference for elders. Provisional deacons shall receive a salary not less than the minimum established for provisional elders.

The Commission on Equitable Compensations recommends the following housing guidelines relating to compensation:

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1. For the purposes of housing policy, every parsonage will be considered as meeting the minimum compensation package. This is true whether the clergy are working full-time or part-time.
2. Churches and pastors may apply to the Commission for an exemption to the higher “non-parsonage” compensation rate under certain conditions. For example, a pastor already has a house in the area, or adequate housing is easily available in the local community for a lesser rate. If the Commission does not grant an exemption and a parsonage is not provided, the church **must** pay the higher compensation rate.

Council on Finance and Administration Rick Beadnell, President

No one knows for sure what 2022 will look like. Will the pandemic be under control? What decisions will be made about the future of the United Methodist Church? This kind of uncertainty can cause us to freeze in place, but while we wade through it, the best thing we can do is make sure that our everyday missions and ministries continue to happen at all levels.

Looking back on calendar 2020

- The total apportioned budget of **\$3.4M** was nearly the same as 2019. Our apportionment receipt percentage declined from 78% in 2019 to 73% in 2020 as we dealt with the pandemic. This left a total revenue deficit of \$921K to work into the Spending Plan
- 92 of our 172 churches paid 100% or more of their apportionments
- Spending exceeded revenue by \$76K, but this was offset by greater than usual investment returns and by the \$267K we received as part of the Federal PPP program grant
- We continued to emphasize our connectedness to our Worldwide Church ministries by paying 100% of our General Church and Western Jurisdiction apportionments

Quick peek at calendar 2021 through March

- The apportioned budget is **\$3.0M**, which is an 11.6% decrease from 2020.
- Apportionment revenue is up 2.7 percentage points compared to 2020
- Spending exceeds revenue by \$31K at this point, but is an improvement over 2020
- We have set a Spending Plan for the first 9 months of the year which includes 100% payment of General Church and Jurisdictional apportionments, and will readjust the Spending Plan as needed for the 4th quarter

Looking forward to calendar 2022

CF&A is recommending a flatline 2022 apportioned budget of **\$3.0M**. This budget includes a 2% increase for personnel paid by the conference and contains approximately \$75K in new programs. The budget was kept unchanged from 2021 by applying reserves. Significant increases and decreases are listed and explained in the Financial Section of the pre-conference reports.

It is possible that a few minor modifications will be made before the final budget proposal is presented at the Zoom Annual Conference in June.

CF&A would like to thank our Conference employees who make up our Office of Stewardship and Finance under the supervision of Director Dan Wilson-Fey. This is a small, dedicated group of hardworking people who handle a myriad of finance and accounting challenges to keep us on track.

2021 ANNUAL RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE COUNCIL ON FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

1. Between sessions of the Annual Conference, the Council on Finance and Administration shall implement a spending plan based upon anticipated receipts and projected expenses.
2. The Oregon-Idaho Conference Council on Finance and Administration is authorized to borrow up to \$500,000 on an open line of credit to cover essential and authorized expenditures during intervals dictated by cash flow needs. Interest on such borrowed funds will be paid from the “Contingency” reserve funds.

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3. The General Fund reserve (balance) provides working capital (cash flow) for the operation of the Conference, emergencies, and for unexpected needs that arise from time to time. The annual net operating results in the budget funds not otherwise designated will provide the basis for the General Fund reserve. CF&A is authorized to hold a minimum of 4 months of average monthly budget in this account.
4. The following organizations are given permission to solicit funds among the churches of the Conference without quota:
 - Alaska Pacific University
 - Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon
 - Northwest United Methodist Foundation
 - Oregon-Idaho Camp and Retreat Ministries
 - Oregon-Idaho United Methodist Minister's Retirement Fund
 - Pacific School of Religion
 - Partnership with Liberia Annual Conference
 - Rust College
 - United Methodist Campus Ministries of the Conference
 - Willamette University and Claremont School of Theology
 - Willamette View Foundation
 - Willson House, Salem

Board of Ordained Ministry **Julia Nielsen, Chair; Teri Watanabe, Chair-Elect**

As our church and neighbors local and global strive for new ways of being community, it is more important than ever that the Board of Ordained Ministry actively recruit, nurture, prepare and credential people for ordained, licensed, and certified ministry. Our world continues to need called and courageous church leadership grounded in our Creator, providing mutual aid alongside Jesus to the most vulnerable, and wading into the future empowered by the Spirit's wisdom.

This year, our 2021 candidacy class includes one person recommended for commissioning as a provisional deacon, in addition to the nine members of the class of 2020, who were brought into full membership (but not ordained) and into provisional membership (but not commissioned) in 2020. We're thrilled to finally celebrate their ordination and commissioning services this year as the pandemic makes possible.

On this 25th anniversary year of the Order of Deacon, we're especially grateful for the leadership of a generation of deacons who continue to design and lead innovative, ecumenical, and wide-reaching ministries across our region. Our many deacons in Oregon-Idaho help shape the Board's vision of what transformative ministry means in the 21st century.

In 2019, the Board committed to expand our internal work around cultural adaptiveness, eliminating implicit bias, and anti-racism to better support the candidates applying for provisional and full membership and our own faith communities. This work has been continued intentionally throughout 2020, including beginning work to redesign our educational equivalency and provisional/full-membership application processes using an anti-racist lens, and to provide meaningful multilingual support at all levels of the Board's areas of responsibility. We have pledged to continue this work for the foreseeable future, alongside our four District Committees on Ordained Ministry.

Our regional Residence in Ministry program, shared with the Pacific Northwest and Alaska Conferences, continues to grow and become ever more connective tissue across our Episcopal Area, supporting our provisional members for two years during their process. We also celebrate new inventive collaboration with the Board of Lay Ministry as we navigate support, education, and care for our Certified Lay Ministers across the region.

We are grateful for the opportunity to continue our work with the Bishop, the District Superintendents, the other boards and agencies, and the people of our annual conference to encourage creativity, inclusivity, and excellence in ministry.

Conference Board of Pensions **Jeremy Hajdu-Paulen, Chair**

The Conference Board of Pensions (CBOP) oversees the health and wellness benefits and pension and welfare plans for annual conference clergy and lay staff.

Benefit Support for Pastors Serving BIPOC Ministry Settings

Dismantling racism is a strategic priority of the Oregon-Idaho Annual Conference. The Board of Pensions is in the process of leveraging its resources to address systemic injustice by providing financial support for the health, retirement, and disability benefits of pastors serving BIPOC ministry settings within the Annual Conference. At the time of writing, specifics are not available but the Board hopes to share more information at the Annual Conference session in June

Health Insurance

Health insurance benefits continue to be provided through the Wespeth HealthFlex Exchange. Claims paid in 2020 were 76% of premiums paid (compared to 118% in 2019 and 113% in 2018). That favorable loss ratio is most likely due to underutilization of health benefits in 2020 due to the COVID19 pandemic, and may also reflect more participants choosing high deductible plans.

In 2022, the Annual Conference's HealthFlex rate for medical coverage will increase 6.7%. (There will be no increase in rates for dental or vision coverage.) To mitigate the impact to ministry settings, the CBOP has approved holding the blended rate charged to ministry settings in 2022 at \$1,200 per month (same as 2020 and 2021). To mitigate the impact on participants, the CBOP has approved increasing the premium credit for 2022 by 6%. The balance of the cost to the annual conference of the increased HealthFlex premium rate will be covered by CBOP health insurance reserves.

Health Reimbursement Account Benefit for Retired Clergy

The Board of Pensions is in its ninth year of providing a Health Reimbursement Account (HRA) stipend benefit for qualified retired clergy. Last year, the CBOP approved a 3% increase to the retiree HRA stipend for 2021 and 2022. The CBOP reviews the HRA stipend every two years and will do so again in 2022.

Please note that the following policy was revised by the Board of Pensions at the March 2021 meeting.

Participation: Retiree must be a member of the Oregon-Idaho Conference or a lay employee of the OR-ID Annual Conference at the time of retirement.

Years of Service Eligibility:

1. "Years of Service" is defined as years of service with pension and benefit claim upon the denominational pension plans (Pre82, MPP & CRSP).
2. Years of Service applies to years served as clergy under appointment within the Greater Northwest Episcopal Area (the Oregon-Idaho, Alaska and PNW conferences) effective September 1, 2012.
3. For Conference lay employees, years of service in which the lay employee participates in the employer-sponsored pension plan.

Retirement Prior to Age 65/Medicare Eligibility:

1. Clergy retiring who are not yet eligible for Medicare, may opt to remain on the HealthFlex "active" pre-65 insurance plan and pay the total cost of the premium until he/she reaches the age of 65, and then apply for the retiree HRA stipend once they reach medicare-eligibility.

Clergy Couples:

For clergy couples in which both clergypersons qualify for the subsidy, the years of service of the spouse with the highest level will be used to determine the couple's subsidy regardless of who was officially listed as the participant at the time of retirement unless calculating the subsidy for each individual clergy person as singles results in the greater benefit.

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Spouses:

1. The spouse will receive 50% of the subsidy that the retiree receives.
2. Following the death of an eligible retired clergy member, a surviving spouse – married at the time of death – may receive an annual HRA stipend when that spouse is, or becomes, Medicare-eligible. The surviving spouse stipend shall be the same as the retired eligible spouse would receive.
3. At the time of retirement the HRA status chosen is permanent. If one’s marital status changes the HRA can be reduced, but not expanded, based on the status of the clergy person when the HRA was started.
4. A surviving spouse does not receive a benefit if the clergy member or lay participant never began to receive the retiree HRA benefit.

General

1. A stipend begins at the time of application for an HRA; the stipend is not retroactive to the time of retirement.
2. Allocations of any further retiree HRA stipends to a clergy member will end if that clergy member ceases to hold clergy membership in the Oregon-Idaho Annual Conference.
3. Those retiring after January 1, 2021 must enroll in a Medicare Advantage or Supplemental medical plan through ViaBenefits in order to be eligible to receive the retiree HRA stipend.

2022 HRA Benefit for Retired Clergy	Single	Couple
Retirees with more than 20 years of pre-82:	\$2,295	\$4,590
Retirees who retired before January 1, 2011:		
At least 5 but fewer than 10 years of service	\$656	\$1,312
At least 10 but fewer than 20 years of service	\$1,311	\$2,622
At least 20 but fewer than 30 years of service	\$1,639	\$3,278
30 or more years of service	\$1,967	\$3,934
Retirees who retired after December 31, 2010:		
At least 10 but fewer than 20 years of service	\$984	\$1,476
At least 20 but fewer than 30 years of service	\$1,311	\$1,967
30 or more years of service	\$1,967	\$2,951

Note: Years of service apply to years of service in the Oregon-Idaho, Pacific Northwest and Alaska Conferences with pension and benefit claim upon the conference or Wespath. The HRA stipend cannot be used to pay for health insurance premiums if the retiree is not enrolled in Medicare. If the retiree is enrolled in Medicare, the stipend can be used to offset Medicare or Medicare supplement premiums. According to the IRS, if a retiree is not enrolled in Medicare, the stipend can only be used to pay medical, dental or vision out-of-pocket expenses but not premiums.

HEALTH BENEFITS RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION:

The CBOP presents the following health benefits recommendations to the 2021 Annual Conference Session for consideration and action:

1. The Conference Board of Pensions, in consultation with the Council on Finance and Administration, is authorized to adjust the Conference Budget for Health Insurance Premiums and the monthly billed amount between sessions of the Annual Conference, if necessary, due to the receipt of new premium rate information from Wespath.
2. The Conference Board of Pensions is authorized to adopt new eligibility policies as required by Wespath for the HealthFlex Program. These policies may include procedures for the cancellation of coverage due to various circumstances. The effective date of these policies will be determined as required by Wespath.
3. The Conference Treasurer is authorized to bill \$1,200 per month to local churches and 100% of the premiums to other participants’ ministry settings to support a premium credit toward health

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insurance benefits. Participants will pay any difference between the premium credit amount and the total premium for the plan and benefit options they select. The Conference Board of Pensions may approve use of the blended rate for non-local church settings if such change is mutually agreed upon by the ministry setting and the Conference Treasurer.

4. The CDHP C2000P2 with vision exam coverage and no dental coverage will be the default plan. The annual Defined Contribution for active HealthFlex Exchange participants in 2022 will be as follows:

Single Participant: \$10,320

Participant + Spouse: \$19,068

Participant + Family: \$26,628

5. The retiree health insurance plan is a Health Reimbursement Account (HRA) stipend based on the number of years of service in the Oregon-Idaho, Pacific Northwest and Alaska Conferences per the eligibility policy and table above.

6. No premium subsidy or stipend will be granted to participants retiring prior to the age of their Medicare eligibility. They shall be responsible for the full payment of their health insurance premium. Upon reaching the age for Medicare eligibility, and enrolling in the Medicare program, the clergy member shall be eligible for conference subsidy or stipend based on the then current schedule as approved by the annual conference.

7. The conference shall pay 100 percent of the medical insurance premium payment at the default level of benefits, for those persons eligible for benefits under the CPP Disability program. After one year the conference will pay the premium for the participant only.

Pension and Welfare Plans

Due to changes made to retirement benefits by previous General Conferences, there are three retirement plans for which the Conference Board of Pensions has responsibility: the Pre-82 Pension Plan, Ministerial Pension Plan, and the Clergy Retirement Security Program (CRSP). Depending on when clergy began their service, they may receive retirement benefits from one to three of these plans. CRSP was most recently modified in 2013. Funding for CRSP is supported through direct billings to local congregations at 13 percent of the pastor's compensation. All three plans are fully funded.

The Comprehensive Protection Plan (CPP) provides clergy death benefits, survivor children benefits, minimum surviving spouse benefits, and long-term disability benefits. CPP funding is also directly billed to the local churches or to the appropriate salary-paying unit.

Retirements

The Board of Pensions recognizes the following persons who are members of the Oregon-Idaho Annual Conference who have retired since the 2020 Annual Conference session. Because an in-person Annual Conference session will not be held this year, these retirees will be recognized and celebrated at the 2022 Annual Conference session (along with those from the previous year).

Retirees

Evelyn Erbele
Walter Terence Erbele
Kim Fields
Nancy Slabaugh Hart
Earl D. Lane
Craig Pesti-Strobel
John Watts

The following clergy are on Medical Leave with Benefits

Margaret Lofsvold
Katherine Raines
Christina Thompson

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PENSION AND WELFARE PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

The Conference Board of Pensions presents the following pension and welfare plan-related recommendations for your consideration and action:

Pension and Welfare Plans

1. Effective January 1, 2022, the Pre-82 (MRPF) past service rate for ordained clergy and local pastors shall be \$681 per service year, with 70 percent continuing payment to the surviving spouse, and that Addendum A of the Clergy Retirement Security Program be so amended.
2. Concerning the Clergy Retirement Security Program (CRSP): The Conference Treasurer will bill each local church for CRSP at the rate of 13 percent of the pastor’s compensation (including cash salary plus utilities and housing allowance [25% of cash salary if parsonage is provided]) for eligible clergy. Cash salary includes deductions from payroll and any contributions toward social security. Local churches served by retired clergy are exempt from this billing.
3. The Conference Treasurer will bill each local church (with a pastor appointed three-quarter time or full time) at a rate of 3.0 percent of the pastor’s plan compensation for the Comprehensive Protection Plan (CPP) for eligible clergy.
4. The Oregon-Idaho Annual Conference meeting on June 21, 2021, approves the Addendum: Resolutions Relating to Rental/Housing Allowances for Retired, Disabled, or Former Clergypersons of the Oregon-Idaho Annual Conference.
5. The Oregon-Idaho Annual Conference meeting on June 21, 2021 approves the 2022 Comprehensive Benefit Funding Plan for the Oregon-Idaho Annual Conference, as submitted by the Conference Board of Pensions and approved by Wespath.

**Oregon-Idaho Annual Conference
2021 Comprehensive Benefit Funding Plan Summary**

The 2016 Book of Discipline ¶ 1506.6 requires that each annual conference develop, adopt and implement a formal comprehensive funding plan for funding all of its benefit obligations. The funding plan shall be submitted annually to Wespath for review and be approved annually by the annual conference, following the receipt and inclusion of a favorable written opinion from Wespath. This summary document is only a portion of the information contained in the actual signed funding plan. As such, it might not contain all the information required for a comprehensive view of the benefit obligations of the conference. You may request the full contents of the 2022 comprehensive benefit funding plan from the conference benefits office.

BOARD OF PENSIONS INFORMATIONAL DATA

Denominational Average Salary (DAC)	Conference Average Salary (CAC)
DAC	CAC
2018 - \$70,202	2018 - \$58,941
2019 - \$71,361	2019 - \$59,699
2020 - \$72,648	2020 - \$61,400
2021 - \$74,199	2021 - \$63,034
2021 - \$75,570	2022 - \$65,026

Past Service Rate For Local Church Pastors

2018 - \$615.00
2019 - \$631.00
2020 - \$647.00
2021 - \$664.00
2022 - \$681.00

ADDENDUM:

**Resolutions Relating to Rental/Housing Allowances for Retired, Disabled,
or Former Clergypersons of the Oregon-Idaho Annual Conference**

The Oregon-Idaho Annual Conference (the “Conference”) adopts the following resolutions relating to rental/housing allowances for active, retired, terminated, 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”); and

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; and

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

WHEREAS, the Internal Revenue Service has recognized the Conference (or its predecessors) as an appropriate organization to designate a rental/housing allowance for 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, severance, 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 Wespath, during the period January 1, 2022 through December 31, 2022, to each active, retired, terminated, or disabled Clergyperson who is or was a member of the Conference, or its predecessors, be and hereby is designated as a rental/housing allowance for each such Clergyperson; and THAT the pension, severance, or disability payments to which this rental/housing allowance designation applies will be any pension, severance, or disability payments from plans, annuities, or funds authorized under the Discipline, including such payments from Wespath and from a commercial annuity company that provides an annuity arising from benefits accrued under a Wespath plan, annuity, or fund authorized under the Discipline, that result from any service a Clergyperson rendered to this Conference or that an active, a retired, a terminated, or a disabled Clergyperson of this Conference rendered to any local church, annual conference of the Church, 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 an active, a retired, a terminated, or a disabled Clergyperson’s pension, severance, or disability plan benefit as part of his or her gross compensation.

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

Conference Rules Committee **Steve Mitchell, Chair**

This year we re-submitted three new rule proposals through the Legislative Assembly process that were submitted before the COVID-19 pandemic changed plans for the 2020 Legislative Assembly and Annual Conference Sessions. Two of them are rules our appointive cabinet requested to allow for new church starts and new faith communities to elect Lay Members of Annual Conference. The third rule clarifies that all items submitted to the Legislative Assembly will be acted upon by the Plenary Session of Annual Conference, in fulfillment of Conference Rule 2.023 that “the Annual Conference in Plenary Session shall make the final determination of all action.” These will be resubmitted for the 2021 Annual Conference.

In process (to be brought before the Pre-Conference Legislative Assembly meeting in June 2021) are some new rules that define more specifically vacation time, family/maternity leave, and sick leave benefits. A new rule will also specifically make clergy members who are employees of the Annual Conference amenable to Conference Personnel policies, as long as they don’t conflict with rules related to all clergy members.

Our Annual Conference Rules are up-to-date as of now, but we’ll see what may be needed after the next General Conference session is held. The Committee will be ready to propose changes, adjustments, and additional rules as needed.

We also stand ready to be of assistance whenever issues around Conference Rules arise. Let us know of conflicts, needed revisions, and needs for new rules. We’ll do our best to meet the needs that arise.

Safe Sanctuaries Team **Lydia Henry, Safe Sanctuaries Coordinator**

“Our hope and belief today is that the church is a place where all people will find the unconditional love and care they so desperately need to grow and thrive. But, we know that abuse occurs in local ministries, large and small, urban and rural. It is a reality which cuts across all economic, cultural, and racial lines...”¹

In 2020, the Safe Sanctuaries Team experienced a time of team transition and discussion on new approaches to training. We continued to meet with the District Administrative Assistants to coordinate information and efforts to support local ministry settings. The team offers assistance for the districts’ work in supporting churches’ efforts to become compliant with the Oregon-Idaho Annual Conference standards for abuse risk reduction and prevention.

The Safe Sanctuaries Team and the District Offices work together to identify and develop ways to make information easy to access and report. In 2020, several churches reached out to the Administrative Assistants asking general questions or requesting training information for their congregations using the 2018 “Safe Sanctuary Annual Policy Review”. These requests were forwarded to the Safe Sanctuaries team for follow-up. The team appreciates the diligence of the Administrative Assistants in passing on requests to the team.

Other activities by the Safe Sanctuaries Team include:

- preventabuse@umoi.org is the new email address for the Safe Sanctuaries Team
- The team continues to explore alternative ways to provide training to meet local and area needs.
- The team is researching options for online training. The experience with zoom during Covid has shaped the focus of the conversations.

The Safe Sanctuaries Team keeps our missional statement always in the forefront of our activities: “God cares for all. God suffers when children, youth, and vulnerable adults suffer. The United Methodist church was founded by John Wesley who taught: First, do no harm. Do all the good you can. Stay in love

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with God . . . [we] recognize that staying in love with God requires safe sanctuary for the vulnerable and support for survivors of sexual violence.”²

1. General Conference (Resolution 3084, “Reducing the Risk of Child Sexual Abuse in the Church, pg. 240, 2012 Book of Resolutions).

2. Template for Risk Reduction and Prevention Policies for Local Ministry Settings.

Statistician’s Report **Ted Wimer, Conference Statistician**

Our yearly statistics reports record what is going on in each of our congregations. These statistics can help local churches see trends for how effective our local ministries and missions are. The General Council on Finance and Administration (GCFA) collects these numbers from all of the Annual Conferences and compiles the data for the General Boards and Agencies; to track trends and plan ahead.

Because of the Covid-19 pandemic, our church year and church activities have varied far from normal. Many churches struggled with how to report some fields that had been usually straightforward. With the assistance from our District Administrative Assistants, the District Superintendents, the Treasurer’s office and local church clergy and treasurers, approximately 92% of local churches submitted their data for 2020 as of the time of this report. In spite of all our efforts, there are still many churches missing in the data. With the reporting confusion our normal metrics could be somewhat misleading. Churches counted participation in many different ways. However, using the data we can observe the following: Our attendance at weekly worship services fell by 15%. Online Worship attendance increased by over 1,500% to over 11,785. The total Professing Membership in the Oregon-Idaho Annual Conference has continued to decrease. The number of persons participating in all of our normal church school and Christian formation groups has decreased. The number of ministries for outreach, justice & mercy fell by 20% and the number of people served decreased by 23%; however, the amount of giving to community emergency services to help those in need increased by 23%. In addition, outside sources helped fund our churches’ response to help those in their communities: with funds from other sources up by 75% and grants and money from institutions up 211%. This funding was not only for the COVID-19 response, but also to help so many wildfire victims.

The total Number of Households giving to the local church decreased by 16%. The amount received through Pledges decreased by 12%. The amount received from all categories of operations budget giving fell; however, several churches actually had giving per “giving-unit” increase. The amount spent by the local church for Operating Expenses decreased by 12%. The amount spent on Capital Improvements decreased by 34%. Funds from Capital Campaigns decreased by 48%. Debt secured by Church Physical Assets decreased by 46%, however, Other Debt increased by 126%. The apportionments paid to the Conference decreased year-to-year by only 6%; however this was still only 73% of the amount which had been apportioned.

The longer term overall numbers show many local churches continuing to support their operations even though their membership has declined. Many churches had fewer people giving on a regular basis; however, many of those still giving increased their donations.

To see all the statistics for 2020 – for individual churches as well as totals by District and the entire Annual Conference – look online at your 2021 Annual Conference Journal, which will be published in August.

Board of Trustees **Larry McClure, President**

Highlights

In keeping with Conference values, two noteworthy property transfers were made to Native American communities this year. The closed Wallowa UMC property was returned to the Nez Perce Tribe as part of their ancestral land holdings, and the former Chiloquin UMC is serving members of Klamath Tribes as a recovery resource center operating in partnership with Great Spirit UMC in Portland.

Church Properties Held in Trust by the Oregon-Idaho Conference

Transitions of ownership for local United Methodist properties continue with your Conference Trustees assuming responsibility for churches whose congregations voted to close after many years of service. A major portion of revenues from closed church sales is disbursed to the Innovation and Vitality Team for new ministries across the Conference.

As of April 15, the 2021 Annual Conference is slated to vote on these closures at its June session:

- Pendleton (Columbia District)
- Portland:Pioneer (Columbia)
- Shelley (Sage)
- Tenmile (Crater Lake)
- Veneta:Valley (Crater Lake)

Properties moved out of Trustees care since April 15, 2020:

- Chiloquin (Crater Lake) Ownership transferred to Great Spirit UMC in Portland
- Elgin (Sage) Sold
- Richland (Sage) Sold
- Salem:Englewood (Cascadia) Transferred to Open Door Churches of Salem-Keizer
- Salem:Jason Lee (Cascadia) Transferred to Open Door Churches of Salem-Keizer
- Union (Sage) Sold to Friends of Union Community Center
- Wallowa (Sage) Transferred to Nez Perce Tribe
- West Salem (Cascadia) Transferred to Open Door Churches of Salem-Keizer

Properties still under Oregon-Idaho administration:

Dundee (Cascadia). The church continues to be leased to an independent church.

Lents (Columbia). Lents Tongan Fellowship continues to conduct ministries at this property.

Sunnyside-Centenary UMC (Columbia). The new start Groves Church PDX continues to manage this property as the congregation considers moving toward chartering and full ownership.

Nyssa (Sage) On the market for sale.

Oregon-Idaho Conference Center in Portland

Discussions about potential futures of the building are underway as General Conference considers a potential denomination split and as Oregon-Idaho personnel office space needs shift. The Center was constructed in the 1970s and is adjacent to Portland First UMC.

Claremont School of Theology at Willamette University

As this sole United Methodist seminary on the West Coast transitions to the campus of Willamette University in Salem, the Oregon-Idaho Trustees (along with other conferences in the Western Jurisdiction) agreed to provide a temporary bridge loan to cover certain expenses. The loan will be repaid after Claremont's facilities in California are sold.

United Methodist Ministers' Retirement Fund **John I. Watts, Board President**

On April 10, 1909, at the direction of the Oregon Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, six leaders – half lay and half clergy – petitioned Oregon Secretary of State F.W. Benson to incorporate “an irreducible fund, the income of which shall be applied annually to the support and maintenance of the Conference Claimants.”

The fund began with \$3,500. In the 112 years since, it has grown to \$2,559,000. Many things have changed, including the way clergy pensions are funded, but this fund remains true to its mission. It is now called the “United Methodist Ministers' Retirement Fund” (UMMRF). Each year earnings are distributed equally among retired clergy of our Conference, their surviving spouse or their surviving dependent children.

UMMRF assets are now invested with Wespath, formerly known as the General Board of Pensions and Health Benefits of the United Methodist Church. This frees our Board from investment decisions and allows us to focus our work on making sure the fund continues to benefit those for whom it was intended. Our current practice each year is to distribute 5% of the average year-end fund balance over the previous three years. In 2020, this was \$105,185, making possible 271 checks in the amount of \$392.27 each.

Donations to keep this fund going and growing are gratefully received. Some have included a legacy gift to UMMRF in their wills. Memorial gifts honor those who have served in our connection. There is a memorial page in the Conference Journal listing gifts of \$500 or more with the names of those so honored.

Donations can be sent to the Conference Treasurer, designated UMMRF. They are tax deductible. Thank you.

Districts, General Agencies, Educational Institutions

Cascadia District **Wendy Woodworth, District Superintendent**

Ministry in the Cascadia District has been quite an adventure during my first year: Meeting clergy outdoors for conversation, via Zoom and phone calls – Engaging with congregations rarely in person (and if so, with masks and lots of distancing), and most often via Zoom and You-Tube – Approving phase 2.0 plans and now 2.1 plans in our Reimagining Life Together phases related to Covid-19.

Fall Charge Conferences gave me the opportunity to hear about the ministries of each church, and I was amazed to learn of the many ways you have pivoted and excelled this year in your worship and continued service in the community. I appreciated the conversations we had related to anti-racism, what you are reading/learning, what images of Jesus are present in our places of worship and what they say about our understanding of Jesus and what we are communicating through those images.

I have greatly appreciated spending monthly colloquy time with the clergy and pastors of the district. We have engaged together in mini-workshops on self-care, anti-racism work and adaptable leadership. I have discovered that the clergy and pastors of our district are dedicated to their ministry settings, faithful to the call God has laid on their hearts, and seek to live lives of grace, justice, and peace. I may be biased, but we have fabulous, exceptional clergy and pastors in the Cascadia District! It is important that we all make sure to support them, encourage them to take care of themselves and take their days off and vacation days!!

In the coming year the work of the district will center around these areas:

- Anti-racism and what it means to be inclusive

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- Adaptive Leadership
- Self-care of our clergy, pastors and lay leadership
- Connectional Ministries – discovering where partnerships can be formed and around what areas of ministry

I am grateful for the ministry of Paula Sadler, who has been our Cascadia District Lay Leader since July 2016. She brought her passion and love for the church and lifted up the gifts of the laity. She stepped down in February this year and we will be welcoming a new lay leader. I am also grateful for Linda Grund-Clampit, Cascadia District Administrative Assistant, who is teaching me about all things Cascadia District and whose dedication to her work and ministry is inspiring.

I look forward to our next year of adventure and getting to know the district more up-close-and-personal as we hopefully move to a new place of doing ministry under our Re-imagining Life Together guidelines.

Columbia District **Tim Overton-Harris, District Superintendent** **Brandon Rhodes, District Administrative Assistant** **Cynthia MacLeod, Lay Leader**

“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of light, it was the season of darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair” Martin Luther King Jr.

[The legal expert] responded, “You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your being, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and love your neighbor as yourself.”

Jesus said to him, “You have answered correctly. Do this and you will live.” – Luke 10: 25-28 (CEB)

In the same way, faith is dead when it doesn’t result in faithful activity. – James 2:17 (CEB)

Last April I was writing my report for the Cascadia District. We were in the infancy of the pandemic. George Floyd hadn’t been killed by the police. The wildfires hadn’t burned hundreds of thousands of acres. The renewed eruption of mass shootings was still to come. The general election was months away and we were in the middle of the primary battles. And we all thought that the lockdown and disruption to life caused by the pandemic would be over well before our Annual Conference Session in June.

And here we are, a year later and things have shifted but not really changed. It would seem these are the worst of times.

But if we focus on only these aspects of the past year, we miss the faithfulness, compassion, and tenacity of our people and churches. So let’s review this last year through another lens:

- Congregations large and small raised hundreds of thousands of dollars for gift card to assist those most adversely impacted by the economic distress imposed by the pandemic. **Great Spirit UMC** raised and distributed over \$25,000 for this effort.
- Hundreds took to the streets in cities and towns across the district to proclaim that “Black Lives Matter!”
- Churches found ways to continue to provide food boxes, meals, and other critical services to those without. Pastor **Tillie MakePeace**, her ecumenical and government partners, and the folks of **Milton-Freewater and Wesley UMC** deserve a shout out for all they have done and continue to do.
- Pastors and musicians and Sunday School teachers had to innovate and learn new skills, and they did what was needed to ensure worship and learning continue.
- Congregations discovered how to connect in meaningful ways over the internet and by other means so that they could stay connected, offer each other support and care.

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- Pastors stood in front lawns and sat in camp chairs in the cold and rain and spoke to parishioners through storm doors to provide pastoral care and comfort.
- Small groups and Bible Studies figured out Zoom so they could continue to connect and explore together.
- As racial tensions mounted and the band-aid over the scourge of racism and bias and white privilege was ripped off you committed yourselves to learn, to explore, and to find ways to authentically engage and address these issues too long suppressed. **Fremont UMC** continues their deep commitment and work in this area and staged weekly demonstrations proclaiming Black Lives Matter.
- You stepped up when wildfires ravaged our state. The community of Oak Grove, the **Oak Grove UMC**, the emerging UMC/ELCA faith community of **Storyline**, other community and government and faith group partners opened a shelter for the medically fragile houseless population and did so in a matter of hours.

Maybe we should see this as the best of times since our churches and our people really embraced our tag lines of “Open Hearts. Open Minds. Open Doors” and “ReThink Church” even when we couldn’t have our buildings open. We proved and continue to prove that Church is not a building.

When you read this in your pre-conference materials, we will likely still not be in our buildings in any sense of normalcy. We will still be exploring options and learning new things as we continue to figure out how to be Church in the new reality being birthed. We are at a threshold. We have one foot in what was and the other extended ready to place it on the other side and this is a most uncomfortable place to be. But I am convinced that we will figure out how to move across this threshold, through this liminal season and become what God needs us to be.

These are the best of times even when they are the worst.

Crater Lake District **John Tucker, District Superintendent**

Resilience is the capacity to recover from difficulty. It is the ability to suffer losses without suffering defeat. It is a necessary characteristic of any who would take up a cross to follow the Jesus way. This past year we have been reminded of our need for resilience. We have been reminded that we do not follow Jesus *in order to attend worship* but that we attend worship *in order to follow Jesus*. Following Jesus has been strange this year. Many of the churches in Crater Lake engage in community outreach ministries, and COVID restrictions has made those ministries more difficult. But our churches have shown resilience in coming up with ways to abide by the safety protocols while continuing to serve their communities. This is a testimony to resilience in service to others.

Our clergy have also been resilient. Resiliency has come in the form of learning new ways to provide worship experiences for congregations. We have become more technologically savvy. Some churches have increased the size of their community from the 60 or so who would attend in-person worship to more than 200 who attend via ZOOM, YouTube, or Facebook. Clergy are working twice as hard to deliver worship content while being unable to build the interactive relationships that require in-person attention. I am grateful to the leadership clergy have provided during these challenging times.

The district is showing resilience in venturing into new territory. District Leadership is collaborating with our conference Director of Innovation to create a new Eugene-area position dedicated to establishing strong relationships with those outside our churches for the purpose of justice, advocacy, and relationship building. This is something new and different from anything we have tried before.

Like many of you, I am uncertain what the future holds for our denomination. I can say that these past few years have brought clarity regarding our purpose to stand in solidarity with those who are oppressed. We have never been clearer and I believe that our district, our annual conference, and our area will move forward with a progressive Christian faith regardless of the actions of the General Conference.

Sage District
Karen Hernandez, District Superintendent
Sharon Bryan, District Lay Leader

United Methodists are making disciples and transforming the world as we live our love for God and neighbor across the Sage District! The real and numerous challenges of COVID-19 continue to stymie, frustrate, and limit us in some ways that we never imagined would linger so long. In spite of that, ministry continues, creativity surges, new opportunities emerge, leaders are stepping forward, and God is very much at work among us!

Though long-distance and virtual ways of connecting are not without complications, they also offer new possibilities. Sage ministers have been invited to gather twice monthly, and participants have benefited from collegial support and camaraderie. In spring of 2021, a monthly online gathering for Holy Communion began, which allows laity and clergy from across our expansive district to connect as we share the sacrament apart/together. Sage churches have partnered with other UMCs in the district and country, as well as with ecumenical neighbors near and far, for everything from worship to conversation to justice-seeking work.

I am especially grateful for the many ways our churches are finding to address the Greater Northwest Area priority of dismantling racism. As our eyes are opened (for the first time or in new ways), we see the systemic injustice and supremacy that have always been present in our country and even in our churches. Sage clergy and those serving in pastoral assignments engaged in learning and conversation about privilege and cultural competency in our second annual “Meet Up in the Mountains” event, which was necessarily online in September 2020. Charge conferences all included conversations about how to address racism in our local settings. Some are energetically and sincerely attending to this priority—thanks be to God! Others have determined that when our United Methodist commitment to do no harm is applied to matters of COVID safety and racism, perhaps this is no longer the tradition for them, which is an important discernment.

My biggest hope for our future is that not a single one of the ministries in the Sage District will ever be what it was prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. For some this is obvious as there are many appointment changes and shifting church relationships across the district, but others will need to be more intentional about avoiding a return to church/business as usual. I believe that the Spirit is on the move and will guide us to renewed practices of being the body of Christ and new expressions of loving our neighbors that make the most of the ways our church (as both institution and the people within it) and our world have changed in the past year. May it be so.

Africa University

James H. Salley, Associate Vice Chancellor for Institutional Advancement

It is a joy to update and thank the members of the Oregon-Idaho Conference as dedicated partners in ministry with Africa University.

Africa University is deeply grateful to the Oregon-Idaho Conference for investing 100 percent of the asking to the Africa University Fund in 2020. Thank you for supporting the ministry of Africa University with such faithfulness and generosity. By consistently sharing your blessings, even in difficult times, the Oregon-Idaho Conference is a source of inspiration and strength.

The multilayered impact of COVID-19 and the measures instituted to control the public health crisis it caused have brought about profound and lasting adjustments in how we live, work, serve and connect. For Africa University, these include:

- A shift to online-only teaching and learning from late March through December 2020. As the only university in Zimbabwe accredited to offer online degrees, Africa University had the infrastructure and expertise to transition smoothly and break new ground with competency-based student assessment tools.
- Gifts totaling more than \$300,000 from across the United Methodist connection for COVID-19 relief efforts. These second-mile gifts enabled Africa University to care for around 300 international students who were stranded on its campus between March and late July 2020.
- Excellent student retention and modest enrollment growth. More than 3,000 students enrolled for the 2020-2021 academic year—16 percent more than the previous year—with 2,395 studying full-time. Fifty-seven percent of full-time students were female, and 24 percent were international.
- **Innovation, outreach, and service** through:
 - The development and distribution of masks and hand sanitizer (*of its own design/formulation*), that are now certified for commercial production.
 - The launch, via a web application, of farm to household delivery of fresh produce, meat and poultry products by the Africa University Dream Farm Trust.
 - Two student-led initiatives—*Feed a Family* and *Ben Hill UMC Women’s Residence Girl Child Support Program*—that provided medical care, food, and school fees assistance to vulnerable families in the wider community. Campus-based and home-based students gave up meals, raised resources, procured supplies, and organized safe distribution to families.
- The successful completion of two new buildings—the Highland Park UMC-funded student union facility and a dormitory for female students. A new solar farm powers the Highland Park women’s dormitory.

Africa University’s online campus is here to stay, thanks to infrastructure enhancements and the many lessons learned in 2020. Africa’s business, philanthropic and higher education sectors are taking notice of Africa University’s adaptability in unprecedented times. Africa University is currently ranked #1 in Zimbabwe and moved up 59 places in 2020, from 98th to 39th among the top 200 universities on the continent of Africa.

Africa University continues to grow its pan-African presence and impact through new programs, partnerships and blended learning options.

Thank you, Oregon-Idaho United Methodists, for helping to prepare young leaders to be “an aroma that brings life” to a world that is crying out for justice, compassion, healing, and wholeness (2 Corinthians 2:14-16). Through your prayers and gifts, you participate with the students, lecturers, and administrators in disciple-making by example.

In journeying alongside Africa University in ministry, Oregon-Idaho United Methodists are the church in the world—seeding hope and sharing the love of Christ. You affirm that when we are all in it together, God’s grace is indeed sufficient. To God be the glory.

Candler School of Theology
Jan Love, Mary Lee Hardin Willard Dean and
Professor of Christianity and World Politics

Since our founding in 1914, **Candler School of Theology at Emory University** has educated more than 10,000 students, shaping thoughtful, principled, and courageous leaders who are dedicated to transforming the world in the name of Jesus Christ. We continued our work even through this most difficult year, with the coronavirus continuing its march around the world, a reckoning for racial injustice rolling across our nation, and a toxic, divisive political atmosphere challenging our civic life. Perhaps there has been no better year than this to underscore the importance of faithful and creative leaders for the church's ministries throughout the world—the type of leaders we form at Candler.

Though our mission remains unchanged, the pandemic has necessitated many changes in how we undertake that mission: We have shifted classes online, redesigned syllabi to support optimal online learning, developed new ways to worship and experience community together in the virtual sphere, and discerned which new habits and modalities have promise for enriching our work even after the pandemic ends. Through these efforts, we and our students have gained deep experience in being flexible, adaptable, and creative as we respond to the demands of ever-changing contexts—experience that not only serves us well now, but will continue to serve us and our ministries far into the future.

Candler is one of 13 official seminaries of The United Methodist Church, yet true to the Methodist tradition of ecumenical openness, we enthusiastically welcome students from 44 denominations, with 46% of MDiv students coming from the Wesleyan tradition. Our student body reflects the diversity and breadth of the Christian faithful, with an enrollment of 483 from 12 countries and 37 states, 44 percent persons of color (U.S.), and a median age of 27 among MDivs. This diversity is a rich blessing, and this year we created a new staff position of assistant director of student life for diversity, equity and inclusion to foster understanding and ensure we are responsive to the needs of our diverse student body.

We offer six single degrees (MDiv, MTS, MRL MRPL, ThM, DMin) and ten dual degrees. Our Doctor of Ministry degree is 90 percent online, so students can remain in their places of ministry while completing their degrees. Our new Chaplaincy concentration is now among our most popular, and our Teaching Parish program enables students to serve as student pastors in local churches throughout the southeast, learning firsthand about shepherding a congregation; this year, there were 36 participants.

Alleviating student debt through generous financial aid remains among our top priorities. In 2019-2020, we awarded nearly \$6.6 million in financial aid, with 100% of MDiv and 98% of all students receiving support. All MDiv students who are certified candidates for ordained ministry in the UMC receive full-tuition scholarships, and all MDiv, MTS, and master of religious leadership students who are enrolled part-time or more receive a scholarship covering at least 50% of tuition for the length of their program.

The demands of the pandemic did not diminish Candler's robust schedule of events. Candler's Black Church Studies program celebrated its 30th anniversary with a yearlong slate of online lectures and panel discussions, now available at vimeo.com/candler. We also launched The Candler Foundry to make theological education accessible to all, through short and semester-length courses taught by Candler faculty, videos and discussion guides to spark conversation in groups or one-on-one, and Facebook Live panel discussions connecting theology with current issues in the world. View the latest offerings at candlerfoundry.emory.edu.

Candler's ability to fulfill our mission of educating faithful and creative leaders for the church's ministries throughout the world depends upon your prayers, partnership, and support. Thank you for the countless ways you advance this vital ministry in the life of our denomination. We invite you to visit us online at candler.emory.edu.

Claremont School of Theology
Kah-Jin Jeffrey Kuan, President and Professor of Hebrew Bible

As you know, CST values its connection to The United Methodist Church and particularly to the conferences of the Western Jurisdiction. I am grateful for your continued support of our students, alumni/ae, faculty, and mission through this time of trial.

Since 1885, CST has existed to prepare students to become agents of transformation, healing, and renovation in the world, and our alumni/ae are evidence of this mission. Every day, I see them serving local communities through compassionate and prophetic teaching, preaching, chaplaincy, and non-profit work. The world hungers for this kind of religious leadership, and **I am grateful for innovative, effective, and restorative ways our alumni/ae, faculty, and staff have responded to the pandemic.**

Six years ago, CST developed a **strategic plan** based on three goals: *promoting transformative education, engaging local and global communities, and achieving long-term institutional stability.*

I am proud to say CST's sacred **transformative theological education** has and will continue. Through this pandemic, our faculty and staff have cared holistically for our students through listening, teaching, and offering grace for one another. Because of our renowned hybrid programs, our students, faculty, and staff were well-equipped to pivot to 100% online programming from the beginning of the pandemic and have continued over the last year to innovate and remake their teaching and learning strategies.

Additionally, we have developed new academic programs to **engage local and global communities**. Most recently, we added an Advanced Certificate for Military Chaplaincy program. As you well know, military personnel and their families carry huge burdens and are often placed in situations where their religious beliefs, ethics, and moral integrity are challenged, so we've developed a new program specifically designed to prepare Chaplains for effective ministry in military settings.

To ensure reaching **long-term institutional sustainability**, we continue to seek viable and innovative solutions. As many of you may have heard, our litigation with the Claremont Colleges has not gone as planned. However, we continue to fight the good fight, and work on relationships with Willamette University and Yalong Group USA (an organization that wants to establish a college on CST's Claremont campus). Unfortunately, the current state of our litigation has slowed the steps of our affiliation with Willamette. Willamette staff and trustees are as disappointed in the appellate decision as we are, and they continue to support our efforts. Per our affiliation agreement, we continue to meet regularly to move forward with collaborations and steps to strengthen our relationship. In the meantime, CST maintains its own accreditation and academic systems, and our main campus remains in Claremont. The Claremont campus houses our largest number of residential students, all business operations, the Office of the President, the Office of Advancement and Communications, the Office of the Dean and Vice President of Academic Affairs, and Student Services.

CST has a vision of becoming the foremost progressive theological school in the Western United States, and with an extension campus in Salem and a shared campus in Claremont the vision is being clarified. For our students, we have linked the two campuses, with state-of-the-art synchronous classroom technology that enables students 800 miles apart to learn simultaneously from a single professor. We currently have students, faculty, and staff in both locations, and by affiliating with Willamette, we retain both our connection to The United Methodist Church and our reputation as an excellent theological school with renowned programs.

We are also encouraged to have CST alumnus Rev. Steve Horswill-Johnston on board as our interim Vice President of Communications. Steve is a four-time Emmy-winning communications executive who serves as the Chief Communications Officer for Discipleship Ministries in Nashville. We're looking forward to the ways he will inject life and strategic engagement into our Admissions and Advancement efforts. As both an alumnus and board member, Steve's love for CST coupled with his communications expertise and his deep knowledge of the institution is a gift to our community.

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Certainly, we could not do this critical work without the generosity and grace of the conferences of the Western Jurisdiction. Thank you for your continued interest and support of CST. We invite you to please stay connected through our monthly newsletters, our website, and our social media channels. Together, we are CST

Drew University Theological School Melanie Johnson-DeBaufre, Interim Dean

As with most other schools in the northeast of the U.S., Drew University evacuated its campus in early spring 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Drew Theological School faculty and staff adapted to this challenge with resilience, compassion, and creativity. The Theological School faculty put their courses all online, led development workshops for faculty across the university, and, in order to accommodate our many international admits who would not be able to enter the United States for fall 2020, designed an asynchronous Master of Divinity program. As a result of this work, the Theological School welcomed 147 new students, its largest entering class in a decade, with an enrollment of 380 for the current academic year. Our chapel team has also led the way in creating online worship experiences that connect the Drew community now across the globe. All degree programs at the Theological School include interdisciplinary courses that demand out-of-the-box thinking, apprenticeship training that addresses real-world issues, and modes of learning that promote adaptability and innovation. Our MDiv and MATM degrees include a required gateway year, vocational pathways, and experiential learning that develops and deepens adaptive leadership skills. The curriculum features a team-designed and taught interdisciplinary sequence of core courses reflecting the integration of the theological disciplines and practices characteristic of the life of faith. The faculty have also articulated shared values that 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. Drew cultivates pastors, preachers, deacons, activists, teachers, and thought leaders who go all over the world to take their place as the next generation of faith leaders and change agents.

Saint Paul School of Theology

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

This past year, we have all faced new challenges amid these unsettled times. Saint Paul School of Theology began the 2020-2021 academic year offering students an online option for all courses. With many students choosing to attend class solely online, our Student Council created a monthly “Chat & Chew” where students, faculty, and staff come together to eat lunch and talk. In addition, Rev. Rod Newman, our Oklahoma Campus Chapel Coordinator, crafts a weekly Community Prayer to provide encouragement and faithfulness as the school seeks to provide spiritual formation in new ways.

Saint Paul staff and faculty continue to contribute to the academy, church, and society. This year, we have added new adjunct professors, including Rev. Dr. Carol Cook-Moore and Rev. Dr. Tiffany Nagel Monroe both of the OKUMC, Rev. Dr. Robert Turner of Vernon Chapel AME, UMC Deaconess Cindy Johnson of Rio Grande Conference, Rev. Adam Hamilton and Debi Nixon both of Church of the Resurrection, Rev. Chebon Kernell of the UMC Native American Comprehensive Plan, and Rev. Dr. Shannon Fleck of the Oklahoma Conference of Churches.

In February, Saint Paul held the 2021 Slater-Willson Lecture online featuring Rev. Dr. Miguel A. De La Torre. His lecture, “Why Do They Come?” explored the political, economic, and social causes of our current immigration crisis. Before the lecture, Rev. Dr. De La Torre participated in a student-led forum, entering a conversation centering around the practical aspects of ministry and immigration. Later in April, Saint Paul Evangelical Society, led by Dr. Hal Knight, hosted a lecture given by Dr. Sammy G. Alfaro, Associate Professor of Theology at Grand Canyon University and Pastor of Iglesia Nuevo Dia (New Day Church), on the “Pastoral Strategies for Ministering Among Latinx Immigrant Communities.”

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And for the first time, on May 22, Saint Paul held a virtual commencement celebration with videos, cap and gown photos, online congratulatory messages from friends and family, and a commencement address by Rev. Chebon Kernell. The class of 2021 had 22 graduates, including 16 Master of Divinity and 1 Doctor of Ministry graduates. Due to the pandemic, for safety concerns, Saint Paul has postponed our 60th Anniversary Celebration. However, we have rescheduled the event for Friday, October 22 and look forward to coming together as a community for a safe, in-person gathering.

Through a Board initiative related to diversity and inclusion, Saint Paul created a working group on Native American theology and ministries comprised of Native theologians and church leaders. Their efforts are focused on how the church and academy can work together toward healing generational trauma related to the spread of Christianity and the genocide of Indigenous North Americans.

As we have happily reported in past years, Saint Paul is financially sound and operates with a balanced budget. The changes made these last years have established a solid financial foundation for years of sustainability. We continue to be grateful for donations from the community that provide technology, scholarships, and emergency assistance to students. Our significant investments in technology have recently allowed our staff, faculty, and students to transition to a fully hybrid educational delivery model providing a safe learning environment during the pandemic. Our faculty was uniquely adept at managing technology in the classroom before the pandemic, making the transition to all online courses a smooth process.

Saint Paul School of Theology is blessed to be your partner in ministry and help those seeking more to answer the call. We are a seminary that offers online and on-campus classes with a flexible schedule to help our students manage pastoral leadership demands in the 21st century. 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 healing in these unsettled times and for generations to come.

Wesley Theological Seminary

For the world, 2020 was a year like no other. In the midst of a global pandemic, plus resurgent racism, mass unemployment, and politically challenging times in the US, Wesley remained committed to fostering wisdom and courage, preparing graduates to lead innovative ministries while remaining grounded in our biblical and theological traditions for the sake of God's inbreaking kingdom.

Research projects support congregational community engagement and envision future ministry

Wesley is pleased to announce new opportunities for UMC congregations to explore, clarify, and pursue thriving in their communities. Through **The Source Collaborative**, Wesley will work with three cohorts of regional congregations in a two-year process of prayer, community engagement, congregational visioning, and coaching, with the goal of following Jesus in mission and ministry. Interested congregations can contact innovation@wesleyseminary.edu for more information. This work, funded by a \$1 million Lilly Endowment, Inc, grant, raises Wesley's role as a leading research and development seminary for the whole church and complements Wesley's other Lilly Endowment-funded projects focused on congregational vitality.

We invite you to discover the latest research and conversations generated by the Wesley community through our new web portal, #EngageInTheseTimes, at www.wesleyseminary.edu/#engage.

Using research and partnerships to reach and equip the next generation of ministers

Research shows that the primary way people learn about and begin to consider seminary options is through their pastor or an alumnus. Whether you feel called or you know someone who does, Wesley is ready to work with you as we make theological education more accessible and relevant to the realities of ministry today—for laity and clergy, for those seeking a degree or certification or continuing education, and for ministry from within or beyond the church.

Take your ministry to the next level

In addition to full master's degrees, Wesley offers graduate certificates for those preparing for specialized

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ministry! The new **Certificate for Children and Youth Ministry and Advocacy (CYMA)** is designed for people who work with and advocate for children and young people, whether in churches, schools, or non-profit organizations. The **non-residential certificate can be completed in 12 to 15 months** through online coursework and up to two residential sessions. For more information, visit www.wesleyseminary.edu/admissions/cyma-3. The **Certificate in Faith and Public Life** explores the foundations of public theology, religious freedom, and civil discourse through graduate courses. For more information, visit www.wesleyseminary.edu/ice/programs/public-theology/public-life/

Wesley is a leader in **Doctor of Ministry programs** in specialized tracks that can include international study. Find out more or apply at www.wesleyseminary.edu/doctorofministry/.

Enrich your congregational outreach and explore new dimensions of ministry

The Lewis Center for Church Leadership continues to be on the leading edge of research for the local church. The Lewis Center's **Leading Ideas e-newsletter** is the go-to source for over 20,000 people in ministry each week. Stay on top of their latest developments by subscribing to their podcast or newsletter at www.churchleadership.com. Also look for new practical online courses at www.lewisonlinelearning.org.

The Center for Public Theology equips pastors, seminarians, people of faith, and the media to create spaces for civil dialogue at the intersection of religion and politics. For more information, visit <http://www.wesleyseminary.edu/ice/programs/public-theology/>.

The Henry Luce III Center for the Arts and Religion works with students, religious communities, artists, and scholars exploring the intersection of the arts and theology. For information on upcoming workshops and shows at the Dadian Gallery, visit www.luceartsandreligion.org.

Stay connected

Ready to join in our mission? Find out more about how you can be part of the future of Wesley at www.wesleyseminary.edu/support/. Join the Wesley Community online via Wesley's social media, www.facebook.com/wesleyseminary, on Instagram [@wesleyseminary](https://www.instagram.com/wesleyseminary), and on Twitter [@WesTheoSem](https://twitter.com/WesTheoSem), or sign up for our electronic newsletter, *eCalling*, at www.wesleyseminary.edu/ecalling.