

September 15, 2020

Dear Mission Partner,

I am honored to serve as General Secretary of Global Ministries and UMCOR. The work of this agency is my life's vocation and I pledge to you my wholehearted devotion to God's mission through The United Methodist Church.

This is a time of considerable challenge for Methodist mission represented by the coronavirus pandemic and the uncertain future of the denomination. Here, in my first communication with you as general secretary, I want to be transparent about some of the immediate challenges we face and some of the operational adjustments necessary to respond to them. At the heart of our efforts, of course, is the belief that Global Ministries is in mission to witness to what God has done and is doing. God's mission will continue no matter what shape the church or its agencies may take in the future.

I met with all staff of Global Ministries and UMCOR in a virtual Town Hall on September 9. It was a good meeting and allowed me the opportunity to share my vision for our work together and to explain some realignments in our organizational structure. These realignments had been discussed earlier with the Executive Committee and explored in detail with the officers of the Board. I see the plan outlined here as operative for at least the next 18 months.

Our four mission priorities remain the same: Missionaries, Evangelism and Church Revitalization, Global Health, and Disaster Response and Development. I have identified five key elements which must be in play if our work in these areas is to be strong and effective. These include narrower, strategically determined foci in each area; greater accountability, both individually and collectively; more collaboration within and beyond the agency; critical use of monitoring and evaluation to measure the efficiency and effectiveness of our work; and effective communication within the church and beyond.

Guiding and overseeing our work will be a 12-member leadership team, a cabinet type entity, that will involve more voices at the table than in past years. We will have a flatter structure and three of the previous units have been now split into six. While our overall work continues to be global, one of the new units, Multi-ethnic Ministries, will focus on racial and ethnic ministries in the US, including the National Plans and our participation in the anti-racism work in the church. Except for the Missionary Service unit, all Executive Director positions have been eliminated. I am thankful for the role that Rev. Amy Valdez Barker played over the past three years in the organization and wish her well in the new ministries that will come her way. Information on these operational changes will be posted on the website in due course.

We have been working remotely now for six months and will continue to do so until at least the beginning of next year. This new way of operating is accompanied by financial concerns. The projected 2021 Global Ministries budget will be about \$34 million, a 40 percent reduction over the past three years. We have cut more than 60 staff positions over the past year. Such reductions have been and will continue to be painful but are necessary to reach realistic operational levels with the funds available.

It is a privilege to be called to serve as General Secretary for Global Ministries at this unique time in our history. It is a position which I accepted both humbly and energetically after much prayerful thought. As we journey together, please feel free to reach out to me with any thoughts or comments on the contents of this letter or on any other matters.

Thanks for your ongoing support and your prayers for me personally and for Global Ministries.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Roland Fernandes". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "R".

Roland Fernandes  
General Secretary