

2026 Annual Conference Session

North Georgia Conference
The United Methodist Church



UNTO the
LEAST
of THESE

June 18-20, 2026
The Classic Center, Athens, Georgia
Bishop Robin Dease, presiding

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2026 Annual Conference Session Handbook

Report numbers marked with an asterisk () are on the Consent Agenda unless removed on June 18. The Consent Agenda is listed on page 14.*

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Bishop's Welcome

Dear North Georgia United Methodists,

Welcome to the 2026 North Georgia Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church!

This year, the theme for our Annual Conference session is “Unto the Least of These” based on Matthew 25:40. The Gospel teaches us that what we do for our brothers and sisters, especially those seen by society as the least, we do for Christ himself. How we treat the sick, the immigrant, and the neighbor facing hard times is a reflection of our love for Christ. How we see Christ in others, especially those who feel unseen, is a testament to our faith.

This year we have a lot of work and a lot of joy ahead for our Annual Conference session, but our work won't be done unless we have lifted up our neighbors, listened to our communities, and learned from each other. We will worship, pray, conduct business, and listen for the guidance of the Holy Spirit. We'll receive a special offering.

There is important business before us this year as we prayerfully elect delegates to the 2028 General and Jurisdictional Conferences. Additionally, after a year and a half of prayerful study, engagement, discernment, and diligent work, the Connectional Table of the North Georgia Annual Conference will bring forth the Georgia Unification Plan for your consideration. This plan reflects the work of United Methodists from across the North and South Georgia Annual Conferences. We have an opportunity to expand the footprint of two Annual Conferences and demonstrate a new era of unity and healing in The United Methodist Church.

We have been called in this moment to be a witness to unity in a season of division. We have been called to dream beyond our Annual Conference lines and to work toward the growth of The United Methodist Church across our state. Our calling is clear: to form disciples who, empowered by the Holy Spirit, love boldly, serve joyfully, and lead courageously in our local communities and worldwide connections.

This year we will open with worship at 10 am Thursday, June 18, and conclude our work on Saturday, June 20. I encourage you to prepare using the material shared with you in this document and to pray for one another, pray for our time together, and pray that all will hear the invitation and follow Christ.

Know that I pray for you daily. I look forward to seeing you as we embark upon holy conferencing.



Grace and peace,
Bishop Robin Dease
Georgia Area
The United Methodist Church

Host District Welcome

Dear Members of the 2026 Annual Conference,

On behalf of the South East District, welcome back to Athens! Our conference theme this year is “Unto the Least of These,” and throughout the week we will be focused on all the ways we share the love of Jesus, especially by offering help and hope to those on the margins of society. Athens is a welcoming city that provides services and resources for all who need safety and hospitality. We hope this Annual Conference will invite and spark creativity in ways of love and service.

For those attending annual conference for the first time, we extend a special welcome to you. Please look for volunteers around The Classic Center who are ready to help you navigate. Be sure to read about parking availability and print your Parking Permit from the handbook. As in past years, breakfast and lunch vendors will be available in the atrium. And know that Athens is filled with a variety of restaurants within a short distance of the Classic Center.

Again, welcome. May God open each of our hearts and hands as we respond to Jesus’s call to bring God’s love “Unto the Least of These.”

Rev. Dr. Beth Sanders
South East District Superintendent

Visuals in Worship: “Unto The Least of These”

The visuals team endeavors to transform the space of the annual conference into a sacred environment where God’s presence is not only spoken, but seen and experienced. This year’s guiding scripture is Matthew 25:37–40—“unto the least of these.” Large banners fill the stage, each depicting either vines bearing fruit or tangled thorns. The images are also reflected on the altar frontal, where vines and thorns are intentionally kept separate, with space between them.

This visual separation reflects the choices before us. The vines represent life and the life-giving responses that reflect Christ’s love. The thorns represent choices that diminish and divide. Throughout the conference, these visuals invite us to recognize that every interaction with “the least of these” is an encounter with Jesus Christ—and that each moment holds the opportunity to choose a way of life shaped by grace.

Prayer Room

The prayer room extends the theme of Matthew 25 through a wide range of artistic expressions offered by individuals and churches across the North Georgia Conference. Artwork includes mixed media collage, oil and acrylic painting, watercolor, photography, and multiple handmade quilts. Together, these pieces reflect both the needs of the world and the call to respond with compassion, justice, and love.

Contributions come from individuals and teams representing churches and ministries across the conference, including Northbrook UMC, Neighborhood Church (Atlanta), Moore’s Chapel UMC, The Bridge UMC (Milledgeville), Haralson UMC, Trinity UMC (Atlanta), Zoar

UMC (Snellville), Wesley Chapel UMC (Stockbridge), Wesley UMC (Evans), First UMC Barnesville, Roswell UMC, and North Georgia UMC Disaster Response Ministries.

Highlights include artwork created by children exploring creation care, quilts depicting acts of hospitality and inclusion, and photography capturing moments of service, from feeding ministries and disaster response to everyday acts of compassion. Several pieces center on the image of Christ encountered in those who hunger, are imprisoned, or are overlooked.

The prayer room invites participants to pause, reflect, and pray as they consider how they are called to respond to “the least of these” in their own lives.

Service of Licensing, Commissioning, and Ordination

Thursday evening’s service celebrates those answering God’s call to ministry. The visual elements for this service are shaped by flame imagery and warm colors—reds, oranges, and golds—symbolizing the presence and movement of the Holy Spirit.

The pulpit frontal, altar table, and kneelers reflect the flow of the Spirit, reminding us that the same Spirit who calls continues to guide and empower those who serve.

Clergy are invited to wear robes and red stoles as a visible sign of welcome, surrounding those who are being licensed, commissioned, and ordained with the presence of a community already shaped by that call.

Each ordinand receives a hand-crafted stole, created by members of the North Georgia Annual Conference, as a tangible sign of their call and the community that supports them.

Service of Remembrance

The Service of Remembrance on Friday at 2:00 PM is marked by white and gold, reflecting the hope of resurrection and the promise of eternal life.

Wreath ornaments, decorated with leaves and vines, hang from the altar table in honor of each saint named. A candle is also placed on the altar for each person, marking their life with light and remembrance. The vines symbolize the life-giving love these individuals shared with others, while the wreath reflects the promise of life that endures beyond death.

At the conclusion of the service, families are invited to come forward to the space in front of the stage to receive the wreath created in memory of their loved one. Each wreath serves as a tangible reminder of a life rooted in Christ and shared with others.

Closing Worship and Sending Forth

Closing worship gathers the conference for a service of sending forth, as new appointments are named and prayers are offered for each district.

Holy Communion serves as a unifying act of worship, reminding us that Christ meets us at the table and sends us into the world. Having reflected on Matthew 25 throughout the conference, we are sent to live out that calling, recognizing Christ in others and responding with lives shaped by grace.

Our Thanks

We are grateful for the many individuals and congregations who contributed their creativity, time, and care to the visuals of this year’s annual conference. From those who created artwork and handcrafted stoles to those who prepared the space and supported worship behind the scenes, each contribution helps shape an environment where God’s presence can be seen and experienced.

We give thanks for the ways these shared gifts invite the whole conference to reflect, pray, and respond to Christ in “the least of these.”

Respectfully submitted,
The Annual Conference Visuals Team
Deanne Lynch, Pam McCurdy, Cyndi McDonald, Sara Cook, Sheila Crowe, PJ Johnston,
Ellynda Lipsey, Ann Mann, Amy McCollough, and Tasha Wiggins.

**2026 Annual Conference Special Offering:
Center for Clergy Excellence’s International Fund**

The church has always moved across borders: carrying hope, building relationships, and answering the call wherever God leads. This year's Annual Conference Special Offering will support the Center of Clergy Excellence's International Fund. This fund will help pastors navigate the practical steps required to serve across cultural and national boundaries. Your generosity today is more than a financial gift. It is a statement of faith that the church moves together, and when one part of the body is ready to serve, the whole body leans in to help. Let's open doors together.

Churches are invited to receive the offering any time before Annual Conference, but many churches choose the first Sunday in June. One person from each local church will have the opportunity to present a check from their church during the Service of Remembrance on Friday, June 19, at 2 p.m., or checks may be submitted to the Conference Treasurer’s Office. Please indicate that funds are Annual Conference Special Offering.

160th Session of the North Georgia Conference
The United Methodist Church
June 18-20, 2026

The Classic Center - Athens, Georgia
Theme "Unto the Least of These"

**Denotes Order of the Day*

Wednesday, June 17, 2026

8:00 am Prayer Room set up – Athena A
8:00 am Hush Arbor set up – Grand Hall 2-3
8:00 am Display Set up begins – Grand Hall 6
8:00 am Quest Set-up – Parthenon 2
3:00 pm Youth Delegate Orientation – Hotel
3-4 pm In person Check-in/Credentialing begins
5:30-7:30 pm In person Check-in /Credentialing continues

***4:00 pm Clergy Executive Session – Grand Hall**

(Rehearsal for service of Licensing, Commissioning, and Ordination immediately following Clergy Executive Session in Grand Hall)

Thursday, June 18, 2026

7-9 am, 11 am-2 pm Concessions – Atrium
6-10 am Quest Diagnostics – Parthenon 2
7:00 am Bishop's Breakfast for Thursday's presenters – Parthenon 1
7 am-6 pm Prayer Room – Athena A
7 am-6 pm Hush Arbor – Grand Hall 2-3
7:30 am Service of Holy Communion – Grand Hall 2-3
7 am-6 pm First Aid/EMT – Grand Hall Pre-Function
7:30 am-5 pm In Person Check-in – Grand Hall 5
8am - 6 pm Displays – Grand Hall 6
8:00 am Grand Hall 1 – Youth Members/ Offering Assignments

8:30 am Lay Candidate Forum – Grand Hall

9:45 am Pre -Service Music – Grand Hall

***10:00 am Session One – Grand Hall**

Opening Worship
Preacher – Bishop Robin Dease
Worship Planners: Susan Allen Grady & Laura Rappold

10:45 am Call to Order – 160th Session – Bishop Dease

Prayer
Welcome by Host Committee
Organization of Conference
Standing Rules Committee – to present
Consent Agenda – to present
Voting Demonstration

Ballot # 1
 Board of Ordained Ministry Report: Presentation of Candidates
 Historic Examination for Admission into Full Connection
 Report of Ballot # 1
 Ballot # 2
 Announcements
 Closing Prayer
 12:30 pm Adjournment

2:00 pm Session Two – Grand Hall
 Call to Order
 Prayer
 Reporting and Balloting continue throughout session
 Afternoon Devotion
 Conference Committee on Nominations –to present
 North Georgia Housing and Homeless
 Salary Equalization Task Force Update
 Murphy Harpst
 Common Table Report: One Georgia Task Force
 Announcements
 Prayer
 5:15 pm Adjournment

***7:30 pm Session Three – Service of Licensure, Commissioning, and Ordination – Grand Hall**
 Preacher: Bishop Hector Antonio Burgos-Nunez
 Worship: Susan Allen Grady & Laura Rappold,
 Center for Clergy Excellence
 Offering: Ministerial Education Fund
 Clergy participating: black robes/red stole
 Reception in the Atrium following the service

Friday, June 19, 2026

7:00 am Bishop's Breakfast for Friday's presenters – Parthenon 1
 7 am-6 pm Prayer Room – Athena A
 7 am-6 pm Hush Arbor – Grand Hall 2-3
 7 am-6 pm First Aid/EMT – Grand Hall Pre-Function
 7:30 am Service of Holy Communion – Grand Hall 2-3
 7:00 am-9 am & 11am-2 pm Concessions open – Atrium
 7:30 – 6 pm Displays – Grand Hall 6
 8 am-5 pm In Person Check - continues – Grand Hall 5

8:15 am Gathering Music – Grand Hall
***8:30 am Session Four – Grand Hall**
 8:30 am Call to Order
 Prayer

Morning Devotion
 Reporting and Balloting continue
 CFA Report
 Barnes Evaluation and Administration Team
 Disaster Response
 Blessing of Valancia Mari Ellyzsa, Mission Advocate for Young Adult Mission
 Service at Global Ministries
 United Methodist Men & Scouting Ministry
 United Women in Faith
 Consent Agenda – remove any requested items
 Pension and Health Benefits
 Recognition of Retirees
 Announcements
 Prayer
 12:00pm Adjournment
 12:00 pm Rehearsal for Service of Remembrance

***2:00 pm Session Five– Grand Hall**
 ***Worship – Service of Remembrance**
 Preacher – Vance Ross
 Worship Planners: Susan Allen Grady & Laura Rappold,
 Center for Clergy Excellence
 Annual Conference Special Offering

 3:25 pm Gathering Music/ Song
***3:30 pm Call to Order of Business Session**
 Prayer
 Reporting/Balloting continue throughout session
 Trustees
 Conference Safe Sanctuary Policy
 Equitable Comp
 Wellroot
 Wesley Woods
 Laity Address
 Standing Rules
 Property Resolutions
 Announcements
 Closing Prayer
 5:30 pm Adjournment

7:30 pm Session Six – Grand Hall (subject to cancellation if voting has concluded)
 Call to Order of Voting Session
 Reporting/Balloting
 Adjournment to be set

Saturday, June 14, 2025

7 am – noon Prayer Room - Athena A
7 am – noon Hush Arbor – Grand Hall 2-3
7 am – 1 pm First Aid/EMT – Grand Hall Pre-Function
7:00 am Bishop's Breakfast for Saturday presenters
7:30 am Service of Holy Communion – Grand Hall 2-3
7-9 am Concessions open – Atrium
7:45 am Rehearsal for Closing Worship – Grand Hall
8-10 am On-Site Check In – Grand Hall 5
8:20 am Gathering Music

***8:30 am Session Seven – Grand Hall**

8:30 am Call to Order – Bishop Dease
Prayer
Morning Devotion
Episcopacy Committee
North Georgia Camping and Retreat Ministries
Committee on the Status and Role of Women
General Commission on the Status and Role of Women
Faith Connection Federal Credit Union Scholarship
Georgia United Methodist Foundation
UM Commission on Higher Education Francis Asbury Award
Future Dates & Sites of Annual Conference
2026: June 18-20, 2026 (Thursday - Saturday)
2027: June 15-18, 2027 (Tuesday - Friday)
2028: June 1-3, 2028 (Thursday - Saturday)
2029: June 14-16, 2029 (Thursday - Saturday)
Marian Wilder Award – Aldersgate Homes
Committee on Nominations to Vote

***10:30 am Service of Word and Table & Fixing of Appointments – Grand Hall**

Preaching: Max Vincent
Worship Planners: Susan Allen Grady & Laura Rappold

12:00 pm Adjournment of 160th Session of the North Georgia Conference

Meeting of the newly elected delegation immediately following adjournment. Room to be announced.

2026 Consent Agenda

North Georgia Standing Rule C.7. provides for a Consent Agenda to expedite business during the annual conference session by **adopting reports to be included in the Conference Journal without verbal action by the annual conference**. The following reports, indicated by number, name of agency, and page, will be offered as the 2026 Consent Agenda on Thursday, June 18. Please read the reports carefully prior to that session. Unless reports are removed from the Consent Agenda at that time, all reports will be accepted and approved by consent of the annual conference. Reports **removed** from the Consent Agenda will be scheduled as time permits.

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2026 NGUMC Annual Conference Meals and Gatherings

Tuesday, June 16, 2026

12:00 pm Production Lunch – Grand Hall 1

Wednesday, June 17, 2026

12:00 pm Production Lunch – Grand Hall 1

5:00 pm Registration Boxed Dinner – Grand Hall 1

7:00 pm Youth Members – Cabinet Dinner – Athens First UMC

7:00 pm Order of Deacons Dinner – Last Resort (RSVP required)

Thursday, June 18, 2026

7:00 am Bishop's Breakfast with Presenters – Parthenon 1

7:00 am Youth Members – Complimentary Breakfast – Homewood Suites

8:00 am Extension Ministers Breakfast – Athena B-D

12:00 pm Production Lunch – Grand Hall 1

12:00 pm Cabinet Lunch – Olympia 1

12:00 pm Local Pastors Gathering – Athena B-D

12:00 pm Youth Members and Campus Ministry Representatives – Homewood Suites

5:00 pm Production Dinner – Grand Hall 1

5:00 pm Cabinet Dinner – Olympia 1

5:00 pm Youth Members – Complimentary Dinner – Homewood Suites

8:30 pm Ordination Reception – Atrium

Friday, June 19, 2026

7:00 am Bishop's Breakfast with Presenters – Parthenon 1

7:00 am United Women in Faith Breakfast – Athena B-D

7:00 am Youth Members – Complimentary Breakfast – Homewood Suites

12:00 pm Production Lunch – Grand Hall 1

12:00 pm Youth Members – Complimentary Lunch – Homewood Suites

NO Cabinet Lunch – Cabinet will attend Laity Luncheon

12:00 pm Laity Luncheon – Athena Ballroom F-J

12:00 pm North Georgia Clergywomen Lunch – Empire Room

12:00 pm North Georgia Clergy Spouses Lunch – Parthenon 1

TBD Memorial Service Choir Lunch – Athena B-D

NO Youth Member Dinner – Youth Members will go out with Church members & Pastor

5:00 pm Production Dinner – Grand Hall 1

5:00 pm North Georgia United Methodist Ministers Fellowship – Athena F

5:00 pm Candler Club Dinner, Emory University – Parthenon 1

Saturday, June 20, 2026

7:00 am Bishop's Breakfast with Presenters – Parthenon 1

7:00 am Youth Members – Complimentary Breakfast – Homewood Suites

8:30 am KCA Youth Orchestra Gathering Space – Athena B-D

12:00 pm Production Boxed Lunch – Grand Hall 1

12:00 pm KCA Closing Youth Orchestra Boxed Lunch – Athena B-D
12:00 pm Newly Elected Delegation Meeting – Parthenon 1

Registration and Assistance Committee

The Registration and Assistance Committee provides name badges to all persons attending annual conference. It also distributes and collects reimbursement forms from persons eligible for financial assistance.

Registration is required both online and onsite. Online registration is open May 14 – June 12, 2026 at noon at www.ngumc.org/AC2026.

Clergy must use their georgiaumc.net email account to register online.

Lay members and reserves must register online using their email of record.

- An email of record is defined as a unique email address entered in the conference's data application (Data Services).
- Lay members and reserves may not share an email address. They must all have a unique email of record to register.
- Churches and districts are responsible for entering their Lay members and reserves information, including their email of record into Data Services.

Onsite credentialing is in Grand Hall 5 of the Classic Center:

- Wednesday, June 17, 3-4 pm and 5:30-7:30 pm
- Thursday, June 18, 7:30-5 pm
- Friday, June 19, 8 am - 5 pm
- Saturday, June 20, 8 am - 10 am

Name badge categories with voting designations:

There are seven styles of name badges. Appropriate styles of North Georgia Conference name badges are necessary for participation within the Bar of the Conference. Badges list name and indicate voice and vote status for Annual Conference (AC) and Clergy Executive Sessions (CES).

1. Red bar – voice and vote on all matters at AC*.

- a. Local church lay members to annual conference ¶251.1; ¶32
- b. District at-large lay members (for equalization) ¶33
- c. Diaconal ministers, active or retired ¶33
- d. Active deaconesses under episcopal appointment within bounds of the annual conference ¶33
- e. Home missionaries under episcopal appointment within bounds of the annual conference ¶33
- f. Members of annual conference by virtue of current conference or

district position ¶33

* Lay Members of BOM also have voice and vote at Clergy Executive Session.

2. Dark Blue bar – voice and vote on all matters at AC and CES.

- a. Deacons in full connection, active or retired ¶33, ¶329.2
- b. Elders in full connection, active or retired ¶33, ¶334.1, 602
- c. Leave categories eligible to vote: Voluntary Leaves of Absence (personal, family, transitional) ¶353.7, Sabbatical Leave ¶351; Maternity or Paternity Leave ¶355.2; Medical Leave ¶356.1

3. Light Purple bar – voice and vote on all matters at AC and CES except General and jurisdictional conference delegate ballots.

- a. Full connection clergy on Involuntary Leave of Absence ¶354.8

4. Green bar – voice and vote on all matters at AC and CES (including election of clergy delegates to General and jurisdictional conferences) except constitutional amendments and all matters of ordination, character/conference relations of clergy; not eligible to be elected as delegate to General and jurisdictional conferences.

- a. Provisional members who have completed all their educational requirements and have been elected to provisional membership; deacons and elders who have been elected to provisional membership, but not yet commissioned, are eligible to vote ¶35, 327.2
 - b. Local Pastors and Retired Local Pastors who have completed Course of Study or a Master of Divinity degree and have served a minimum of two consecutive years under appointment before the election may vote to elect clergy delegates to General and jurisdictional conferences ¶35, 316.6.
- 3. Associate members, active or retired ¶35, ¶321.1
 - 4. Associate members, active or retired, member of BOM also vote at CES ¶35, ¶321.1

5. Orange bar – voice and vote on all matters at AC and CES except General and jurisdictional conference delegate ballots, constitutional amendments, character/conference relations of clergy.

- a. Provisional members who have not completed all their educational requirements ¶327.2
- b. Local Pastors who do not meet the criteria listed above in Number 4.b ¶316.6

6. Yellow bar – voice only at AC and CES. No voting rights.

Retired Local Pastors not serving an appointment – ¶320.5c

Members of Another Denomination serving an appointment ¶346.2, ¶359.2, ¶360.3

7. Gray bar – no voice or vote.

- 1. Affiliate members – ¶344.4 voice without vote

2. Clergy from other conferences serving in North Georgia – ¶346.1 clergy in such appointments may be granted voice but not vote
3. Clergy on honorable location – ¶358.2 honorably located clergy shall not continue to hold membership in the annual conference
4. Clergy on administrative location – ¶359.3 administratively located clergy shall not continue to hold membership in the annual conference.
5. Candidates for ordained ministry not under appointment in North Georgia during the 2025-2026 conference year
6. Local Pastors not under appointment.
7. Lay Supply Pastor
- h. Lay members: local church reserve and district at-large reserve members
- i. Visitors, guests, clergy spouses (including surviving spouses)
Agency, staff, and other guests

Name Badge Use and Care

Name Badges are provided at registration and are required for all sessions and meetings. Use only the name badge and holder that you receive at onsite registration. Do not place stickers or notes on badges or holders. We recycle the plastic name badge holders. Please turn in your badge before you leave, collection containers will be provided.

Financial Assistance

Persons eligible for financial assistance must complete and submit a reimbursement form with receipts by 10 am, Saturday, June 20. Checks are issued approximately 30 days after annual conference. Reimbursement forms received after June 20 cannot be processed. Reimbursement forms are available at Registration.

1. **Eligibility.** Financial assistance is offered for the following:
 1. Retired ministers not serving churches, retired clergy serving churches whose compensation does not exceed \$6,000 per year.
 2. Widows or widowers of clergy persons who are not married to persons designated in #1 above.
2. **Assistance Procedures.**
 1. Eligible persons must complete reimbursement form and attach receipts.
2. **Leave the forms/receipts for Meg Morrison in Registration, Grand Hall 5 at the bottom of the escalators. Deadline is 10 am, Saturday, June 20.**
 3. Mailed forms cannot be accepted.
 4. Checks are issued approximately 30 days after annual conference.
 5. Eligible persons may be reimbursed for up to \$75.00 per day for a maximum of three (3) nights lodging and meals. Receipts must be attached for reimbursement.

Responsibility of the Clergy Members of the Annual Conference

Each clergy member has the responsibility to:

- 1) Attend pre-conference briefing on May 18 at 3 pm or watch the recording of the briefing.
- 2) Attend all sessions of the annual conference and leave only under emergency conditions and with the knowledge of his/her district superintendent. Attendance is not optional. “Any such person unable to attend shall report by letter to the conference secretary, setting forth the reason for the absence.” (2020/2024 *Book of Discipline*, ¶ 602.8.)
- 3) Become familiar with the organizational structure and existing programs of the annual conference, parliamentary procedure and the conference standing rules as printed in the conference handbook and discuss with his/her lay member(s).
- 4) Read pre-conference reports and become familiar with specific programs and items that might be presented during the sessions. Prior to annual conference, consult with his/her lay member(s) so that he/she might understand the various reports and their implication for the life of the Church. Keep in mind that the lay member(s) as well is/are obligated to express views and vote as each feels is best.
- 5) Participate fully at the annual conference and help in policy-making decisions.
- 6) Form his/her own opinions on issues and vote his/her convictions.
- 7) Serve as interpreter of the annual conference actions along with the lay member. (2020/2024 *Book of Discipline* ¶ 251.2).

Responsibility of the Lay Members of the Annual Conference

It is an honor to be elected as a lay member to the North Georgia Conference. This is an assignment of great responsibility. By virtue of this office, he/she is also a member of her/his church’s council (¶ 252.5.g), finance committee (¶ 258.4), and the pastor-parish relations committee (¶ 258.2.a) (2020/2024 *Book of Discipline*).

Each member has the responsibility to:

- 1) Attend pre-conference briefing on May 18 at 3 pm or watch the recording of the briefing.
- 2) Attend all sessions of the annual conference. When he/she must be absent from the conference every effort should be made to see that the alternate lay member is able to be present.
- 3) Become familiar with the organizational structure and existing programs of the annual conference, parliamentary procedure and the conference standing rules as printed in the conference handbook.
- 4) Read pre-conference reports in the conference handbook provided on the conference website and become familiar with specific programs and items that might be presented during the sessions. Consult with the pastor and church lay leader. While the lay member is obligated only to use his/her own best thinking in the conference, the dialogue with others ahead of time should prove helpful in clarifying issues.
- 5) Participate fully in the work of the annual conference policy-making decisions.
- 6) Form his/her own opinions on issues and vote his/her convictions.

7) Prepare a report for his/her local church. This report may be presented at a Sunday morning worship service and/or a more detailed report at a meeting of the administrative board/council. In either case it should be done as soon after annual conference as feasible, and “not later than three months after the close of the conference” (§ 251.2, *2020/2024 Book of Discipline*). Consult with his/her pastor before conference about scheduling and time limit. The conference handbook, the North Georgia Conference web page, www.ngumc.org/AC2025, handouts received at annual conference, and personal notes on the sessions can be used as a basis for the report. Mention major issues raised and any action and how they might affect the local church. Refer to conference preachers and share highlights from worship services. Discuss the positive aspects of the conference and try not to dwell on trivia.

Parliamentary Guidelines for Participation at Annual Conference

1. The presiding bishop is the “chair” of the conference.

2. To address the conference: move to a microphone and check in with the Teller/Cue Concierge to register in the queue; stay at the microphone until recognized by the chair; state your name, the name of your local church and whether you are a lay member of your church, a district at large member, or clergy member and, youth, young adult, or adult.

3. To request a conference committee review the business currently under consideration: after recognition by the chair, state: “I move that the item currently before the conference be referred to ...” (state the name of the committee to which you think the matter should be referred or request referral to a committee to be recommended by the chair).

4. To request clarification of business being conducted: after recognition by the chair, state: “I request a point of information/clarification reg

5. To change the wording of a resolution, or business item, that is before the conference:

a. Write down the specific wording of the proposed amendment/change, including handbook page and line number along with your name and church or district.

b. Raise your hand for recognition. When recognized by the chair, state the reasons for your proposed amendment/change.

c. After recognition by the chair, say, “I move to amend line_____, on page ___ by: (deleting or inserting) the following words: ...” Read only the exact wording proposed.

Have a written copy of the amendment ready for the conference secretary immediately after the motion is read.

d. The chair will ask for a second, state the motion and ask for discussion.

- e. Other persons may be recognized to discuss/debate the motion. The motion's presenter is allowed a final chance to speak for the motion.
- f. After "the question is called" and discussion is closed, the motion is voted on by the conference.

2026 Information for Conference Members and Visitors

Annual Conference Registration

Online registration is available to allow members to quickly pick up their pre-printed name badge and credentials for annual conference, pay the \$30 Annual Conference registration fee, and make reservations for meals and pre-pay for meals requiring payment. Pick up pre-paid meal tickets during onsite registration. To register online, click on "Registration" at www.ngumc.org/AC2026.

Onsite registration is open: Wednesday, June 13, 4-6 pm; Thursday, June 14, 8 am-2 pm and 3:30-5 pm; Friday, June 15, 8 am-5 pm; and Saturday, June 16, 8-10 am. All registration is located in Grand Hall 5 of the Classic Center. Pick up name badges at onsite registration. Payment station for annual conference registration fee only accepts cash, check, or credit card. It is located in the registration area.

Annual Conference Text Updates

Receive Annual Conference 2026 updates delivered straight to your phone! Text AC2026 to 833-848-9264 to sign up for text updates. (Normal text messaging rates apply. Text "STOP" to opt out.)

Annual Conference Webpage

Information on the 2026 annual conference session is available on the North Georgia website: www.ngumc.org/ac2026. Live streaming of all sessions will be available.

Conference Journal – Print on demand

Print copies of the 2026 North Georgia Conference Journal will be available to order online through a print-on-demand service this fall. There will be no pre-orders of the journal. This method streamlines the ordering process and promotes better stewardship of Conference resources. A free pdf digital copy will be available following publication on the conference website. Find more information at ngumc.org/journal.

Displays

Display tables are an extension of reports presented at the annual conference session. The displays interpret and celebrate the program ministries of the annual conference. Various conference boards, committees, commissions, councils, teams, and related agency displays are located in Grand Hall 6.

Distribution of Materials

Conference Standing Rules prohibit distribution of materials. No material may be placed on chairs during breaks or between sessions or distributed at doors in or around the Grand Hall or inside the Classic Center. Distribution of materials is limited to authorized display tables. Associate Secretaries and Tellers are instructed to remove any non-authorized items. Worship bulletins and Election Summary Reports are distributed by those designated by the conference.

E-Newsletter

A daily e-newsletter is sent each evening of annual conference. Please subscribe to receive the newsletter at www.ngumc.org/subscribe.

Electronic Voting

Members of annual conference will use an electronic voting system. There is only one type of voting device for lay and clergy members. Pick up the device at tables located inside either entrance to the Grand Hall. If you leave the Grand Hall leave the voting device on your seat. Voting devices should never leave the Grand Hall. There are fees charged to the annual conference for voting devices that are not returned.

Voting cards are distributed at registration. You must have your card to participate in the voting process. It is each member's responsibility to secure the voting card received at registration. There are fees for voter cards that are not returned. It is recommended that members keep the voting card in their name badge holder along with their name badge which they will also need for voting.

If you leave prior to adjournment of conference, turn in the voter card at the Voting Assistance Table located to the left of the stage ramp in the Grand Hall. At the close of the second session Friday you will leave the voter card in the voting device on your seat. If you are in the stadium seating, leave the voter card in the voting device in a bin at the bottom of the stairs.

Family Restrooms, Baby Changing Stations, Nursing Mothers

The Classic Center family restrooms are located on the upper and lower floors of the Foundry Building. Baby changing stations are located in the men's and women's restrooms located near the Athena Ballroom and the Grand Hall. Baby changing stations are also located near the Olympia Room. Location of space for nursing mothers is available at the Information Center.

First Aid and Medical Care

Direct requests to the Information Center located in the Classic Center at the top of the escalators.

Housing

Members make and confirm housing arrangements through a housing portal. Information is on the North Georgia Conference website www.ngumc.org/AC2026.

Information Center

An information center for annual conference and Athens is located in The Classic Center at the top of the escalators. Emergency messages are displayed electronically in the Classic Center Grand Hall.

Meal Tickets

Members must pick up meal tickets that are purchased online during on-site registration.

Registration Fee

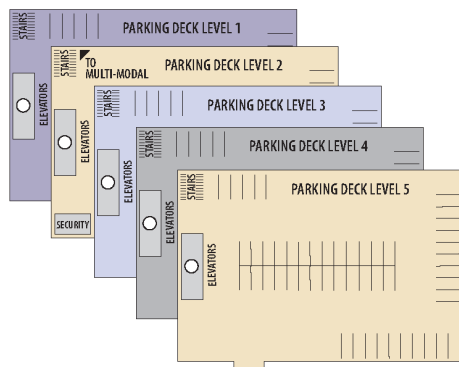
North Georgia Conference Standing Rule E.7 states that a \$30 registration fee shall be assessed for each lay and active clergy delegate to the North Georgia Annual Conference. Retired clergy and youth members are exempt from the assessment. Members may pay the registration fee as part of their online registration process or onsite at lay and clergy registration.

Safety

Please be aware of your surroundings and use caution at all times, especially after dark. Do not walk alone or leave valuables in parked cars.

We are thankful for the security provided by the Classic Center and Athens-Clarke County Police Department.

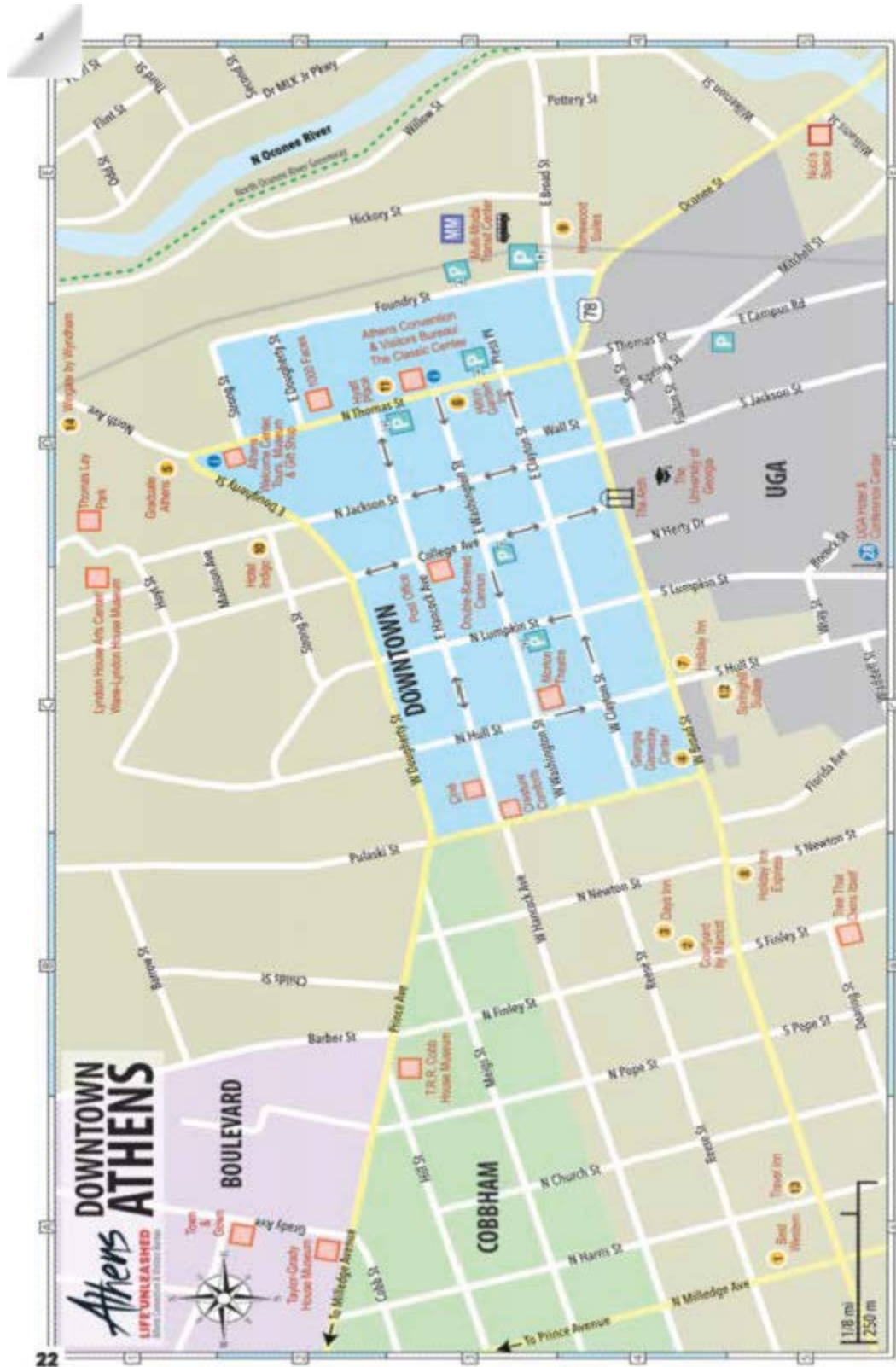
THE CLASSIC CENTER Facility Map



Site Map Legend

-  Information Center
-  Restrooms
-  Vending
-  Automated External Defibrillators (AED)
-  **300 North Thomas Street Building - Upper Level**
Theatre Lobby
Ticket Office & Administration
Parking Deck Level 5
Loading Dock 1
-  **300 North Thomas Street Building - Lower Level**
Theatre-Orchestra Level
Parking Deck Level 2
Loading Dock 2 & 4
Multi-Modal Transit Center
-  **130 Foundry Building Lower Level**
Parking Deck Level 1
Loading Dock 3
-  **Akins Ford Arena**

Downtown Athens



Parking and Transportation

Parking at the Classic Center

Conference members may park at the Classic Center parking deck using the “Annual Conference Parking Permit.”

The Classic Center does not allow overnight parking.

Parking at UGA North Campus Deck

Conference members may also park at the University of Georgia North Campus Parking Deck (0.6 of a mile south of the Classic Center on S. Thomas Street). To avoid getting a parking ticket at the UGA deck, you must scan the QR code and put in your vehicle’s tag number into the kiosk in the parking deck.

UGA does not allow overnight parking. Even though the same QR code is used for all three days, you must scan it each day.

The code is valid each day from 7 a.m. to 11 p.m.

There are shuttles to and from the North Campus Parking Deck to the Classic Center. The shuttles pick up and drop off at the Thomas Street side of the parking deck. Shuttles will run from 7:30 a.m. to 6p.m. Thursday and Friday and 7:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Saturday.

North Georgia UMC Annual Conference Classic Center Deck

PARKING PERMIT JUNE 17-20, 2026

Conference members may park at the Classic Center or at the Clarke County Courthouse parking deck (located at the corner of E. Hancock Street and N. Thomas Street across from the Classic Center). At the Court House, you must show either your conference name badge or the “Annual Conference Parking Permit.”



Section: Special Reports to the Annual Conference

Salary Equalization Task Force

The Salary Equalization Task Force was established by action of the 2025 North Georgia Annual Conference to examine clergy compensation across the conference, giving particular attention to disparities related to race, gender, disability, and clergy status. Currently, local church leaders set pastoral salaries, often influenced in part by the financial capacity of their congregations. The task force is charged with developing recommendations for policies, practices, transparency, and accountability measures that promote just and equitable compensation.

We began our work of gathering information by looking at the private sector and other annual conferences and trends developing for addressing compensation disparities. Models such as the California Fair Pay Act, Canada's Pay Equity Act, Duke University's Pulpit and Pew Project, and the Upper New York Annual Conference's measures to reduce clergy salary gaps offer valuable insights for closing compensation inequities.

Next we analyzed anonymized compensation information for clergy appointed to local churches in North Georgia with specific attention to race, gender, years of service, age, and status and found the following:

- Men are more than twice as likely as women to be in the top 25% of pay.
- Even when we compare clergy with the same years of experience, women earn approximately 10% to 13% less than their male peers.
- Early in ministry, compensation is relatively similar. But by mid-career, women are earning 13% to 15% less than men.
- Full time clergy women earn about 17.8% less than clergy men (median comparison, median gap: \$18,950) *Note: this number is unadjusted for years of service. It is a broad analysis across the conference.*
- The compensation gap between white and BIPOC clergy also persists across every stage of ministry, with differences of 10 to 15%, even among equally experienced clergy. These gaps do not close over time. In many cases, they grow.

We recognize that this work requires both care and sustained commitment from clergy, local churches, and the annual conference. Accordingly, we envision our work to be a multi-phased, multi-year effort, with each phase building toward greater equity, consistency, and accountability across the conference.

Phase 1 Recommendations:

- Transparency is essential to advancing equitable compensation across the annual conference. When clergy compensation information is shared with clergy, local church leaders, and the leadership of the annual conference, inequities become known to everyone involved in setting clergy compensation, thereby allowing everyone to develop a shared understanding of the problem. This common awareness is a necessary first step toward meaningful and just change.
- Collaboration is central to this work. Since convening in the fall of 2025, the task force has identified significant overlap with the efforts of the Commission on Equitable

1 Compensation, the Committee on the Status and Role of Women (COSROW), and the
2 Conference Commission on Religion and Race. In response, the task force will include
3 representation from each of these bodies as well as the Disability Ministry Committee in
4 their ongoing work and is committed to deep, collaborative engagement in advancing
5 equitable compensation practices across the conference.

- 6 ● We plan to create and offer tools to local churches by September 1, 2026, so that when
7 local church leaders set clergy compensation for 2027, they will be informed about
8 inequitable compensation among clergy based upon race, gender, disability, and clergy
9 status and will have suggestions available to them as to what they can do to address these
10 disparities.
- 11 ● We have already begun to meet with the appointive cabinet to advise them of the
12 information we are gathering on clergy compensation with insights shared in this report.
13 We will continue to meet with them in future phases and are grateful for their attention to
14 our work.

15 Finally, we ask the laity and clergy of the North Georgia Annual Conference to prayerfully
16 reflect on the information we share in our report, to courageously join in the work as we move
17 into future phases, and to lead the effort to create equity in clergy compensation across our
18 shared ministry.

19
20 Respectfully submitted,
21 Shirley Everett, lay member
22 Millie Kim, clergy member
23 Eric Lee, clergy member
24 Belinda McCastle, clergy member
25 Bill McKinnon, lay member
26 Tony Phillips, clergy member
27 Brian Smith, clergy member
28 Susan Allen Grady, clergy member & chairperson
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The Common Table Report on Unification

Part One – The Journey

*“We are called to community. There is no ‘us and them.’
In that spirit, we launched an effort to study and pursue
the unification of these two great annual conferences.”*

— Bishop Robin Dease

The journey to where we are today began in the summer of 2024, when the Southeastern Jurisdictional Conference of The United Methodist Church (SEJ) established a new Georgia Episcopal Area composed of The North Georgia and South Georgia Annual Conferences. The SEJ assigned Bishop Robin Dease, who was currently overseeing the North Georgia Conference since January 2023, as the resident bishop of the Georgia Episcopal Area. She began her assignment overseeing both the North and South Georgia Conference on September 1, 2024.

The United States has 51 annual conferences, supervised by 32 bishops in 38 episcopal areas. Bishop Dease is one of the many bishops serving more than one annual conference.

From day one, Bishop Dease said that there would be no “us and them.” In a spirit of faithful discernment and connectional collaboration, she invited a small group of leaders – an equal number from both conferences – to start a conversation about the value in exploring unification. The One Georgia Leadership Team met together, prayed together, ate together, pulled data, asked questions, shared concerns, and began to develop a framework to take the next steps.

During this time, the leadership team discovered that the two conferences have more in common than we realized, that we have experienced some of the same pains throughout the past couple of years, and most importantly, that we have the same goals to reach people for Christ.

On January 1, 2025, the team launched an information site, www.GeorgiaUMC.org, so members of both Annual Conferences would have access to the same sources as the leadership team.

They named a separate nominations team to populate more than 20 working groups who would focus on key areas of conference life and structure.

In the meantime, Georgia United Methodists continued to connect. The Boards of Laity of the two conferences shared devotional series across the state, clergy took part in a cross-conference Lenten study, United Methodist campus ministries gathered together from across Georgia, and disaster response began working side-by-side as storms struck communities from Savannah and Statesboro to Augusta and beyond.

Through continued prayerful study and discernment, the leadership team produced a thorough report for the 2025 North and South Georgia Annual Conference sessions. Presented last June, the members of the conferences received and overwhelmingly supported the continued study of unification.

The report highlighted the reality that unification presents the opportunity for a new structure that allows us to respond across current conference boundaries, which at times feel can feel like barriers when critical need or ministry opportunities arise—enabling us to engage in ministry in more practical, economical, and missional ways.

- **Practical:** for our ministry efforts to have one structure rather than two different and independent structures. This nimbleness can enable us to continue to create a legacy that can impact generations to come.
- **Economical:** for our ministry efforts to become one. Not only can we save on overhead costs, but we can maximize our number one asset (laity) and deploy them to serve incarnational ministries versus populating duplicate mandatory committees.
- **Missional:** for our ministry efforts to come along side each other to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. At the end of the day, unification presents the beautiful opportunity of a greater harvest, and we have a greater opportunity to make disciples out of the 8 million people in our state that are currently going through life without knowing Jesus.

With the blessing of the North and South Georgia Annual Conferences, the working groups officially launched in July 2025, deploying more than 200 clergy and laity from both annual conferences to help explore and visualize the possibility of unification. With people coming from all across the state of Georgia, the working groups met via Zoom or in person answering questions about what a future Georgia Conference might be. These groups walked this journey with a spirit of grace, nimbleness, and with three guiding values: Culture, Community, and Connection.

- **Culture:** The groups explored the creation of a new culture that can empower us to expand United Methodism across the state of Georgia – rather than the self-preservation of old structures.
 - **Community:** The groups emphasized the blessing of building new and strong clergy and laity relationships across the state – rather than the simple action of membership and assets compilation.
 - **Connection:** They approached this journey with God’s Kingdom as the vision and mission mentality – rather than a mentality driven by scarcity, survival, and isolation.
- In November 2025, the working groups submitted preliminary reports and then finalized their reports in January 2026. Those reports have been thoroughly reviewed by the leadership team for consistency and uniformity of vision, structure, and purpose. Members of the Standing Rules Working Group and both annual conference secretaries met for two days to study the reports and develop standing rules for a potential future Georgia Conference.

The reports then went before two bodies: The Common Table (in North Georgia) and The Leadership Forum (in South Georgia). Those bodies have adopted the reports, and they will officially be before the North and South Georgia Annual Conferences in June.

Today, you are invited to read the reports.

It is our prayer that you will engage the following reports with curiosity and openness as we discern the next steps ahead.

1 **Part Two – The Legacy**

2 The North and South Georgia Conferences have developed over more than 200 years, beginning

3 with the arrival of the first Methodist preachers in 1786.

4 Shaped by growth, division, racial segregation, reunification, and denominational mergers, the

5 two conferences took their present form with the creation of The United Methodist Church in

6 1968. From that point, until 1988, they were one Episcopal Area and shared a bishop.

7 Both conferences embody a deep commitment to our Wesleyan faith, vibrant ministry, and

8 servant leadership that impacts communities across Georgia and our United Methodist

9 connection.

10 At this moment, another milestone is before us.

11 The figures below offer a snapshot that helps us understand who we are today and who the

12 Georgia Annual Conference could be.

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14 **North Georgia and South Georgia By the Numbers**

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16 **A. Membership**

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18 **North Georgia Churches - Average Worship Attendance (AWA)**

North Georgia 2025 End of the Year Report	
Churches = <u>393</u> Total number of churches – <u>38,896</u> Reported Average Worship Attendance	
*AWA 500+ - <u>14</u> churches	*AWA 200-499 - <u>30</u> churches
*AWA 100-199 - <u>48</u> churches	*AWA 50-99 – <u>90</u> churches
*AWA 25-49 - <u>114</u> churches	*AWA 0-24 – <u>97</u> churches
* Total Professions of Faith <u>1,860</u>	*Total Baptisms <u>1,241</u>
* Full Time Appointments <u>251</u>	*Part Time Appointments <u>161</u>

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20 **South Georgia Churches - Average Worship Attendance (AWA)**

South Georgia 2025 End of the Year Report	
Churches = <u>156</u> Total number of churches – <u>5,500</u> Reported Average Worship Attendance	
*AWA 500+ - <u>0</u> churches	*AWA 200-499 - <u>6</u> churches
*AWA 100-199 - <u>8</u> churches	*AWA 50-99 – <u>17</u> churches
*AWA 25-49 - <u>23</u> churches	*AWA 0-24 - <u>102</u> churches
* Total Professions of Faith <u>184</u>	*Total Baptisms <u>160</u>
* Full Time Appointments <u>58</u>	*Part Time Appointments <u>42</u>

1 **North Georgia Clergy and Laity**

North Georgia 2025 End of the Year Report	
Total Clergy = <u>962</u>	
*Full Connection Elders <u>256</u>	*Full Connection Deacons <u>49</u>
*Provisional Elders <u>21</u>	*Provisional Deacons <u>5</u>
*Full Time Local Pastors <u>13</u>	*Part Time Local Pastors <u>107</u>
*Clergy From Another Conference <u>6</u>	*Clergy from Another Denomination <u>7</u>
*Retired Clergy Under Appointment <u>60</u>	*Retired Clergy in Retirement Status <u>562</u>
*Supply Appointments <u>69</u>	*Certified Candidates <u>54</u>
*Clergy on Disability <u>7</u>	*Clergy on Leave <u>9</u>
*White/Caucasian Clergy <u>783</u>	*Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) Clergy <u>239</u>
Total Laity = <u>196,836</u> members	

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6 **South Georgia Clergy and Laity**

South Georgia 2025 End of the Year Report	
Total Clergy = 284	
*Full Connection Elders <u>54</u>	*Full Connection Deacons <u>11</u>
*Provisional Elders <u>6</u>	*Provisional Deacons <u>0</u>
*Full Time Local Pastors <u>10</u>	*Part Time Local Pastors <u>17</u>
*Clergy From Another Conference <u>9</u>	*Clergy from Another Denomination <u>3</u>
*Retired Clergy Under Appointment <u>26</u>	*Retired Clergy in Retirement Status <u>233</u>
*Supply Appointments <u>5</u>	*Certified Candidates <u>5</u>
*Clergy on Disability <u>6</u>	*Clergy on Leave <u>3</u>
*White/Caucasian Clergy <u>300</u>	*Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) Clergy <u>47</u>
Total Laity = <u>18,500</u> members	

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1 **B. Finances**
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3 **North Georgia Finances**

North Georgia Financial Picture

All Funds and Apportionment Budgets

*2026 Apportionments Budget = \$ 10,493,931

*2026 All Funds Spending Budget = \$ 12,990,181

*2027 Projected Apportionments Budget = \$ 10,663,773

*2027 Projected All Funds Spending Budget = \$ 12,996,258

*Other Sources of Funds: Lilly Foundation, UMCOR, and BEAT Multicultural Grants, Clergy Excellence quasi-endowment, Retiree Medical HRA Reserves, Methodist Center Reserves and Current Benefits Reserves

2025 Ending Net Assets = \$170.6M (12/31/2025 Preliminary, unaudited)

*Unrestricted \$4.4M

*Designated – Benefits \$72.9M

*Other Unrestricted Designated \$8.1M

*Designated- Board of Trustees \$20.6M

*Board Designated Endowment Funds \$62.0M

*Restricted \$2.6M

Apportionment Metrics

*Percentage of apportionment collected 2025 = 89.7%

*Amount of dollars for apportionments collected 2025 = \$9,909,212

*Top 25 churches contribution = 46% of total allocated

*Based on total aggregated income received by North Georgia churches in 2025, local churches were allocated 6.3% of their income for apportionments, and all local churches in aggregate paid 6.0% of their total expenses in apportionments.

1 **South Georgia Finances**

South Georgia Financial Picture

All Funds and Apportionment Budgets

*2026 Apportionments Budget = \$ 2,148,650

*2026 All Funds Spending Budget = \$ 3,188,300

*2027 Projected Apportionments Budget = \$ 2,175,591

*2027 Projected All Funds Spending Budget = \$ 3,247,190

*Other Sources of Funds: Undesignated and designated program reserves, Episcopal reserve, CFA discretionary reserve, Current benefits reserve, Pitts Trust distributions, District and Board of Trustees reserves

2025 Net Assets = \$64.9M (Preliminary, unaudited)

*Unrestricted - \$6.6M

*Designated – Benefits \$33.9M

*Designated - Board of Trustees \$4.1M

*District Funds - \$6.5M

*Endowment Funds - \$0.4M

*Other Unrestricted Designated – \$10.2M

*Restricted - \$3.2M

Apportionment Metrics

*Percentage of apportionments collected 2025 (includes disaffiliated prepaid \$) = 85.3%

*Amount of total apportionments collected 2025 - \$2.5M

*Amount of total apportionments collected 2025 excluding disaffiliation payments - \$1.4M

Top 25 churches contribution = 54% of total allocated.

*Based on total aggregated income received by South Georgia churches in 2025, local churches were allocated 9.4% of their income for apportionments, and all local churches in aggregate paid 9.9% of their total expenses in apportionments.

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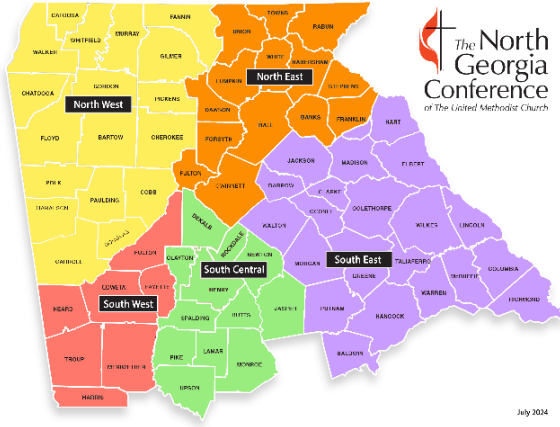
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C. Geographical Area

The North Georgia Annual Conference is composed of 71 counties divided in 5 districts and served by 5 district superintendents:



North Georgia Total of Miles = 21,993

***Northeast District = 3,674 SQ miles**

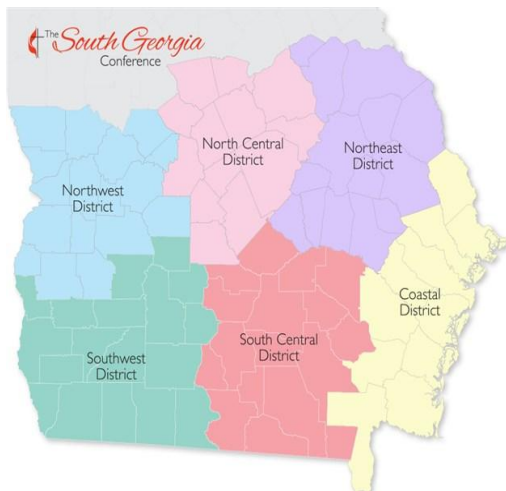
***Northwest District = 6,292 SQ miles**

***Southeast District = 5,863 SQ miles**

***Southwest District = 3,163 SQ miles**

***South Central District = 3,001 SQ miles**

The South Georgia Annual Conference is composed of 64 counties divided in 6 districts and served by 2 district superintendents:



South Georgia Total of Miles = 32,101

***Northeast District = 4,527 SQ miles**

***Northwest District = 5,276 SQ miles**

***Coastal District = 5,145 SQ miles**

***Southwest District = 5,631 SQ miles**

***South Central District = 5,510 SQ miles**

***North Central District = 6,012 SQ miles**

D. Mission Field

There are currently **11,262,342** residents within the boundaries of the state of Georgia. 73% of Georgians (**8,221,509**) are not actively involved in church or faith community.

1 **Part Three – The Vision**

2 **Living Our Vision to Love Boldly, Serve Joyfully, Lead Courageously**

3
4 This year we have an opportunity to expand the footprint of two Annual Conferences and
5 demonstrate a new era of unity and healing in The United Methodist Church. Since fall 2024, the
6 leaders of the North Georgia and South Georgia Annual Conferences have been prayerfully
7 discerning a pathway forward as a unified Annual Conference under one episcopal leader.

8
9 In 2025, laity and clergy from both conferences worked together to study and recommend ways
10 to work together to create a new era for ministry.

11
12 Today, we have a unique opportunity to expand the reach of the theological message of God's
13 grace and redemption in Jesus Christ as our more than 545 churches work together. We have
14 been called in this moment to be a story of unity in a season of division. We are called to dream
15 beyond our Annual Conference lines and to work toward the growth of The United Methodist
16 Church across our state.

17
18 Just as our ancestors were consistently asked to go beyond their own boundaries and places of
19 comfort to follow God's calling and to embrace God's plan, we, too, are invited to a faithful next
20 step in our journey. The call to become the Georgia Annual Conference is a sacred task,
21 presented to us following an era of loss and strife. The call to become unified propels us to a new
22 phase of ministry, one which requires us to build new relationships and trust one another as we
23 navigate this new era.

24
25 When we look back over the history of the Methodist people, the fire and passion of the
26 movement never ceased to evolve. Transitions and new vision have been a constant for us. As we
27 heed the call to take the lessons and stories of the past into an unknown future, let us do so with
28 the trust that our known God goes with us!

29
30 Our calling is clear: to form disciples who, empowered by the Holy Spirit, **LOVE BOLDLY,**
31 **SERVE JOYFULLY, AND LEAD COURAGEOUSLY** in our local communities and worldwide
32 connections.

33
34 The Georgia Annual Conference is called to **LOVE BOLDLY.**

35
36 Matthew 22:37-39 and John 13:34-35 instruct us to passionately love God, and like Jesus,
37 embrace and include people of every age, nation, race, gender, language and walk of life.

38
39 United Methodists across the state of Georgia will work together to ensure that all people have a
40 place at the table and a voice in the meetings. We are excited to be a force in our state for love
41 and acceptance while sharing the power of Jesus to heal and redeem.

42
43 We will love boldly through:

- 44 1. Providing a nurturing environment for spiritual growth and a pathway for intentional
45 Christian education and spiritual discipline. We will not assume that people are
46 learning and growing and instead offer resources in all necessary languages for

individual lives to be transformed, which will create transformation in local churches and communities. We will create ways for people to learn across cross cultural and linguistic lines from one another.

2. We will hold each other accountable to go beyond the church walls to engage with local and regional communities in addition to building relationships with people around the globe. Loving boldly will mean showing love outside of our own comfort zones.
3. We will remember our story and our faith history as United Methodists and discern ways to ensure the next generation hears the story from us. We will boldly talk about our faith and share our personal and collective account of God's power and presence in the world yesterday, today, and tomorrow.
4. We will advocate for those whose voices are not being heard and work to ensure that they will have an amplified voice in the church. We will show our love by standing up for those who are vulnerable and hold one another accountable for the work of advocacy.

The Georgia Annual Conference is called to **SERVE JOYFULLY**.

The heart of Christ will enable us to joyfully serve a world in need. We will unite our efforts to provide for the most vulnerable among us with compassion and care, offering not only hope but an invitation to a life with Jesus. We will consider joyful service as an essential task of discipleship and will provide opportunities for local churches, laity, and clergy to serve (Psalm 100:1, Nehemiah 8:10, John 13:14-15, 1 Peter 4:10).

We will serve joyfully by:

1. Having a shared understanding that we are entrusted with being present and supportive to children and youth in the church as well as in the community in which we live. We will encourage and empower laity to find joy in leading or being present for the next generation as they learn to love Jesus and begin to serve others as He served.
2. We will hold one another accountable for our efforts and intentional plans to care for the poor among us.
3. We will invite new members of The United Methodist Church to connect and serve in the denomination on district and annual conference levels. We will see our task to teach our denominational history, which emphasized acts of service as essential to faith development. We will lean into our United Methodist Social Principles.
4. We will intentionally engage in changing local and national laws which cause harm to vulnerable populations.

The Georgia Annual Conference will **LEAD COURAGEOUSLY**, following Jesus' example. We will resist and dismantle all systems of evil injustice and oppression, striving for peace, justice, and reconciliation (Joshua 1:9 and Ephesians 6:10).

We will lead courageously by:

1. Renewing our commitment to prayer and discernment, we will listen to God’s vision for the Church. With confidence we will grow in our awareness of the Holy Spirit. We will nurture others' faith and invite people of all ages to participate in leading.
2. Making sure we are growing disciples over and above growing the institution, which will mean we will have to question those in power within the denomination.
3. Becoming more comfortable with our faith and talking about our faith with others, reaching people who are not yet connected to any church, through initiatives such as new faith communities, church planting, or innovative expressions of ministry.
4. Advocating for those in need even when it is unpopular or risky.

With a shared mission and vision, may we live a model of unity and work toward the growth of The United Methodist Church across our state.

Part Four – Working Group Reports

A. Annual Conference Session Report

Objective

To ensure a comprehensive understanding of both conferences' practices and cultures.

Overview

The Annual Conference Working Group was established to review the structures of the two existing annual conference sessions and to develop recommendations for consolidation into a single annual conference session, including potential locations and organizational models.

This report is informational and will serve as a reference for future annual conference planning committees.

Our guiding principles throughout this process have been to honor and blend the traditions of both conferences, foster shared leadership, and create opportunities for meaningful relationship-building among participants.

This report shares research and recommendations for the future Georgia Conference of The United Methodist Church. The future annual conference planning committee will refer to this information in their planning for 2027 should unification be approved.

Registration

The registration procedures for both conferences consist of advance online registration and in-person check-in and credentialing on site. In South Georgia, a late registration fee was piloted in 2025 for those who did not register online in advance. The group recommends considering the implementation of such a fee for the future annual conference.

Another distinction pertains to youth and young adult members. North Georgia requires that a specific number of youth and young adults be designated as official conference members. South Georgia does not have this requirement. This subcommittee recommends that youth and young adults continue to hold an official seat at the conference with final details to be determined in consultation with CFA, Connectional Ministries, and the annual conference program committee, in consideration of Safe Sanctuaries compliance.

At-Large Members

District Superintendents and District Lay Leaders should recruit At-Large Members based on the needs expressed by the conference secretary for purposes of equalization.

Regarding funding for At-Large Members, North Georgia provides a flat amount to go toward expenses, and South Georgia provides a per diem. The committee recommends adopting the flat rate to ease administrative burden.

Location

For more than 25 years, North Georgia has held its annual conference session at the Classic Center in Athens, while South Georgia rotates locations. The Sites Subcommittee

1 recommends forming a review committee to evaluate venues to find the optimal site for the
2 Georgia Annual Conference session.

3 4 Space Needs

5 Based on the 2025 figures, the Georgia Annual Conference session requires a venue that
6 accommodates between 2,000 and 2,500 chairs. The largest recorded attendance was 1,400
7 for North Georgia and 400 for South Georgia in 2025.

8 9 Hotel Rooms

10 The subcommittee estimates the host city will require about 1,000 quality hotel rooms.

11 12 Meals and Events

13 The annual conference planning committee should consider space for meals and events.

14
15 It is important to note that there are key meals and gatherings that are important to the annual
16 conference, some new and some longstanding traditions, some conference-wide and some
17 affinity groups. Some of those meals and gatherings for consideration include:

- 18
19 • Memorial Reception (South Georgia)
- 20 • Methodist Home and Ministries Dinner (South Georgia)
- 21 • Laity Luncheon (North Georgia)
- 22 • Presenters Breakfast (North Georgia)
- 23 • Morning Communion (North Georgia)
- 24 • Ordination Reception (Both Conferences)
- 25 • Extension Ministries Breakfast (Both Conferences)
- 26 • Reconciling Ministries/Foundry (Both Conferences)
- 27 • Black Methodist Church Renewal (BMCR) (Both Conferences)
- 28 • Clergy Spouses Gathering (Both Conferences)
- 29 • Seminary/College Dinners (Both Conferences)
- 30 • And others

31 32 Vendors and Partners

33 The annual conference planning committee should consider adequate space for display
34 tables.

35 36 Agenda of the Annual Conference

37 The agenda of the annual conference session is set by the bishop in consultation with the
38 conference secretary and annual conference planning committee. Worship, communion,

1 ordination, memorial service, necessary business, and fixing appointments currently anchor
2 the agenda of both existing conferences.

3
4 Childcare

5 Subject to the funding approval from the Council of Finance and Administration in fall of 2026,
6 the future Georgia Annual Conference will plan to provide financial support for childcare costs
7 for attendees with children in 2027. *The Book of Discipline 2020/2024* recommends such a
8 program at annual conference business sessions.

9
10 **Action Item Recommendation**

11 Empower the annual conference planning/program committee to begin planning future
12 Georgia Annual Conference sessions upon the decision of the Southeastern Jurisdiction.
13 *Rationale: To ensure the first session of the Georgia Annual Conference is implemented with*
14 *excellence, planning should begin as soon as it is appropriate.*

B. Barnes Evaluation and Administration Team (BEAT)/ District Funds/Properties Report

Objective

The objective is to recommend a unified and sustainable congregational development and revitalization grants process in the Georgia Conference of The United Methodist Church. The process optimizes the current and future funds available from net proceeds from sales of closed church properties across Georgia through prudent investing of the conferences' pooled funds. Pooled investments help ensure funding for church growth and mission for many years, regardless of budgetary pressures. All Georgia local churches and districts will have equal opportunity through the process to access the grant funds for innovative, sustaining, and missional needs. Another key objective for the process beyond providing equitable access is to hedge against decreasing budgets and apportionment collections in the season of our church life we are currently encountering. The process provides improved oversight of funds to enable resourcing new, emerging, and existing local ministries for furthering the mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

Overview

In 2020, the North Georgia Conference Board of Trustees recommended and the North Georgia Annual Conference authorized by action the pooling of all district and congregational development funds in one Church Development fund named the Charles Barnes Fund for Church Development ("Barnes Fund") and in 2021 approved a new committee with an important task: to distribute grant funds from the net sale proceeds from closed church property in an equitable, accountable manner to fund ministry initiatives across all the districts. This committee is called the Barnes Evaluation and Administration Team (BEAT). BEAT created a robust process for granting funds from the earnings of the Barnes Fund investments. This process has enabled the North Georgia Conference to award financial support to the Connectional Table's five core areas for transformational disciple making: scriptural literacy and imagination, health and well-being, community engagement, racial justice and healing, and new faith opportunities and communities. These awards have shown to be unifying, vital, transparent, measured, and accountable in their grant process.

In the South Georgia Conference, the funds from closed church properties have been used first to pay any outstanding liabilities for pension and health benefits. The remainder of this money has been directed to the corresponding District Board of Missions of the closed church being sold (50%) for district missional needs and priorities and to the Conference Committee on Congregational Development (50%) for the birthing of new congregations or revitalizing existing congregations.

Action Items Recommendations

1. Process

Establish the current model from North Georgia Conference for pooling funds from the net sales proceed from closed church properties. Expand the current model of the BEAT program to be used in the Georgia Conference of The United Methodist Church for all districts and local churches in the conference. The current grant process will provide a unified, equitable and sustainable granting process which will then cover the entire conference.

1 2. Committee Representation

2 It is recommended that the members of the BEAT team include but not be limited to: the
3 Executive Assistant to the Bishop, representatives from the Board of Church Development
4 (Chair), Council on Finance and Administration, Conference Board of Trustees, Conference Lay
5 Leader, Director of Connectional Ministries, district representatives, and two Cabinet
6 Representatives. With the help and support of the Transitional Nominations Committee,
7 additional members will be added to achieve lay/clergy and district balance and to ensure the
8 team's membership will reflect of the diversity of laity and clergy as well as geographic
9 representation.

10 3. Funds Centralization

11 Centralize the funds from closed church properties and determine an effective date for which the
12 current South Georgia district and congregational reserves beyond current obligations will be
13 transferred to combine with North Georgia Conference funds invested in the Barnes Fund. Also
14 consider centralizing any other funds which are geared towards these efforts.

15 The future sales of church properties added to the existing investments from both legacy
16 conferences designated for church development and revitalization will provide the foundational
17 strength for the growth and vitality of The United Methodist Church in Georgia.

18 4. Generation of New Funds

19 Work in conjunction with the Board of Trustees of the Georgia Conference to ensure that every
20 single property goes through the same process of liquidation and distribution of funds.

21

C. Board of Laity Report

Objective

There shall be in every annual conference a conference board of laity or other equivalent structure to provide for these functions and maintain connectional relationships. It shall provide for the ministry of the laity related to the objectives of the General Board of Discipleship as set forth in *The Book of Discipline 2020/2024* (BOD) ¶¶ 1101-1122.

Overview

The Conference Board of Laity exists to represent the laity, develop and train lay leaders, foster lay involvement and decision-making, and promote a United Methodist theological and biblical basis. The Board achieves this by providing educational programs, supporting lay ministries like Lay Servant Ministry, United Women in Faith, and United Methodist Men, encouraging lay leadership in local churches and districts and advocating for the laity's roles in the church's mission and strategy. The board also focuses on developing and promoting stewardship of time, talent, and possessions among lay members.

Action Items Recommendations

1. It is recommended that the current North Georgia Conference Board of Laity structure and leadership format be implemented in a unified Georgia Conference Board of Laity structure and leadership format. (See below for recommended Conference Board of Laity make-up.)
Rationale: The current North Georgia Conference Board of Laity more closely aligns with the structure laid out in The Book of Discipline.
2. It is recommended that the current North Georgia Conference Board of Laity structure and leadership sections of the North Georgia Standing Rules be rewritten to refer readers to *The Book of Discipline* when a standing rule is not necessary to supplement the directives of *The Book of Discipline* in the Georgia Conference Standing Rules.
Rationale: This recommendation eliminates unnecessary standing rules redundancies and ensures clear directives, consistency, and adherence to The Book of Discipline. A draft has been given to the Standing Rules Working Group.
3. The Georgia Conference Board of Laity will have co-chairs for the position of Conference Lay Leader representing both legacy conferences for the remainder of the current quadrennium.
Rationale: This recommendation promotes trust, ensures geographical balance in leadership, and provides geographical coverage.

Conference Board of Laity Composition - Reference BOD for composition ¶ 630.3

The following membership of the board is recommended: the conference lay leader, associate conference lay leaders, the conference director of Lay Speaking Ministries, the conference scouting coordinator, and the presidents and two representatives elected by each of the conference organizations of United Methodist Men, United Methodist Women, United Methodist Young Adults, and the conference council on youth ministries; and in addition, the district lay leaders, two laymen, two laywomen, and two youth elected by the annual conference upon

1 nomination of the conference nominating committee, a district superintendent designated by the
2 cabinet, the director of the conference connectional ministries, and the presiding bishop. Special
3 attention shall be given to the inclusion of people with disabilities and individuals from diverse
4 racial and ethnic backgrounds. All members shall be professing members of local churches.

5

D. Board of Ordained Ministry/District Board of Ministry, Clergy Status, and Ministerial Services Report

Objective

This work was to identify areas of alignment, clarify differences, and discern potential pathways toward a unified approach to the Board of Ordained Ministry (BOM), District Committee on Ministry (DCOM), Clergy Status, and Ministerial Services should the conferences unify.

Overview

1. Significant similarities already exist. Both conferences share commitments to consistent candidacy processes, comprehensive training for DCOM members, ethical standards for clergy, and collaborative programming for clergy development.
2. Clear structural and cultural differences remain. Differences in mentoring models, interview structures, Residency in Ministry (RIM) processes, Local Pastor supervision, and practices surrounding clergy retirement-in-place demonstrate the need for ongoing discernment rather than rigid standardization.
3. Existing collaboration is strong and growing. Joint ethics trainings, combined Lenten book studies, shared RIM philosophies, and coordinated ministerial services indicate a healthy foundation for deeper alignment.
4. Recommendations require both flexibility and clarity. The committees consistently affirmed that any future shared structures must both honor the strengths of each conference and provide clear, fair, and consistent processes across a unified system.

Action Items Recommendations

1. Establish a Georgia Board of Ordained Ministry Transition Task Force

The Annual Conferences should create a Transition Task Force to develop a unified BOM structure that draws on the strengths of current North Georgia and South Georgia practices. This group should include representation from BOM leadership, Ministerial Services, DCOM chairs, and cabinet members from both conferences.

Rationale: A dedicated task force is necessary to ensure careful, inclusive, and coordinated planning for a unified system.

2. Develop a Unified Candidacy and DCOM Framework

The Transition Task Force should create a unified framework for candidacy certification, mentoring models, and DCOM responsibilities, ensuring consistent expectations and equitable processes across all districts.

Rationale: A unified framework ensures equitable preparation and reduces confusion for candidates and DCOM members.

3. Standardize Provisional and Ordination Interview Structures

The Transition Task Force should develop a unified interview model for commissioning and ordination that maintains high standards and ensures consistent evaluation practices.

Rationale: Standardizing procedures ensures consistency, minimizes perceptions of unequal rigor, and promotes fairness.

4. Align Residency in Ministry (RIM) Requirements and Processes

The Transition Task Force should request the creation of a standard RIM curriculum, mentor training process, and fruitfulness project expectations, allowing flexibility in meeting formats (in-person/virtual) while ensuring consistent outcomes.

Rationale: Alignment is needed to ensure fairness in ordination requirements and clarity for mentors and candidates.

5. Standardize Clergy Effectiveness and Corrective Action Procedures

The Cabinet and Ministerial Services should collaborate to create a unified clergy effectiveness process, including shared forms and remediation protocols.

Rationale: Aligning these processes is essential for fairness, accountability, and clarity for District Superintendents and clergy.

6. Establish Criteria for Clergy Retirement-in-Appointment

The bishop and cabinet should create clear, conference-wide guidelines for when and if clergy may transition from active to retired status while remaining in the same appointment, in consultation with BOM leadership and Pension & Benefits.

Rationale: Shared guidelines balance financial stewardship with the needs of clergy and the appointment system.

7. Consolidate Data Management Systems

The two conferences should continue the ongoing unification of clergy data management related to pensions, insurance, appointments, and ministerial records, ensuring a single, accurate, and accessible system.

Rationale: Completing data unification is essential for efficient administration and consistent reporting.

Informational Content

The working group encourages the continued work of the Center for Clergy Excellence/Office of Ministerial Services to cultivate, credential, and sustain clergy in the Georgia Annual Conference.

The Center for Clergy Excellence/Ministerial Services provides support and coordination to all the programs of the Board of Ordained Ministry, including nurture and guidance for provisional members and the efforts of the Order of Deacons, Order of Elders, and the Fellowship of Local Pastors, Associate Members, and clergy in Extension Ministries. The support for the credentialing interviews of candidates for provisional and full connection membership, and full-time local pastors are also a part of the responsibilities of Clergy Excellence. The Ministerial Education Fund is administered through this office, providing financial assistance to seminary

1 students and local pastors in the Course of Study. The personnel files for all the clergy of the
2 conference are maintained by this office.
3

E. Board of Trustees Report

Objective

Evaluate existing policies and procedures of the work of the Board of Trustees as defined in *The Book of Discipline* (BOD) and within both Annual Conferences and recommend future policies and procedures for the Georgia Conference of The United Methodist Church.

Overview

The Conference Board of Trustees' work is outlined in *The Book of Discipline 2020/2024* (BOD) ¶ 640 and ¶ 2512 1.-8.

Action Items Recommendations

By June 2026

1. Accurate Inventory of Property and Restricted Assets

We recommend compiling a thorough, comprehensive, and accurate inventory of all conference and district-owned real property, reserves, investments, executors of estates, and bequests—especially those with restrictions. Each conference should produce a full accounting so that all such assets shall be utilized by the new entity with respect to, and integrity regarding, their stated intent.

Rationale: This inventory is essential to beginning operations of the Georgia Conference of The United Methodist Church.

2. Creation of Joint Distribution Committee

Each Annual Conference will be asked to elect a Joint Distribution Committee made up of three members and three alternates from each conference for the purpose of unification. Wespath will advise on this process and convene the committee. This committee is outlined in the BOD ¶ 639 and ¶ 1507.

Rationale: This is a BOD requirement.

By September 2026

3. Procedures and Processes Review

We recommend developing a detailed list of the procedures and processes used by each current Board of Trustees. Recognizing that North and South Georgia may have differing practices, we suggest these be documented, compared, and contrasted.

Rationale: This will help the new Board of Trustees to operate with fuller awareness of previous approaches concerning property, funds, and bequests.

4. Learning from Other New Creations

1
2 We recommend continued investigation as to how other annual conferences in The United
3 Methodist Church have successfully united two or more former annual conferences.
4 *Rationale: By continuing to study these instances, we hope to identify best practices that will*
5 *help the Georgia Conference work effectively and with full transparency and integrity.*
6

7 By January 2027
8

9 5. Formation of a New Legal Entity January 1, 2027
10

11 We recommend that North Georgia and South Georgia Boards of Trustees constitute a new legal
12 entity. We intentionally avoid the language of "merger," preferring to frame this transition as a
13 new creation.

14 *Rationale: Drawing from biblical language, "the old has passed away; behold, the new has*
15 *come" (2 Corinthians 5:17). A new legal structure is foundational for this process.*
16

17 6. Drafting of New Bylaws and Articles of Incorporation
18

19 In response to a new legal entity, we recommend the creation and adoption of new bylaws and
20 articles of incorporation. Research shows that present and existing documents binding our annual
21 conferences are outdated—some over 70 years old, and one potentially 150 years old. Forming a
22 new entity requires governing documents that reflect our current and future reality. These bylaws
23 and articles should be subject to regular review and updating.

24 *Rationale: Forming a new entity requires governing documents that reflect our current and*
25 *future reality.*
26

27 7. For Archives and History, Board of Trustees shall recommend a repository for the
28 Georgia Conference.
29

F. Camping and Retreat Ministries Report

Objective

Across Georgia, our United Methodist camping and retreat ministries provide spaces where children, youth, and young adults encounter God in ways that leave lifelong spiritual markers. These ministries also cultivate leadership among participants and camp counselors, forming a strong pipeline for clergy and church staff throughout our United Methodist connection. For many, their camping experience becomes the place where faith is deepened, a call to ministry is first heard, lifelong brothers and sisters in Christ are formed, and lives are set on a path of Christian service.

Overview

The North and South Georgia Conferences organize their Camp and Retreat Ministries in fundamentally different ways. This is not unusual, as there are almost as many ways of organizing conference camp ministries as there are annual conferences. The South Georgia Conference combines two organizational models: It employs conference staff to operate its summer camping ministry, which is held at a site, Epworth By The Sea, that is a separately incorporated nonprofit organization. Since 1961, Glisson, now North Georgia Camp and Retreat Ministries (NGCRM), has been a separately incorporated nonprofit that operates both Glisson Camp and Retreat Center and the conference camping ministries.

In the South Georgia model, while the conference is shielded from liability from operations at Epworth By The Sea, the conference retains the in loco parentis liability for the minor participants in the summer program because the conference employs the staff who design and implement its summer camping program.

In the North Georgia model, NGCRM, Inc. holds all liability for the conference summer camp programs along with its day-to-day operations.

Action Item Recommendation

It is recommended that both the North Georgia and South Georgia models retain their current structure in the Georgia Conference. The South Georgia Conference camping program, Camp Connect, will continue to be operated out of the conference office post-unification for its immediate stability and well-being. The liability will be held by the Conference Board of Trustees. NGCRM, Inc. will continue to hold its liability for day-to-day operations of Glisson Camp and Retreat Center and the conference camping ministries. A task force will be formed after the 2026 summer camping season to look at the future of United Methodist camping and retreat ministries across the state of Georgia.

Rationale: The long-term stability and well-being of these ministries is crucial to the Georgia Annual Conference

G. Children and Youth Ministries Report

Objective

The Children and Youth Ministries Working Group was formed to dream and design a stronger, more unified future for ministry with young people across Georgia. Representatives from the North and South Georgia Conferences came together to identify what's working, where there are gaps, and how unification can be a genuine opportunity. Our shared task has been to build on strengths, honor beloved traditions, and craft new strategies that reflect the values of culture, community, and connection.

Overview

We listened to local leaders, reviewed current ministry structures, and looked at long-standing programs like retreats, mission initiatives, Safe Sanctuaries practices, and youth representation in conference life. The recommendations below reflect both vision and practices. These recommendations aim to honor our history while making room for new growth, ensuring that every child and youth in Georgia can experience meaningful, safe, and vibrant ministry through The United Methodist Church.

Action Item Recommendations

(All action items are tasked to Connectional Ministries)

1. Mission and Service Events: We propose that Connectional Ministries launch statewide Georgia Mission Days or rallies that bring children and/or youth together for service, discipleship, and worship. These events will build connections across regions and emphasize our shared call to serve.
2. Safer Sanctuaries Conference Alignment: Develop and implement a single Safe Sanctuaries policy for the Georgia Conference. Integrate best practices from *Safer Sanctuaries: Nurturing Trust within Faith Communities* to ensure the policy reflects denominational standards. This includes setting minimum standards for background checks, training frequency, and best practices for abuse prevention and reporting. The new policy shall be prepared by Connectional Ministries for adoption in September 2026 to be effective January 1, 2027.
3. Local Church Safe Sanctuaries: Every congregation shall receive updated guidance, support, and access to training to reach compliance in adopting a local church Safe Sanctuaries policy. The local church safe sanctuary policy shall be included in annual conference reports.
4. Nursery and Childcare Standards Training: We recommend offering nursery training/resources to churches in the Georgia Conference. Templates, sample policies, and training materials shall be made available for adaptation by local churches.
5. Inclusion and Diversity: We recommend that the Georgia Conference adopt clear standards for inclusion, diversity, and accessibility within children and youth ministries.

1 In addition, we recommend Connectional Ministries provide training and resources to
2 help enable churches in welcoming children and families by being aware of and
3 accommodating the needs in their community as we seek to better reflect the full body of
4 Christ. We further recommend that inclusion resources, including training modules,
5 adaptive classroom guides, and sample accessibility plans be developed.
6

- 7 6. Establish a Georgia Conference Leadership Team for Children and Youth Ministries:
8 Create a conference-wide leadership team under the umbrella of Connectional Ministries
9 to guide children's and youth ministries. This team will bring together clergy and laity
10 from across the state, with representation from diverse regions and ministry settings.
11 Young people shall have a seat at the table. This team will set vision, coordinate shared
12 initiatives, and ensure that ministry resources and support are distributed equitably across
13 Georgia.
14
- 15 7. Recognize and Expand Regional Retreat Ministries: Epworth By The Sea (Confirmation
16 Retreat, KidzQuest, Encounter) and Glisson Camp and Retreat Center (Confirmation,
17 Faithology, and Spiritual Life Retreats) are more than venues for United Methodist
18 retreats, they are spiritual homes for countless families. We recommend maintaining and
19 strengthening the tradition of retreats, opening them to all churches across Georgia.
20 Churches may choose the retreat that best fits their schedule, tradition, or ministry needs.
21 This approach preserves beloved traditions while opening the door to shared experiences.
22
- 23 8. Host an Annual Georgia Children and Youth Leader Retreat: Launch annual retreats or
24 summits that gather children's and youth ministry leaders, staff, volunteers, and clergy
25 from across the Georgia Conference, for spiritual renewal, training, and collaboration. By
26 building relationships across regions, leaders can encourage one another, share ideas, and
27 bring fresh energy back to their local churches.
28
- 29 9. Build a Georgia Resource Hub and Communication Platform: Launch a centralized
30 digital hub where children and youth leaders can access vetted curriculum, program
31 ideas, event details, Safe Sanctuaries resources, nursery guidelines, and training
32 opportunities. This will eliminate silos, streamline communication, and strengthen
33 collaboration among churches. Future plans may include mentorship networks, forums,
34 and live training.
35
- 36 10. Encourage Regional Partnerships and Collaborative Ministry: Create pathways for
37 churches to partner across districts and regions. Larger churches can mentor and resource
38 smaller ones; rural and urban congregations can share their unique gifts. These
39 partnerships will allow creative, sustainable ministry growth and build relationships that
40 reflect the heart of our United Methodist connection.
41

42 **Rationale**

43 Our recommendations are built on the shared conviction that unification is an opportunity to
44 deepen our ministry with young people, not dilute it. Each action is rooted in the values of
45 culture, community, and connection:
46

1 1. Culture: Honoring What’s Sacred

2 Beloved traditions like retreats held at Epworth By The Sea and Camp Glisson are not just
3 events, they are sacred and have shaped generations. Preserving their unique identities while
4 opening them up statewide allows more young people to experience the beauty of these faith
5 communities. Similarly, clear Safe Sanctuaries policies and shared discipleship resources
6 strengthen our culture of care and faith formation.
7

8 2. Community: Strengthening the Body

9 Ministry thrives in relationships. Unifying leadership teams, hosting annual leader retreats, and
10 creating resource hubs will connect ministry leaders across regions. This builds a community of
11 support, reduces burnout, and encourages innovation. Likewise, mission days and joint
12 gatherings offer young people opportunities to meet peers from across Georgia, reminding them
13 that they belong to something larger than their local church.
14

15 3. Connection: Living Our United Methodist Identity

16 Connectionalism is at the heart of who we are. We emphasize creating a shared future where
17 every church, regardless of size or location, can thrive in ministry with children and youth.
18

19 4. Retreat Ministries as a Case Study

20 Retreats provide a living example of why this unified approach matters. We can celebrate their
21 uniqueness while inviting broader participation. When youth from different regions worship,
22 serve, and grow together, they strengthen the bonds of our connectional church.
23

24 **Closing**

25 This report reflects the collaborative work, listening, and dreaming of the task force. It honors
26 the ministry legacy of both conferences and leans forward into what’s next. By embracing a
27 shared vision, we can nurture young disciples with intentionality, unity, and joy.
28

H. Committee on Episcopacy Report

Objective

To offer full support to our bishop, and given the Disciplinary nature of this committee, offer recommendations for the Georgia Conference of The United Methodist Church's Episcopacy Committee.

Overview

The Book of Discipline 2020/2024 (BOD) ¶ 636 outlines the Conference Committee on Episcopacy in committee membership, meeting cycle, and functions. Both the North Georgia Conference (NGA) and the South Georgia Conference (SGA) are a part of the Southeastern Jurisdictional (SEJ) Conference of The United Methodist Church.

Action Item Recommendation

Establishing Membership of the Committee for the Georgia Conference

The following recommendation is for membership of the Georgia Episcopacy Committee beginning January 1, 2027, through the end of this quadrennium. Fifteen members will serve through the end of this quadrennium. One-fifth (3) of the committee members will be nominated by the bishop and six will be nominated by the Nominations Committee.

We recommend the committee as outlined in BOD ¶ 636.1:

- 1.NGA Lay Leader
- 2.SGA Lay Leader
- 3.NGA Clergy SEJ Episcopacy Committee
- 4.NGA Lay SEJ Episcopacy Committee
- 5.SGA Clergy SEJ Episcopacy Committee
- 6.SGA Lay SEJ Episcopacy Committee
- 7.Nominated by Bishop
- 8.Nominated by Bishop
- 9.Nominated by Bishop
10. Nominated by Nominations Committee
11. Nominated by Nominations Committee
12. Nominated by Nominations Committee
13. Nominated by Nominations Committee
14. Nominated by Nominations Committee
15. Nominated by Nominations Committee

This committee could also function as the Conference Committee on Episcopal Residence BOD ¶ 637.

Rationale: This structure would allow for both continuity and alignment with The Book of Discipline.

Best Practices Recommendations

This following is informational and will serve as a reference for future Episcopacy Committees.

Suggested meeting rhythm

- Think annually and quadrennially in terms of the committee's responsibilities and changes in episcopal leadership
- Meet four times per year: once in-person (preferably at annual conference) and three times virtually
- Accommodate both lay and clergy members' schedules.

Suggested meeting topics

- Discuss visions, goals, plans
- Relationships and communication with local churches, districts, and general church
- Discuss self-care, family, and progress report
- Foster review, assessment, and accountability
- Plan intentional appreciation gifts with prior approval from Council on Finance and Administration.

I. Communications Report

Objective

Because communication affects every person and at every level of the conference, it is essential to consider communication needs early and consistently. Doing so strengthens the unification effort, honors the connection, and supports the mission we share across the state of Georgia.

Overview

Through thoughtful review and collaboration, the working group was able to offer constructive insights on communications and affirm the ongoing efforts. The guiding principles of strong communication below can carry through the coming year and beyond.

Effective communication about unification includes:

- Providing clarity about decisions, transitions, and next steps.
- Reducing confusion and anxiety among clergy and laity.
- Ensuring consistent messaging across communications channels (local church, district, conference).
- Supporting transparency, which is essential for credibility and unity.
- Helping shape the narrative so unification is understood as a hopeful, mission-driven process rather than merely structural change.
- Preparing local churches with accurate information and practical tools.

Action Item Recommendations

The Communications Working Group has identified items for consideration by conference staff. The group recommends empowering conference staff to prioritize communications throughout the unification process and into the formation of the Georgia Annual Conference.

Rationale: Effective communication is foundational to a successful unification effort and the establishment of the future annual conference. Clear, timely, and coordinated communication shapes understanding and builds trust. It is essential that we ensure that messaging, timelines, and expectations are aligned at every stage of the process.

1. Capacity

Content will need to be planned and published on three websites, across three sets of social media channels, and new email communication streams (legacy channels for North and South Georgia, as well as new Georgia Conference channels). Each channel and platform will require adapting content while maintaining overall brand coherence—a complex editorial challenge that demands significant planning.

In 2026, conference staff should begin development of new brand guidelines, message testing, and monitoring of engagement metrics across all platforms to ensure successful migration.

1
2
3
4 2. Timeline for Georgia Conference Communications

5 Careful planning and preparation for the Georgia Conference website and social media launch
6 timeline is essential to maximize effectiveness and maintain consistency in messaging.
7

8 A detailed timeline is in development and includes:

- 9 • Early 2026 - Inventory and audit existing communications channels. Take initial steps to
10 prepare for a new Georgia Conference website.
11 • Spring 2026 - Branding study and development.
12 • Fall 2026 - Launch of new Georgia Conference social media channels.
13 • January 1, 2027 - Launch of new Georgia Conference website.
14 • January 2027 - Launch of Georgia Conference e-newsletters.

15
16 3. Branding
17

18 The Communications Working Group recommends giving thoughtful attention to branding the
19 Georgia Conference of The United Methodist Church. This includes adhering to denominational
20 branding standards such as The United Methodist logo, fonts, and style guidelines, while
21 establishing a clear identity for the Georgia Conference.
22

23 4. Future Georgia Conference Website
24

25 The website is the hub of communication for an annual conference. A new website design,
26 migration of content, and population of the website will take time, research, and resources. This
27 must be a top priority for conference staff in 2026 to prepare for launch January 1, 2027.
28

J. Connectional Ministries Report

Objective

To consider how each Annual Conference functions within the Connectional Ministry framework and propose a unified Connectional Ministries team and purpose.

Overview

The local church is the primary location for the formation of disciples who work to transform the world with the love of Christ. Connectional Ministries exists to provide resources and support to the local churches for this important work. Connectional Ministries team members and staff - in coordination with the Discipleship Teams - create and offer opportunities for training and provide resource materials for laity and clergy; encourage relationships and connections among churches, districts, the annual conference and the global church; support and develop ethnic ministries; and advocate for those who need support. This report explains how the responsibility of Connectional Ministries - as outlined in *The Book of Discipline* - is to focus and guide the mission and ministry of The United Methodist Church within its boundaries.

This proposed structure offers the flexibility and responsiveness required to undergird the ministry of the local church and carry out God's work across the state of Georgia.

Action Item Recommendation

Create a structure for the Office of Connectional Ministries

Below is an outline of the new structure for the Office of Connectional Ministries of the Georgia Annual Conference. This would be placed in the standing rules.

CONNECTIONAL MINISTRIES (*The Book of Discipline* 2020/2024 ¶ 608)

PURPOSE

Connectional Ministries is the entity within our annual conference having responsibility to focus and guide the mission and ministry of The United Methodist Church within our boundaries by:

- Envisioning the ministries necessary to live out the mission of the church in and through the annual conference.
- Creating and nurturing relationships and connections among the local, district, annual conference, and general church agencies.
- Providing encouragement, coordination, and support for the ministries of nurture, outreach, witness, and advocacy in the districts and congregations for the transformation of the world.
- Ensuring the alignment of the total resources of the annual conference to its mission.
- Developing and strengthening ethnic ministries, including ethnic local churches and concerns.

- Providing advocacy and monitoring functions to ensure that the church is consistent with its stated values.

OVERSIGHT

CONNECTIONAL MINISTRIES (BOD ¶ 608)

- The Bishop of the Georgia Annual Conference shall name or appoint a Director of Connectional Ministries or similar officer to focus and guide the mission and ministry of The United Methodist Church who serves as steward of the vision of the annual conference. The work and scope of Connectional Ministries is described in the BOD ¶ 608.

STRUCTURE

1. The Connectional Ministries Council

The Connectional Ministries Council serves as the primary body guiding the Conference's nurture, outreach, witness, and advocacy efforts. The Director of Connectional Ministries or similar officer convenes the Council.

The Council is co-chaired by one lay person and one clergy person, who work together to provide leadership and coordination across all ministry areas. The Conference Nominations Committee selects the co-chairs.

The full Council shall consist of the Director of Connectional Ministries or similar officer, the two co-chairs, the four discipleship team chairs, the members of the nurture, outreach, witness, and advocacy teams, and the Conference Lay Leader(s).

The Council shall meet at least annually and may be convened more frequently as needed or as determined by the Steering Group.

2. Discipleship Teams

Four discipleship teams support the work of the Council:

- Nurture Team
- Outreach Team
- Witness Team
- Advocacy Team

These teams focus on developing, supporting, and resourcing ministries within their respective areas. Each team consists of eight members, including a team chair, divided into classes. The Conference Nominations Committee selects the team members and names the chair. The Bishop may assign one District Superintendent to each of the Discipleship Teams.

3. Steering Group

The Steering Group provides leadership, alignment, and strategic oversight for the Council. It is composed of:

- The Director of Connectional Ministries (convener)
- The two Council co-chairs (one lay, one clergy)
- The four discipleship team chairs (nurture, outreach, witness, advocacy)
- Status and Role of Women representative* (§ 644)
- Religion and Race representative* (§ 643)
- Church and Society* (§ 628)

*All three groups shall have representatives on the broader teams of nurture, outreach, witness, and advocacy.

The Steering Group

- Meets as needed to coordinate the work of the discipleship teams and prepare agendas and recommendations for the full Council.
- In consultation with the Bishop and Cabinet, is authorized to fill vacancies that occur between sessions of the annual conference and shall report all such actions to the Chair of the Committee on Nominations.
- In consultation with the discipleship teams, it determines the membership needs for the coming conference year. The Director of Connectional Ministries will provide this information to the Chair of the Nominating Committee.
- In consultation with the Bishop, Cabinet, and discipleship teams, will designate representatives to boards, agencies, and ministry groups beyond the annual conference to strengthen our shared mission across the general church.

DISCIPLESHIP TEAMS

The Discipleship Teams will offer primary assistance and resources to local churches as they seek to fulfill their disciple-making mission. There will be four discipleship teams with the following areas of responsibility. Each team will be composed of eight primary members, divided into classes, and a conference staff member.

1. Nurture Team

The Nurture Team will be responsible for assisting churches in areas of Christian formation, education, small group ministries, worship, stewardship, membership care, age-level, family ministries (§§ 649, 650, 651), higher education and campus ministry (§ 633), small membership churches (§ 645), and outdoor ministries.

2. Outreach Team

The Outreach Team will be responsible for assisting churches in equipping growing Christians to express their discipleship by being in mission beyond the walls of their church. This includes opportunities like global and local missions, mission personnel recruitment and initial screening, disaster response and the United Methodist Committee on Relief, Volunteers in Missions, and ministries through our health and welfare agencies (§ 632).

3. Witness Team

The Witness Team will be responsible for assisting churches to train and motivate growing Christians to share their faith and lead others to accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. The Witness team will sponsor training in witnessing, lay speaking, and specific events to equip our congregations to reach the unchurched in our communities with the gospel (§§ 266-269, 630, 607).

4. Advocacy Team

The Advocacy Team will give coordinated effort to help the annual conference, districts, and local churches reflect the best of Christian community as we value awareness, respect, trust, equality, and acceptance of our diversity. This team will oversee ministries related to Religion and Race (§ 643), Ethnic Local Church Concerns (§ 631), Status and Role of Women (§ 644), Persons with Disabilities (§ 653), Native American Ministries (§ 654), Hispanic/Latino Ministries (§ 631), Pan-Asian Ministries, Criminal Justice and Mercy Ministries (§ 657), Church and Society (§ 628), and Christian Unity and Interreligious Concerns (§ 642).

Composition of Discipleship Teams:

- Each of the four discipleship teams will be composed of eight primary members, divided into classes, and a staff member.
- One team member of each discipleship team will be nominated as Chairperson by the Conference Nominations Committee.
- The Conference Nominations Committee is asked to select the team members based on gifts, graces, interest, availability, and commitment to the conference's vision, while reflecting diversity and inclusion.
- Teams may enlist additional persons to assist in its work as needs arise.
- Teams are expected and empowered to create as many short-term task groups, ad hoc groups, or networking groups as needed to carry out its work. These groups will work under the supervision of the particular discipleship team. Each sub-group will be evaluated annually by the Steering Group to determine whether it is to be continued.

Scope of Work:

- Teams will be expected to consider prayerfully the full range of ministry possibilities within its scope of responsibility and to design and implement the most strategic plans in light of the Conference's mission, vision, values, and action plan.
- The four teams are expected to collaborate to maximize the potential benefits of resources offered to the local churches.

- The Connectional Ministries Executive Team will conduct annual evaluations of each Discipleship Team to determine whether each team’s strategy and work should be affirmed or adjusted to maximize the making of disciples of Jesus Christ.

CONNECTIONAL SERVICES

The Connectional Ministries Office provides several services for the annual conference, which are intended to make the connection a reality for all constituents. These services fall into the categories:

1. Connecting Local Churches to the general church by sharing information and resources (§ 608.2).
2. Consulting and Training in local churches, sub-districts, clusters, and districts.

Rationale

As we considered the structure of Connectional Ministries, these principles guided our conversations and planning. The Connectional Ministries’ structure will point us toward making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world where the local church is the primary focus for disciple making. This structure will resource and strengthen the local church.

K. Council on Finance and Administration Report

Objective

The objective and charge assigned to the Council on Finance and Administration (CF&A) Working Group was to evaluate the plan of fiscal and administrative policies, procedures, and management services of both annual conferences and devise a path for aligning the North Georgia Conference (NGA) and South Georgia Conference (SGA), including the following specific tasks: (1) Review the apportionment methodologies and recommend the best way to bring alignment; (2) Review budget development procedures and recommend a unified process for the development of the combined budget for 2027; and (3) Recommend preliminary work that the Joint Distribution Committee will need to enable the assets of both annual conferences and corporations to be legally and fiscally combined.

Overview

The CF&A Working Group identified the current practices, topics, and challenges to address to respond to the assigned charge. The Working Group determined that there are challenges inherent in combining the work of the Councils on Finance & Administration processes. Therefore, the Working Group recommends the following actions.

Action Item Recommendations

The CF&A Working Group unanimously offers the following recommendations.

1. Apportionment Methodologies

For the 2025 fiscal year and prior years, the NGA method for calculating apportionments was based solely on a church's operating expenses for the preceding year only, whereas the SGA method was based on a formula that combined prior years' operating expenses (65%) and church membership (35%) over two years rather than one.

In 2026 the SGA CF&A moved to adopt an apportionment formula using the method based solely on a local church's operating expenses for the preceding year. The 2026 formula is now consistent with the NGA apportionment formula. It is recommended that this same formula be used with the Georgia Conference in 2027.

2. Reserves

The CF&A Working Group recognized that some difficult decisions may be required (such as, for example, how to handle a reserve established "for use solely within the legacy geographic boundaries of the NGA or SGA conference" when, following unification, there is no longer a "NGA or SGA conference"). The group anticipated there would be some reserves where it makes sense to combine immediately. There will be others that will remain distinct for a season of transition or permanently because of donor restrictions. The group refers this work to either the Georgia Board of Trustees or the Joint Distribution Committee to identify and/or resolve many of these questions.

We recommend that the Georgia CF&A use best efforts, upon advice of legal counsel if and as

appropriate, to handle each reserve currently held in each of the two conferences in a manner designed to honor the intentions of the donors and the purposes of those reserves.

3. Spending Authority

We have determined that spending authority has been handled over the years by SGA and NGA in a similar manner, and in accordance with appropriate best practices and internal controls. The Working Group recommends that this function be handled by the Georgia Conference Treasurer (in consultation, if appropriate, with the Georgia CF&A).

4. Financial Reporting, Treasury Operations, and Investment Policies

In recent years, both conferences have worked to refine and optimize their treasury operations and investment policies to align with the best non-profit practices. This work should continue during and after unification.

The Working Group recommends that the Georgia Conference present financial statements in accordance with Generally Accepted Accounting Practices (GAAP) compliance and that GAAP standards determine choices when there is a variation between the two conferences.

5. Treasurer's Office Operations, Financial Controls, Accounting Procedures, Choice of Software Systems, Billing Procedures

The Working Group has determined that many of these items will work themselves out organically upon unification, and that many of these issues will be, by nature, most effectively and efficiently handled by the Georgia Conference Treasurer in consultation, if appropriate, with the Georgia CF&A.

6. Audits

Adopting the same calendar for audit field work, audit completion, and using the same audit firm for the separate 2026 fiscal year audits could result in cost savings for both conferences and should also result in consistency and efficiency gains with respect to the work of each conference's staff. Adopting the same calendar audit year and using the same audit firm should provide confidence to both annual conferences' stakeholders that the due diligence work will be accomplished to prepare for the 2027 audit.

The working group recommends that the Georgia Conference selects a single audit firm to handle both 2026 and 2027 financial statements and episcopal office audits.

7. Development of Combined 2027 Budget

If unification is approved, a newly formed joint CF&A consisting of the members of both legacy conference CF&A existing member shall jointly develop and recommend a 2027 Georgia Conference budget for approval at the September 2026 unification conference. The 2027 approved

1 unified budget would then be allocated to all Georgia Conference churches for operations to begin
2 in January 2027.

3
4 With the foundation and alignment of the apportionment methodology in 2026 across the
5 conferences, the 2027 unified budget will be constructed with care, financial prudence, to align
6 and enhance the United Methodist ministry and mission throughout Georgia.

7
8 8. Personnel Committee (A Subcommittee of CF&A)

9
10 *Creation of a New Personnel Employee Handbook*

11 A new employee manual would be created that covers numerous topics such as employee status,
12 definitions, work performance guidelines, job descriptions, vacation time allotment, holidays,
13 work hours, etc. This handbook will be presented for voting in September 2026.

14
15 *Creation of Personnel Policies and Practices Sub-Committee*

16 This sub-committee will function under the authority and responsibility of CF&A. Their
17 responsibilities are outlined in *The Book of Discipline 2020/2024* ¶ 613.13. Members of this sub-
18 committee are not limited to members of CF&A and will be nominated by the Conference
19 Nominations Committee.

20 *Create a Human Resource Advisory Committee*

21 The focus of this advisory committee will address and advise the needs of the bishop and
22 conference leaders with respect to recruitment, retention, and performance management for lay
23 and clergy in conference staff positions. Members of this committee are not limited to members
24 of CF&A.

L. Disaster Response Report

Objective

Disaster Response is a valued ministry of the annual conference, providing coordinated leadership in times of disaster in cooperation with local churches, community partners, and United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR). The Disaster Response Coordinator leads this ministry by organizing preparedness, response, and recovery efforts, serving as liaison with UMCOR and conference leadership, and equipping volunteers and churches to respond faithfully and effectively to human needs in times of crisis.

Overview

Disaster Response is a vital ministry of the annual conference that embodies the church's commitment to compassionate service in times of crisis. In accordance with *The Book of Discipline 2020/2024* (BOD) ¶ 632.4b(22), the annual conference provides leadership and structure for responding to natural and human-caused disasters affecting communities within and beyond its bounds.

Conference Disaster Response works collaboratively with local churches, districts, ecumenical partners, and UMCOR to address immediate needs, support long-term recovery, and promote disaster preparedness and resilience. This ministry reflects the United Methodist mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ through acts of mercy, justice, and healing.

The work of the Disaster Response across Georgia has been strengthened by long-standing reliance on UMCOR training and best practices for conference disaster response, along with decades of collaboration through Georgia Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (GA VOAD). These partnerships have provided a strong and effective framework for coordinated response.

In recent years, collaboration between our two conferences has deepened through shared relief and recovery efforts following Hurricane Michael (2018), the 2023 Griffin and West Point tornadoes, Hurricane Debby (August 2024), and Hurricane Helene (September 2024), which caused widespread damage across much of Georgia. These events have led to increasingly intentional and coordinated operations.

As a result, the conferences are now working more closely together in Early Response Team training and deployment, asset coordination, warehouse and logistics management, and long-term recovery ministries, particularly in communities impacted by Hurricanes Helene and Debby.

Action Item Recommendation

Empower the Conference Disaster Response Coordinators and connectional ministries to adopt a Georgia Conference disaster response protocol that includes Early Response Team training and deployment, asset coordination, warehouse and logistics management, and long-term recovery ministries in collaboration with UMCOR and partners.

Rationale: To ensure disaster response ministry continues seamlessly in the Georgia Annual Conference and is implemented with excellence.

M. District Set-Up and Organization Report

Objective

The goal of this work was to clearly establish expectations regarding the structure of district committees, roles, and functions so that we can all hold one another accountable for the work that we are called to do in our respective mission fields.

Overview

We believe that the primary roles of each district structure should be to Strategize, Connect, and Empower their respective churches based on the mandates outlined in *The Book of Discipline 2020/2024* (BOD).

Strategize: Determine the vision and missional priorities of the district.

Connect: Enhance communication and connectionalism among the local churches to maximize their gifts and effectiveness, while identifying and training leaders who will connect the district.

Empower: Equip clergy and laity within the district by delivering high-quality ministry resources available to all churches in the district.

Action Item Recommendations

To make this vision a reality, the following committees or structures shall be formed and populated.

Structures:

1. District Committee on Ordained Ministry
2. District Strategic Growth Team and Church Building/Location
3. District Board of Trustees
4. Committee on District Superintendency
5. District Committee on Lay Servant Ministries
6. District Board of Laity
7. District Nominations Committee

For each structure, the purpose and membership are outlined with function and membership of committees. All district committees shall have the same term lengths and term limitations as Conference Boards, Agencies, Commissions, Councils, Teams, and ad hoc committees unless specified otherwise by *The Book of Discipline 2020/2024*.

1. District Committee on Ordained Ministry

The district committee on ordained ministry (DCOM) shall be amenable to the annual conference through the Board of Ordained Ministry (BOM) (§ 666.1). The BOM shall select

1 from its own membership an official representative to serve as a member of each district
2 committee on ordained ministry, which shall function as subcommittees of the board. (§ 635.1g)

3 The committee shall supervise all matters dealing with candidacy for the ordained ministry and
4 with the license for local pastor. (BOD § 666.5)

5 Membership: The following shall be represented in the membership of the DCOM, including
6 women, men, and racial/ethnic members. All are voting members. (BOD § 666.1)

- 7 • The district superintendent
- 8 • At least three professing members of local churches
- 9 • A representative from the BOM
- 10 • At least six other clergy in the district including elders and deacons. Where possible,
11 include a deacon or elder age 35 or younger. An associate member is also to serve and
12 may include one local pastor who has completed the Course of Study
- 13 • The district superintendent fills interim vacancies
- 14 • The district superintendent, in consultation with the chairperson or executive committee
15 of the BOM, annually nominates DCOM members for approval by the annual conference

16
17 2. District Strategic Growth Team and Church/Building Location
18 The District Strategic Growth Team has several responsibilities and will also function as the
19 District Board of Church Building and Location per the BOD § 2519-2524.

20 1 - Come alongside existing congregations and enable them to become the best version of
21 themselves to make disciples of Jesus Christ.

22
23 2 - To intentionally reach underserved or growing populations identified based on ethnicity, race,
24 culture, age, and Mosaic category (*Mosaic as defined by Missioninsite.com*)

25
26 3 - Function as part of the Barnes Evaluation and Administration Team (BEAT) process for the
27 purpose of grant funding for local churches and other entities. Members of the DSGT are
28 responsible for evaluating applications from churches in their district and forwarding
29 applications that they endorse and approve to the BEAT committee.

30
31 4 - Continue to collaborate with the appointive cabinet and the Office of Connectional Ministries
32 to respond with nimbleness to the advancement of the vision and mission of The United
33 Methodist Church across the Georgia Conference.

34
35 Membership:

- 36 • The district superintendent
- 37 • A minimum of six people to a maximum of nine people
- 38 • One third clergy

- One third laymen
- One third laywomen
- Nominated by the district superintendent in consultation with the district nominating committee
- Recommended the membership of the group be inclusive of gender, race, age, and people with disabilities
- All shall be professing members of The United Methodist Church
- Members (excluding the district superintendent) shall be divided into three classes
- One third shall be elected for a one-year term, a second third will be elected for a two-year term, with the remaining for a three-year term

This committee shall file a report of any actions taken as a part of the minutes of the conference.

Duties include investigation of all proposed local church building sites, confirm it will continue to serve changing neighborhoods, serve both current and future needs, and that all buildings are energy-efficient BOD ¶ 2520.

They will also review any plans of any church in the district which proposes to construct or purchase a new church or educational building or parsonage, or remodeling such building if the cost will exceed 25 percent of the value of the building BOD ¶ 2521.

When the local church has final architectural plans and specifications along with a reasonable estimate of the proposed undertaking, the board shall require their submission and approval. The board shall review and provide their conclusions to the church and the cabinet in writing BOD ¶ 2521.2. Any such decision not acted upon for one year shall terminate BOD ¶ 2521.3.

If such board disapproves of any purchases, building, or remodeling, the local church has a right of appeal to the annual conference BOD ¶ 2522.

3. District Board of Trustees

The District Trustees serve in an advisory capacity to existing local churches. They are encouraged to offer training on endowments, building maintenance, use agreements, risk assessment, and other facility needs.

Membership: the district board shall consist of not fewer than three nor more than nine members in accordance with BOD ¶ 610.5, having the same qualifications provided for trustees of local churches (BOD ¶ 2525), who shall be nominated by the district superintendent in consultation with the district nominating committee, if one exists, and elected by the district conference.

- They shall be elected for a term of one year and serve until their successors have been elected.
- It is recommended that the board include one third clergy, one-third laywomen, and one-third laymen, who are professing members of local churches.
- They shall report annually to the district conference or annual conference.

1
2 4. Committee on District Superintendency

3 There is an expectation that we follow BOD ¶ 669 for the Committee on District
4 Superintendency.

5
6 The purpose of this committee is to support the district superintendent in the oversight of the
7 spiritual and temporal affairs of the church, with special reference to the district where the
8 superintendent has responsibilities BOD ¶ 669.

9
10 Responsibilities:

- 11 • Advocate for adequate budget-support services for the district superintendent, such as
12 secretarial support, travel, continuing education, and parsonage needs
- 13 • Availability for counsel
- 14 • Advise on conditions within the district as they affect relations among the district
15 superintendent, laity, clergy, and the district agencies
- 16 • Establish a clear process for observation, evaluation, and feedback to the district
17 superintendent on the inclusiveness of the church's ministry with respect to sex, race,
18 national origin, and the consultative process of appointment-making
- 19 • Consult on continuing education and provide financial assistance to provide such events
20 to continue his or her professional and spiritual growth
- 21 • Interpret to the people of the district the nature and function of the district
22 superintendency
- 23 • Provide yearly consultation and appraisal of the work of the district superintendent and
24 advise the bishop of the area

25
26 Membership of eleven:

- 27 • District lay leader
- 28 • Two appointments by the district superintendent
- 29 • Recommended that the remaining members be two laywomen, two laymen, two clergy,
30 and two at-large members of the district
- 31 • The selection of these members should be done with special attention to the
32 representation of gender, racial and ethnic persons, ability, youth, young adults, and older
33 adults
- 34 • At least three of the eleven members shall be clergy with seven being laypersons
- 35 • All members are to be professing members of The United Methodist Church

36 5. District Committee on Lay Servant Ministries

37 BOD ¶ 668 states that the district director of Lay Servant Ministries will be filled in a manner
38 determined by the district along with the persons recommended below. The district director's
39 position will be a certified lay servant.

1 Responsibilities:

- 2 • Provide basic training for local church lay servants and advanced courses for certified lay
- 3 servants as either recommended by the General Board of Discipleship or as approved by
- 4 the conference committee on Lay Servant Ministries
- 5 • Decide who will be recognized as certified lay servants
- 6 • Match lay servants and certified lay servants with service opportunities
- 7 • Support and affirm lay servants and certified lay servants in their service
- 8 • Plan advanced courses for lay servants that will enable certified lay servants to maintain
- 9 that recognition
- 10 • Report to the pastor and charge conference the courses the lay servants have satisfactorily
- 11 completed

12
13 Membership:

- 14 • District director of Lay Servant Ministries
- 15 • District lay leader
- 16 • District superintendent
- 17 • An instructor of lay servant courses
- 18 • Other resources may be added as needed

19
20 6. District Board of Laity

21 BOD ¶ 667 states that each district may organize a district board of laity. The purpose of this
22 committee is to foster an awareness of the role of laity both within the local church and through
23 their ministries in the home, workplace, community, and world in achieving the mission of the
24 Church.

25
26 Responsibilities:

- 27 • Develop and promote an increased role of laity in the life of the local church
- 28 • Increase participation of laity in the sessions and programs of the district and local
- 29 churches in cooperation with the district superintendent and local pastors
- 30 • Encourage lay persons to participate in the general ministry of the Church in the world
- 31 • Develop and promote stewardship of time, talent, and possessions within the district in
- 32 cooperation with the district superintendent and the district committee structure
- 33 • Support and relate to the lay servant programs and the organized groups in the district
- 34 such as the United Methodist Men, United Methodist Women, United Methodist Youth,
- 35 and United Methodist Young Adults

36
37 Membership:

- The district lay leader shall chair the board
- Associate district lay leader(s)
- District director of Lay Servant Ministries
- District president of The United Methodist Men
- District president of The United Methodist Women/United Women of Faith
- District president of The United Methodist Young Adults
- May include the district superintendent
- Special attention shall be to the inclusion of women, men, youth, young adults, and older adults; persons with disabilities; racial and ethnic group persons

7. District Nominations Committee

Responsibilities: The purpose of the committee on nominations and leadership for the district functions somewhat like a “committee on committees.” Its primary role is to nominate leaders for key positions within the district structure. Their focus is to identify, develop, deploy, evaluate, and monitor Christian spiritual leadership for the district.

They meet at least annually and more frequently if there is a need to replace individuals who cannot fulfill their commitment to other district committees. Their term is three years.

Membership of no more than twelve with these suggested:

- District superintendent
- District lay leader
- One young adult
- At least four clergy
- At least five lay people

All are professing of The United Methodist Church within the district. The selection of these members is to the inclusion of women, men, young adults, and older adults; persons with disabilities; racial and ethnic group persons.

N. Diversity and Inclusion Report

Objective

As the people called United Methodists in Georgia, we stand at a historic moment. By uniting two conferences into a unified Georgia Annual Conference, our objective is to affirm:

- Our shared identity in Christ
- Our covenant to live as one body
- Our commitment to justice and mercy in every community

This is not only an administrative realignment, but a spiritual covenant — an opportunity to live more faithfully into God’s vision of justice, peace, and beloved community.

Overview

The unification of the North and South Georgia Annual Conferences is more than a structural change; it is a covenant rooted in Christ’s love and a bold step into our shared future. Together, as the Georgia Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church, we embrace our mission:

“To make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.”

This framework outlines the theological foundation, vision, leadership commitments, and practical steps by which our Conference will embody unity, diversity, justice, and inclusion. Our call is to build a beloved community where all are welcomed, empowered, and equipped for mission.

INFORMATIONAL CONTENT

Theological Foundations: Rooted in Christ, Guided by Justice

1. Centered in the Love of Christ

We proclaim that our identity begins in the radical, transforming love of Jesus Christ.

- This love compels us to break down walls of division.
- This love creates communities where every person is seen, known, and valued.

“We love because he first loved us.” — 1 John 4:19

2. Grounded in the Social Principles of The United Methodist Church

We affirm the sacred worth of all persons. We commit to:

- Dismantling racism and all forms of exclusion
- Advocating equity and justice in church and society

- 1 • Welcoming persons of every race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, immigration
2 status, culture, age, theology, ethnicity, physical or mental ability, gender identity,
3 socioeconomic status, and language.

4 3. Called to Social Justice

5 Faith in Jesus Christ requires action. We will move beyond charity toward systemic justice,
6 addressing the causes of poverty, inequity, and exclusion.

7 *“What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with*
8 *your God?”* — Micah 6:8

9 Our Shared Vision: The Beloved Community We Are Building

10 We envision a culture shaped by three commitments:

11 1. Inclusive and Diverse

- 12 • Reflecting the fullness of God’s creation across race, gender, culture, age, theology,
13 ethnicity, physical or mental ability, gender identity, sexual orientation, socioeconomic
14 status, immigration status and language.
- 15 • Lifting up historically underrepresented voices in leadership and decision-making.
- 16 • Celebrating cultural richness in worship, music, preaching, and community life.
- 17 • In the Wesleyan spirit of personal and social holiness, we believe that the grace of God
18 precedes us, inviting all people into communion with God and their neighbor. This
19 prevenient grace compels us to create inclusive spaces where love is made visible in acts
20 of justice, mercy, and compassion.

21
22 2. Christ-Centered and Mission-Driven

- 23 • Forming disciples through worship, evangelism, and spiritual growth.
- 24 • Planting new churches and revitalizing existing ones, especially in underserved
25 communities.
- 26 • Addressing pressing issues — such as poverty, education, housing, healthcare, ecological
27 justice, and many others — as part of God’s kingdom work.

28 3. Justice-Oriented and Prophetic

- 29 • Advocating for systemic change at local, state, and national levels.
- 30 • Equipping leaders to speak truth to power and stand with the marginalized.
- 31 • Partnering with justice organizations and movements that align with kingdom values.

32 *“There is one body and one Spirit... one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of*
33 *all.”* — Ephesians 4:4–6

1
2 **Action Item Recommendations**

- 3 1. It is recommended that Connectional Ministries offer:
- 4
- 5 • Ongoing quadrennial training in cultural competence, anti-racism, and inclusive
- 6 leadership.
- 7 • Mentorship pathways for emerging leaders from underrepresented groups through the
- 8 Center for Clergy Excellence and Board of Laity.
- 9 • Required Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging (DEIB) training for all conference
- 10 staff, and for all clergy or laity who serve on conference boards, committees, or
- 11 commissions, that is consistent with anti-racism and cultural humility formation.
- 12 • Training accountability will be provided by updates each year at annual conference
- 13 through the Office of Connectional Ministries, the Bishop's Cabinet, and Board of
- 14 Ordained Ministry.
- 15 • Commission on Race and Religion (CORR) and Commission on the Status and Role of
- 16 Women (COSROW) will continue their work in these areas as part of the Connectional
- 17 Ministries Advocacy Team. This team could provide tools and support such as:
- 18 ○ A Congregational Diversity and Justice Toolkit
- 19 ○ Certified Diversity and Justice Ministry trainers
- 20 ○ A Speaker & Preacher Directory
- 21 ○ Learning Cohorts
- 22 ○ A Digital Resource Hub
- 23 ○ Regularly monitor leadership, appointments, and resources as it relates to
- 24 diversity and inclusion
- 25 ○ Regularly monitor for equitable and geographical representation on boards,
- 26 agencies, and committees
- 27 ○ Elevate youth, young adults, women, LGBTQ+, rural, and ethnic minority voices
- 28 ○ Work to guarantee accessibility for persons with disabilities in all conference
- 29 events
- 30 2. It is recommended that the Cabinet:
- 31
- 32 • Use best practices to ensure equitable appointment processes that honor the gifts of
- 33 clergy across racial, ethnic, gender, and cultural lines consistent with BOD ¶ 425.4. The
- 34 Cabinet will support clergy and congregations in building healthy cross-racial and cross-
- 35 cultural ministry relationships.
- 36 3. It is recommended that the Office of Clergy Excellence:
- 37

- Offers cultural competency training for all clergy in collaboration with the ethics training

Rationale

As the Georgia Annual Conference, we covenant to:

- Love one another as Christ loves us
- Seek justice, show mercy, and walk humbly with God
- Create a beloved community of inclusion and empowerment
- Remain accountable to one another in faith, action, and spirit

“Let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest time, if we do not give up.” — Galatians 6:9

The Georgia Conference is a witness to the inclusive love of God, the justice of Jesus Christ, and the power of the Holy Spirit at work among us.

Together, we step boldly into God’s future: *One Conference. One Body. One Mission. One Georgia.*

O. Equitable Compensation Report

Objective

The purpose of this commission is found in *The Book of Discipline 2020/2024* (BOD) ¶ 624.2, where it states: *It is the purpose of the commission on equitable compensation to support full-time clergy serving as pastors in the charges of the annual conference by: (a) recommending conference standards for pastoral support; (b) administering funds to be used in base compensation supplementation; and (c) providing counsel and advisory material on pastoral support to district superintendents and committees on pastor-parish relations; and (d) submitting an arrearage policy to be adopted by the annual conference.*

BOD ¶ 624.1 provides that in each annual conference there shall be a commission on equitable compensation. The purpose of this commission is found in ¶ 624.2, where it states: *It is the purpose of the commission on equitable compensation to support full-time clergy serving as pastors in the charges of the annual conference by: (a) recommending conference standards for pastoral support; further defined in ¶ 624.3 ...shall recommend annually to the conference for its action a schedule of minimum base compensation for all full-time pastors...*

Overview

In Spring of 2025, the Equitable Compensation Task Force began meeting to discuss the differences in minimum compensation between North and South Georgia Conferences. The Task Force felt it important to align the two conference's minimum compensation requirements in 2026 instead of 2027 in preparation of the new pension plan, COMPASS, which went into effect January 1, 2026. South Georgia's minimum compensations were 10-13% higher than North Georgia's. This further supported the efforts of the Georgia Board of Pension Task Force which was looking to align benefits for 2026 for the following reasons: 1) in anticipation of the new pension plan 2) to support the Cabinet as they started to make cross-conference appointments 3) provide less disruption for those clergy with cross-conference appointments before the potential unification of the two conferences.

Text from the North Georgia Equitable Compensation Report in the North Georgia 2025 Annual Conference Handbook: *"As we move forward into 2026, with the possibility for unification of the two conferences in the Georgia Episcopal Area, alignment and equality of clergy benefits for both North Georgia and South Georgia is desired. A key component of this alignment is the minimum salary requirements. Although the cost of living has been increasing for several years, we in North Georgia have not increased the minimum salary since 2023, and we trail South Georgia in minimum salaries across the board. With the changes coming January 2026 with Compass, churches will have funds to assist them with the proposed increase in minimum salary.*

Minimum salaries across the conferences have been nearly standardized.

The following was passed by the North Georgia 2025 Annual Conference.

<u>Category</u>	<u>2025</u>	<u>2026</u>
<i>Full Connection Elders/Deacons</i>	\$42,240	\$48,489
<i>Associate Member</i>	\$39,917	\$43,539
<i>Provisional Member Elder/Deacons</i>	\$36,765	\$40,814
<i>Full Time Local Pastor</i>	\$36,765	\$40,814
<i>Part Time Local Pastor</i>	\$13,464	\$13,599

The following was passed by the South Georgia 2025 Annual Conference.

<u>Category</u>	<u>2025</u>	<u>2026</u>
<i>Full Conference Members</i>	\$48,489	\$48,489
<i>Provisional and Associate Members</i>	\$43,539	\$43,539
<i>Full-time Local Pastors</i>	\$40,814	\$40,814
<i>Part-time Pastors</i>		\$13,464
<i>Housing Allowance for FT++</i>		\$18,600

++The church/charge makes the decision of whether to provide a parsonage or pay a housing allowance.

Action Item Recommendations

By September 2026

1. Aligning the unintended equitable compensation funding/local church benefits arrearage balances. Work with Council on Finance and Administration (CFA) to identify adequate funding sources for existing arrearages.
2. Address the guidelines for parsonages with an emphasis on providing guidance to District Superintendents and Staff Parish Relations Committee on navigating clergy moves to and from fully furnished parsonages versus parsonages that are not fully furnished or for those pastors that have a housing allowance.
3. Adopt a new equitable compensation policy that reflects the alignment and best practices that speaks to the missional needs of the Georgia Conference.

P. Lay Servant Ministries Report

Objective

The goal is to create a streamlined, accessible, and sustainable system for the Georgia Annual Conference that equips laity for ministry while ensuring alignment with *The Book of Discipline 2020/2024* (BOD) and Standing Rules. Lay Servant Ministries (LSM) is under the umbrella of the Conference Board of Laity. These ministries are referenced in the BOD ¶ 266-268 as well as ¶ 630.6.

Overview

Over the past several months, leaders from the North and South Georgia Annual Conferences have worked together to design a unified structure for LSM. This report captures the values, priorities, structures, and processes agreed upon in our collaborative meetings.

Action Item Recommendations

This working group proposes the following structure and outline for Lay Servant Ministries in the Georgia Annual Conference.

1. Shared Values Guiding the Georgia Annual Conference

- Streamlined Process – Minimize administrative complexity to keep participants motivated.
- Unified Database – Establish a conference-wide tracking system for lay servants, lay speakers, and certified lay ministers.
- Connection and Support – Build networks of encouragement, especially for those moving toward pulpit supply or pastoral ministry.
- Education and Consistency – Train pastors and district superintendents (DSs) on LSM processes to ensure consistent understanding and application.
- Local Church Engagement – Create entry points for LSM training in congregations (Sunday School, small groups, local instructors).
- Flexibility with Accountability – Allow contextual flexibility in delivery methods while maintaining doctrinal and disciplinary integrity.
- Conference Staff Support – Administrative oversight at the conference level to help create and coordinate a database for recording and tracking of lay courses and certifications
- Conference Connection and Collaboration – Online courses for Basic and Spiritual Gifts (the two most commonly taken classes) to provide an opportunity for people to get to know each other and build relationships across boundaries.

2. Roles and Pathways

Certified Lay Servant (CLS)

Purpose: Leadership in prayer, worship, teaching, congregational/community service.
Coursework: Basic course + 1 advanced course (renewal requires 1 advanced course every 3 years). Recommended for every Lay Leader.

Certified Lay Speaker

Purpose: Preaching the Word when requested by pastors, District Superintendents, or church leaders.

Coursework: Must first be a Certified Lay Servant, then complete courses in worship, prayer, spiritual gifts, preaching, United Methodist heritage, and polity. Must have district approval by the District Committee on Lay Servant Ministries and must be reapproved every three years.

Certified Lay Minister (CLM)

Purpose: Conduct worship, provide congregational care, lead ministries, and extend church mission.

Coursework: Lay servant, plus required CLM courses in worship, congregational care, leadership, discipleship, preaching, and polity. Must have approval by the District Committee on Ministry and regular meetings every 2 years. Certification is outlined in BOD 268.3. For renewal, BOD 268.4 needs to be met. Clergy Excellence will administer the CLM process.

3. Structure and Administrative Requirements

Conference Committee on Lay Servant Ministries

Composition:

- Conference Director/Chair of LSM
- District Director (BOD ¶ 668.2)
- Conference Lay Leader
- One District Superintendent ex-officio
- Director of Connectional Ministries (or designee)
- Up to four at-large members may be elected by the Conference Board of Laity as needed for inclusiveness and operations

Responsibilities:

- Maintain records and background checks
- Oversee alignment of trainings and Continuing Education Units or CEUs
- Approve courses and delivery methods
- Provide instructor training
- Ensure doctrinal consistency
- Sets a fee for classes
- Coordinates communication with the Conference Communications Director

District Director and Teams

District Director:

- Serves as primary LSM contact
- Promotes leadership development through LSM offerings
- Issues certificates and prompts annual reports

1
2 The Board of Laity will oversee Lay Servant Ministries and Lay Speakers. The Office of Clergy
3 Excellence will oversee the certification process for Certified Lay Ministers.
4

Q. Transitional Nominations Committee

Objective

The objective is to prepare the Georgia Conference of The United Methodist to begin work on January 1, 2027, fully engaged. Therefore, the establishment of a Transitional Nominations Committee is recommended in June 2026. *The Book of Discipline 2020/2024* ¶ 610 allows for such a committee to exist.

Overview

The Transitional Nominations Committee will be responsible for developing and implementing a plan to identify those who are qualified and able to serve on committees, commissions, and boards for the Georgia Conference of The United Methodist Church starting on January 1, 2027.

This report and slate of leadership will be populated from amongst individuals who are currently serving on committees, commissions, and boards out of both annual conferences.

This nominations report will be presented and voted on at the September 2026 Unifying Conference. This report will have to abide by the adopted unification plan.

Action Item Recommendation

It is recommended that a Transitional Nominations Committee be elected and composed of the following:

- Resident Bishop of the Georgia Episcopal Area
- South Georgia Conference Secretary
- North Georgia Conference Secretary
- South Georgia Lay Leader
- North Georgia Lay Leader
- SGA nominations by Bishop Dease:
 - Rev. Ramon Hernandez
 - Rev. Matt Stout
 - Joseph Hymes
- NGA nominations by Bishop Dease:
 - Rev. Brian Tillman
 - Rev. Laurie Moeller
 - Shirley Everett

The nominations will include persons who reflect the diversity of the Georgia Conference including gender, race, ethnic background, geography, age, and abilities.

The Transitional Nominations Committee will sunset on December 31, 2026.

R. Board of Pensions Report

Objective

Align clergy and lay benefits in such a way that neither conference will lose a benefit while also acknowledging that incremental steps or strategies may be needed to help churches and clergy in each conference move toward these goals.

Overview

The Board of Pensions of both annual conferences worked to alleviate differences in benefits between the two conferences as of January 2026. These items were approved by both North and South Georgia Annual Conferences in June 2025.

Conference staff leads collaborated with Wespath to identify, evaluate enrollment populations, seek actuarial review, and plan for any subsequent impact of the potential alignment actions. The recommendations were presented to the working group. This work was completed in April 2025, and recommendations for action were presented to the respective Boards of Pensions. The Boards of Pension then recommended the changes for alignment to their respective annual conferences, where they were approved.

The following benefit changes were adopted and became effective in January 2026.

New Wespath Retirement Plan - Compass

Clergy appointed half-time (50%) and above

- South Georgia previously covered clergy $\frac{3}{4}$ -time and above in Clergy Retirement Security Plan (CRSP). Half-time and quarter-time were enrolled in the United Methodist Personal Investment Plan (UMPIP) at 14% of plan comp.
- North Georgia does not offer UMPIP employer coverage to any of their part-time participants. In order to align the conferences, the following was adopted:
 - That UMPIP employer coverage be terminated for the future. Current Quarter-time participants are grandfathered in and remain in UMPIP until the time they retire or change to a new appointment. At that time, they would no longer be eligible for UMPIP employer contributions.
 - Education to encourage participants to invest in themselves by increasing personal contributions should be provided.
- Automatic enrollment starts at 4% and increases annually by 1%. The max auto increase to be 10%. Clergy would be able to opt out of auto enroll and auto escalation if requested; however, this would not be encouraged.

Ministers Pension Plan (MPP) / Pre-1982 Pension Plan

- Past Service Rate (monthly) for 2026 set at \$848.
- Contingent Annuitant payment set for 75% of Past Service Rate (PSR) - \$636.

- North Georgia Conference Pension Board voted to raise the monthly Past Service Rate to \$848 from \$775 (9.4% increase) in order to align with the South Georgia Conference benefit to retired clergy.

Persons on Medical Leave who are not Comprehensive Protection Plan (CPP) disabled would receive Compass contributions. Historically South Georgia participants have only been on Medical Leave while applying for Disability. Once approved, the date of disability is retroactive to their last payday from the church. If not approved, the District Superintendent would work to determine the next steps.

HealthFlex

Alignment of the health insurance rate structure was accomplished and became effective in January 2026.

- Recommend that South Georgia use a “blended” rate for 2026.
- South Georgia churches will be billed and pay a set premium of \$1300 monthly per participant (clergy person) regardless of plan selected or whether employee only, plus 1 or family coverage. North Georgia churches are billed premiums of \$1500 which reflect the claims experience and budgeted rate structure in that conference.
- Participants will pay premiums based on the coverage they opt for during open enrollment (see attached proposed rate sheet). Churches will need to charge the participant for their portion of the coverage through their payroll.
- Additional Background: Wespath provided both conferences with their own HealthFlex rates based on the combined participant populations. North Georgia’s individual rate was 9% over the 2025 rate, while South Georgia’s rate was 14% but capped by Wespath at 12%. The combined One Georgia medical rate increase, year over year is 10%.

Over 65 Active Persons

- Small Employer Exception: currently South Georgia allows ministers of 65 and still actively working to choose Medicare as their primary insurance and transition to Via Benefits if they are in a church with less than 20 employees.
- North Georgia does not participate in this program and clergy continue to be able to participate in HealthFlex after age 65.
- In order to align with North Georgia and provide the above plus one and family options, South Georgia will need to discontinue the Small Employer Exception for those turning 65 in the future. We can grandfather those currently enrolled until there is a qualifying change of appointment to a large church or until they retire. Once there is a change in clergy, the church and the new pastor will pay the then current HealthFlex rates for health coverage.
- The current rate for these churches is \$389/month.

Comprehensive Protection Plan

1 North Georgia moved into alignment with South Georgia practices by implementing a change to
2 the Comprehensive Protection Plan (CPP). CPP will now cover part-time local pastors who are at
3 $\frac{3}{4}$ time. CPP will also now cover provisionals, elders, and deacons in full connection, and full-
4 time local pastors who are on medical leave beginning in 2026.

5 **Action Item Recommendations**

6 Standardize the mechanism to cover Comprehensive Protection Plan expenses. Tasked to North
7 and South Georgia Council on Finance and Administration (CF&A) committees to address.

8 South Georgia Conference has historically apportioned CPP premiums to all local churches and
9 not billed churches directly for the cost of the premiums (this equates to 3% of compensation).
10 The South Georgia Board of Pensions is addressing this issue in Spring 2026 in coordination
11 with the South Georgia CF&A. In 2025 and 2026 this premium will be funded from reserves and
12 is not yet aligned across the two conferences.

13 For reference, North Georgia directly bills the CPP to churches while South Georgia has
14 historically apportioned the CPP premiums.

15 Additional Variations

16 Additional variations in benefits will need to be addressed in 2026. The employer contribution to
17 UMPIP for lay employees remains different for the two conferences. There is no provision for
18 Retiree Health Benefits for South Georgia Conference clergy who are under 58 years of age. The
19 HealthFlex premium subsidy for the employee deduction is not offered in North Georgia.

20 The working group is confident the remaining items can be addressed in 2026 by action of the
21 two pension boards. A report will be presented for approval by the September 2026 Unification
22 Conference.

23 Other procedural changes, such as a standardized billing process, will occur if unification is
24 approved as the staff begins to work as one team.

25

S. Related Agencies (Boards and Agencies) Report

Objective

Our related agencies are key ministry partners in carrying out the mission of our church and serving neighbors across Georgia. To maintain strong relationships between the Georgia Conference and conference-related agencies, and to enable effective collaboration among these agencies, this group has been tasked with exploring ways to work together across the Georgia Annual Conference.

Overview

This working group focused on the following related agencies. However, the recommendations extend to all conference-related agencies.

- Aldersgate Homes
- Epworth By The Sea
- Georgia United Methodist Foundation
- Magnolia Manor
- Methodist Foundation for Retired Ministers Board of Trustees
- Murphy-Harpst Children's Centers
- North Georgia Camp and Retreat Ministries
- Open Door Community House
- The Methodist Home for Children and Youth
- Vashti Center for Children and Families
- Wellroot Family Services (United Methodist Children's Home)
- Wesley Community Centers of Savannah
- Wesley Glen Ministries
- Wesley Woods Senior Living, Inc.

Action Item Recommendations

The working group recommends the following:

1. To ensure stability and continuity, conference-related agencies are encouraged to continue their current fundraising activities/guidelines and operational practices for the remainder of this quadrennium.
2. We recommend that the Annual Conference Planning Committee offer equal opportunities for all agencies to participate in the Georgia Annual Conference session.

- 1 3. All related agencies shall maintain their by-laws, submit their nominations for board of
2 directors, and adhere to their statement of relationship with The United Methodist
3 Church.
- 4
- 5 4. We encourage ongoing dialogue among agencies providing similar services to highlight
6 the value of complementary efforts, resolving any concerns directly and constructively.
- 7
- 8 5. We lift up two areas to be considered by the Council of Finance and Administration
9 (CF&A). First, we recognize that maintenance of data and the expense of sharing data are
10 under the direction of CF&A. Second, we note that Conference-wide Special Sundays are
11 set by CF&A.

12

T. United Women in Faith and United Methodist Men Report

Objective

United Women in Faith (UWFaith) and United Methodist Men (UMM) serve distinct, essential purposes in forming disciples and strengthening the church—purposes that are difficult to accomplish as effectively without focused leadership and structure. United Women in Faith nurtures women’s faith, develops women as leaders, and works together in mission and advocacy to transform communities and the world. United Methodist Men help men grow as disciples of Jesus Christ and equip them for spiritual leadership and service in the church, the home, and the world.

Overview

United Women in Faith

United Women in Faith (UWFaith) is the official, churchwide organization for women in The United Methodist Church, with its place and purpose defined in *The Book of Discipline* 2020/2024 (BOD) ¶¶ 1901–1918.

(Note: While remaining incorporated as United Methodist Women, the organization began doing business as United Women in Faith in 2022.)

United Women in Faith functions at multiple levels of the church:

- Local church circles or units
- District and annual conference organizations
- Churchwide structure, including the Office of Deaconess and Home Missioner (¶¶ 1913–1918)

This connectional structure allows women to act together in mission across the denomination and around the world.

United Methodist Men

According to *The Book of Discipline* 2020/2024 (BOD), United Methodist Men is a churchwide organization with an official place in the life and structure of the church (BOD ¶¶ 2301–2303). United Methodist Men (UMM) is the denomination’s recognized ministry for men within The United Methodist Church, organized to support spiritual growth, servant leadership, and mission.

United Methodist Men functions at several levels:

- Local church units (often called UMM groups or fellowships)
- District and annual conference organizations
- Churchwide leadership through the General Commission on United Methodist Men

These structures work together to resource men’s ministries, promote mission projects, and support leadership development.

1
2
3
4 **Action Item Recommendations for United Women in Faith**

- 5 1. Current United Women in Faith leadership in North Georgia and South Georgia will
6 work together using merger guidelines and staff support from the United Women in Faith
7 National Office.
- 8 2. October 2026: North Georgia and South Georgia United Women in Faith will hold
9 separate Annual meetings to celebrate their past work, approve their future budget, and
10 nominations for the organization.
- 11 3. January 1, 2027: Georgia Conference United Women in Faith begins work.

12
13 **Action Item Recommendations for United Methodist Men**

- 14 1. Current United Methodist Men leadership in North Georgia and South Georgia will work
15 together using staff support from the General Commission on United Methodist Men. It is
16 recommended that the Georgia Conference have co-chairs for the United Methodist Men.
- 17 2. January 1, 2027: Georgia Conference United Methodist Men begins work.
- 18

1 **Part Five – The Resolutions**

2
3 **RESOLUTION #1**

4 **SOUTH GEORGIA ANNUAL CONFERENCE RESOLUTION REGARDING**
5 **APPROVAL OF THE PLAN OF UNION FOR THE GEORGIA CONFERENCE OF THE**
6 **UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**

7 The South Georgia Conference (the “Conference”) hereby takes the following actions and adopts
8 the following resolutions:

9 **WHEREAS**, the South and North Georgia Conferences have a history of shared episcopal
10 supervision; and

11 **WHEREAS**, the Georgia Episcopal Area now, once again, share episcopal supervision; and

12 **WHEREAS**, the cabinets of the South and North Georgia Conferences convened in 2025 with a
13 shared understanding that the evolving landscape of the United Methodist connection
14 necessitated a re-evaluation of conference boundaries; and

15 **WHEREAS**, the South and North Georgia Conferences have a shared history as a single
16 conference as Methodism was established in and spread across Georgia; and

17 **WHEREAS**, we are committed to more than our geographical boundaries, and, in fact, we are
18 committed to the mission of The United Methodist Church to make disciples of Jesus Christ for
19 the transformation of the world; and

20 **WHEREAS**, the cabinets of the South and North Georgia Conferences met in July 2025 and
21 collectively deliberated the prospect of consolidating into a single entity, sharing unified vision,
22 mission and key strategic missional priorities; and

23 **WHEREAS**, the Southeastern Jurisdiction (SEJ) Episcopacy Committee intends to call a special
24 session in the summer of 2026 to approve the realignment of the boundaries of the South and
25 North Georgia Conferences to form one new conference to be known as the “Georgia
26 Conference of The United Methodist Church” with boundaries coextensive with the current
27 South and North Georgia Conferences; and

28 **WHEREAS**, it is both necessary and appropriate for both conferences to approve the Unification
29 Plan that will govern the fully unified Georgia Conference of The United Methodist Church;

30 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Unification Plan attached to this resolution
31 (go to www.georgiaumc.org/resolution) is hereby adopted by the South Georgia Annual
32 Conference with the intention that the Unification Plan shall govern the creation and structure of
33 the new Georgia Conference of The United Methodist Church; and

34 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, in accordance with the actions taken at the respective 2026
35 session of the North Georgia annual conference, that the SEJ Conference is entreated to take the
36 following actions during the 2026 called SEJ Conference:

(1) to approve the realignment of the boundaries of the South and North Georgia Conferences to form one new conference to be known as the “Georgia Conference of The United Methodist Church” with boundaries coextensive with the current South and North Georgia Conferences;

(2) to authorize the South and North Georgia Conferences to conduct a joint organizational conference known as the Unifying Conference, prior to the formation of the new Georgia Conference, consisting of the voting membership (lay and clergy) of the South and North Georgia Conferences; and

(3) to authorize the Georgia Conference to commence operations as a fully unified conference of The United Methodist Church after the completion of the joint organizational conference, in accordance with the Unification Plan adopted by the South and North Georgia Conferences during their respective 2026 annual conference sessions.

Presented by

LEADERSHIP FORUM in South Georgia Annual Conference

RESOLUTION #2

SOUTH GEORGIA ANNUAL CONFERENCE RESOLUTION REGARDING APPOINTING JOINT DISTRIBUTING COMMITTEE

The South Georgia Conference (the “Conference”) hereby takes the following actions and adopts the following resolutions:

WHEREAS, the South and North Georgia Conferences have a history of shared episcopal supervision; and

WHEREAS, In 2025, the South and North Georgia Conferences sessions voted to endorse the intent to pursue a plan to form a new conference, and

WHEREAS, In 2026, leadership from the South and North Georgia Annual Conferences sent a motion to the Southeastern Jurisdictional (SEJ) Conference, for action to call a special session in the summer of 2026 to approve the realignment of the boundaries of the South and North Georgia Conferences to form one new conference to be known as the “Georgia Conference of The United Methodist Church” with boundaries coextensive with the current South and North Georgia Conferences, and

WHEREAS, *The Book of Discipline 2020/2024* (BOD) ¶ 1507, provides that when two annual conferences are to be merged to form a new conference, there shall be elected by each conference affected a distributing committee of three members and three alternates, which shall act jointly with similar committees from the other conference or conferences. The joint distributing committee thus formed shall have power and authority: (a) to allocate the pension responsibility involved; (b) to distribute equitably the permanent funds and all other pension assets of the conference or conferences affected, taking into consideration the pension responsibility involved; and (c) to the extent not otherwise previously provided for by the conference or conferences involved, to apportion or distribute equitably any other assets or property and any other liabilities or obligations, and

1 **WHEREAS**, It is necessary and appropriate for the South Georgia Annual Conference to appoint
2 members as prescribed by the BOD ¶ 1507 for purposes of addressing the pension issues
3 required by the BOD, and for the purposes of providing for apportionment or distribution of
4 assets, property, liabilities, and obligations not otherwise previously provided for by the two
5 participating conferences;

6 Now therefore, be it resolved, the South Georgia Annual Conference (SGA) affirms the creation
7 of a Joint Distributing Committee, together with the North Georgia Annual Conference (NGA),
8 to operate in a manner consistent with BOD ¶ 1507.

9 Be it further resolved, that the following three persons are nominated and approved to serve as
10 members of the Joint Distributing Committee:

- 11 1. Board of Pension Representative-John Ray
- 12 2. Council of Finance & Administration Representative-Kathy Israel McLeod
- 13 3. Board of Trustees Representative-Jimmy Asbell

14 Be it further resolved, that the following three persons are nominated and approved to serve as
15 alternate members of the Joint Distributing Committee:

- 16 1. Conference Staff Representative-Allison Berg
- 17 2. Cabinet Representative-Jeff Cook
- 18 3. At Large Representative-Precious Hawkins

19 Be it further resolved, that such persons, together with the individuals appointed to the Joint
20 Distributing Committee by the North Georgia Annual Conference, shall perform the functions
21 outlined in BOD ¶ 1507 related to pensions; and

22 Be it further resolved, that such persons, together with the individuals appointed to the Joint
23 Distributing Committee by the South Georgia Annual Conference, shall be authorized to act
24 upon and implement plans and recommendations from the One Georgia Task Force and joint
25 working task teams of the two conferences related to health benefits, incorporation, and legal
26 structure, and any other actions related to apportionment or distribution of assets and liabilities
27 not otherwise provided for by the conferences in their Plan of Union or otherwise, pending
28 creation and commencement of the new conference entity.

29 Be it further resolved, that upon completion of its work, the committee shall be dissolved as
30 contemplated by BOD ¶ 1507.

31 Presented by

32 LEADERSHIP FORUM in South Georgia Conference

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The North Georgia Conference (the “Conference”) hereby takes the following actions and adopts the following resolutions:

WHEREAS, the North and South Georgia Conferences have a history of shared episcopal supervision; and

WHEREAS, the Georgia Episcopal Area now, once again, share episcopal supervision; and

WHEREAS, the cabinets of the North and South Georgia Conferences convened in 2025 with a shared understanding that the evolving landscape of the United Methodist connection necessitated a re-evaluation of conference boundaries; and

WHEREAS, the North and South Georgia Conferences have a shared history as a single conference as Methodism was established in and spread across Georgia; and

WHEREAS, we are committed to more than our geographical boundaries, and, in fact, we are committed to the mission of The United Methodist Church to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world; and

WHEREAS, the cabinets of the North and South Georgia Conferences met in July 2025 and collectively deliberated the prospect of consolidating into a single entity, sharing unified vision, mission and key strategic missional priorities; and

WHEREAS, the Southeastern Jurisdiction (SEJ) Episcopacy Committee intends to call a special session in the summer of 2026 to approve the realignment of the boundaries of the North and South Georgia Conferences to form one new conference to be known as the “Georgia Conference of The United Methodist Church” with boundaries coextensive with the current North and South Georgia Conferences; and

WHEREAS, it is both necessary and appropriate for both conferences to approve the Unification Plan that will govern the fully unified Georgia Conference of The United Methodist Church;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Unification Plan attached to this resolution (go to www.georgiaumc.org/resolution) is hereby adopted by the North Georgia Annual Conference with the intention that the Unification Plan shall govern the creation and structure of the new Georgia Conference of The United Methodist Church; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, in accordance with the actions taken at the respective 2026 session of the South Georgia annual conference, that the SEJ Conference is entreated to take the following actions during the 2026 called SEJ Conference:

(1) to approve the realignment of the boundaries of the North and South Georgia Conferences to form one new conference to be known as the “Georgia Conference of The United Methodist Church” with boundaries coextensive with the current North and South Georgia Conferences;

(2) to authorize the North and South Georgia Conferences to conduct a joint organizational conference known as the Unifying Conference, prior to the formation of the new Georgia Conference, consisting of the voting membership (lay and clergy) of the North and South Georgia Conferences; and

(3) to authorize the Georgia Conference to commence operations as a fully unified conference of The United Methodist Church after the completion of the joint organizational conference, in accordance with the Unification Plan adopted by the North and South Georgia Conferences during their respective 2026 annual conference sessions.

Presented by

COMMON TABLE in North Georgia Annual Conference

RESOLUTION #2

NORTH GEORGIA ANNUAL CONFERENCE RESOLUTION REGARDING APPOINTING JOINT DISTRIBUTING COMMITTEE

The North Georgia Conference (the “Conference”) hereby takes the following actions and adopts the following resolutions:

WHEREAS, the North and South Georgia Conferences have a history of shared episcopal supervision; and

WHEREAS, In 2025, the North and South Georgia Conferences sessions voted to endorse the intent to pursue a plan to form a new conference, and

WHEREAS, In 2026, leadership from the North and South Georgia Annual Conferences sent a motion to the Southeastern Jurisdictional (SEJ) Conference, for action to call a special session in the summer of 2026 to approve the realignment of the boundaries of the North and South Georgia Conferences to form one new conference to be known as the “Georgia Conference of The United Methodist Church” with boundaries coextensive with the current North and South Georgia Conferences, and

WHEREAS,

The Book of Discipline 2020/2024 (BOD) ¶ 1507 provides that when two annual conferences are to be merged to form a new conference, there shall be elected by each conference affected a distributing committee of three members and three alternates, which shall act jointly with similar committees from the other conference or conferences. The joint distributing committee thus formed shall have power and authority: (a) to allocate the pension responsibility involved; (b) to distribute equitably the permanent funds and all other pension assets of the conference or conferences affected, taking into consideration the pension responsibility involved; and (c) to the extent not otherwise previously provided for by the conference or conferences involved, to apportion or distribute equitably any other assets or property and any other liabilities or obligations, and

WHEREAS, It is necessary and appropriate for the North Georgia Annual Conference to appoint members as prescribed by BOD ¶ 1507 for purposes of addressing the pension issues required by

1 BOD, and for the purposes of providing for apportionment or distribution of assets, property,
2 liabilities, and obligations not otherwise previously provided for by the two participating
3 conferences;

4 Now therefore, be it resolved, the North Georgia Annual Conference (NGA) affirms the creation
5 of a Joint Distributing Committee, together with the South Georgia Annual Conference (SGA),
6 to operate in a manner consistent BOD ¶ 1507.

7 Be it further resolved, that the following three persons are nominated and approved to serve as
8 members of the Joint Distributing Committee:

9 1. Board of Pension Representative-Elizabeth Schroeder

10 2. Council of Finance & Administration Representative-Cindy McDonald

11 3. Board of Trustees Representative-Susan Daniell

12 Be it further resolved, that the following three persons are nominated and approved to serve as
13 alternate members of the Joint Distributing Committee:

14 1. Conference Staff Representative-Bruce Cooper

15 2. Cabinet Representative-Rodrigo Cruz

16 3. At Large Representative-Harden Hopper

17 Be it further resolved, that such persons, together with the individuals appointed to the Joint
18 Distributing Committee by the South Georgia Annual Conference, shall perform the functions
19 outlined in BOD ¶ 1507 related to pensions; and

20 Be it further resolved, that such persons, together with the individuals appointed to the Joint
21 Distributing Committee by the North Georgia Annual Conference, shall be authorized to act
22 upon and implement plans and recommendations from the One Georgia Task Force and joint
23 working task teams of the two conferences related to health benefits, incorporation, and legal
24 structure, and any other actions related to apportionment or distribution of assets and liabilities
25 not otherwise provided for by the conferences in their Plan of Union or otherwise, pending
26 creation and commencement of the new conference entity.

27 Be it further resolved, that upon completion of its work, the committee shall be dissolved as
28 contemplated by BOD ¶ 1507.

29 Presented by

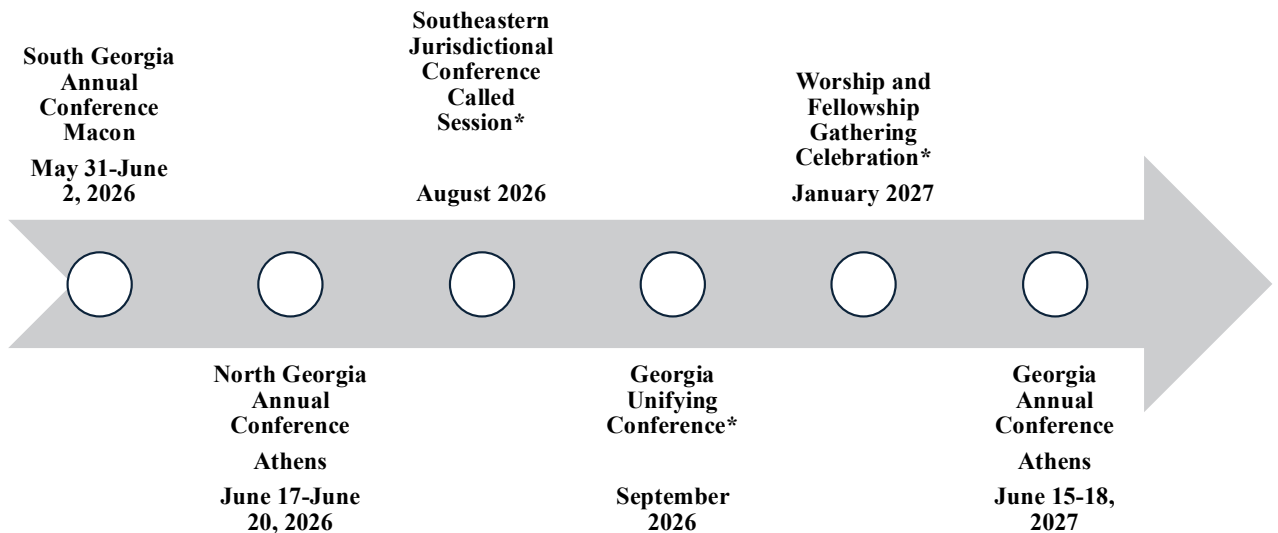
30 COMMON TABLE in North Georgia Conference

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Part Six – The Timeline

During the months of March, April, and May of 2026, regional town hall meetings and online meetings will be held. In these forums, the unification of the North and South Georgia Conferences will be the main discussion topic. Please visit www.georgiaumc.org for a complete list of events. This document will also be available for review on the website.

Georgia Unification Timeline



*Location or Virtual Meeting To be Determined

1 **Part Seven – Standing Rules**
2 **Plan of Organization and Rules of Order**
3

4 Preamble

5 The Georgia Annual Conference constitutes the people of The United Methodist Church listening
6 for, responding to, and joining with God’s activity in the state of Georgia. We embrace the
7 hopeful ministry to which God calls and the legacy of faithful ministry on which we have been
8 built. As the home of the Methodist Movement on the North American Continent, we look
9 forward to how we might love boldly, serve joyfully, and lead courageously as we make disciples
10 of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

11
12 Unless otherwise stipulated, all references to *The Book of Discipline* are from *The 2020/2024*
13 *Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church*.

14 **A. Plan of Organization of The Georgia Annual Conference**
15 **of The United Methodist Church**

16 1. Organization of the Conference

17 1.1. The Rules of the Session of the Georgia Annual Conference (Conference) shall be
18 subject to *The Book of Discipline (Discipline)*.

19 1.2. Membership

20 1.2.1. Membership and voting rights of clergy and lay members shall be as
21 defined by *The Book of Discipline* (§§ 32–35, 602).

22 1.2.2. Lay membership shall equal clergy membership.

23 1.2.3. There shall be one lay member from every pastoral charge of the
24 conference, elected as provided in § 32 of *The Book of Discipline*;
25 provided, that each pastoral charge served by more than one clergy
26 member under appointment shall be entitled to as many lay members of
27 the conference as there are eligible clergy members appointed to that
28 charge.

29 1.2.4. In addition to charge-elected lay members, the following shall be members
30 of the Annual Conference:

- 31 ● Conference lay leader and associate lay leaders
32 ● District lay leaders

- Individuals elected as lay delegates to jurisdictional and general conference
- Conference President of United Women in Faith
- District Presidents of United Women in Faith
- Conference President of United Methodist Men
- District Presidents of United Methodist Men
- Conference director of lay servant ministries
- Leader of Conference Youth Organization
- Leader of Conference Young Adult Organization

1.2.5. Each district shall select additional lay members from its district so that the total number of lay members equals the total number of clergy members with attention to inclusion related with respect to race, color, ethnicity, national origin, social status, gender, sexual orientation, age, economic condition, and disability.

1.2.6. Lay equalization shall be calculated and implemented in accordance with *The Book of Discipline* (§ 33). There shall be for each district up to ten (10) young persons 18 years of age and under and thirteen (13) young adult persons eighteen (18) years of age to thirty-five (35) years of age.

1.2.7. The completed registration process shall constitute the official membership roll of the Annual Conference.

1.3. A quorum for any Annual Conference session shall be the number of registered Annual Conference members present and voting.

2. Officers and Staff of the Conference

2.1. Bishop

2.1.1. The resident bishop shall be the President and Chief Executive Officer of the Conference, and shall, with the assistance of the Conference Secretary, implement and execute any actions or orders of the Annual Conference. The implementation and execution of actions shall be reported by the resident bishop, and/or Conference Secretary, at the next session of the Annual Conference.

2.1.2. The resident bishop may appoint or hire an executive assistant to the bishop (A2B) whose role and function shall be at the discretion of the resident bishop. The executive assistant to the bishop serves as an

extension of the Episcopal Office, the Chief-of-Staff for the Conference staff, and may serve as a member of the appointive cabinet.

2.2. Annual Conference Lay Leader

2.2.1. The Conference Lay Leader is the elected leader of conference laity and is an officer of the annual conference, whose election and role is defined in ¶¶603.9 and 607.

2.3. Secretary of the Annual Conference

2.3.1. The secretary of the annual conference shall be elected quadrennially as outlined in ¶603.7 of *The Book of Discipline*.

2.3.2. Associate Secretaries shall be elected annually on nomination of the secretary of the annual conference with attention to diversity related to age, gender, race, ethnicity, location, and ability.

2.3.3. Tellers

2.3.3.1. Two Lay Head Tellers and two Clergy Head Tellers shall be elected annually on nomination from the secretary of the annual conference.

2.3.3.2. Other tellers, whose number is deemed as necessary by the secretary of the annual conference, shall be elected annually on nomination from the secretary of the annual conference.

2.4. Chancellor

2.4.1. The chancellor of the annual conference shall be designated and have roles and responsibilities as outlined in ¶603.8 of *The Book of Discipline*.

2.5. Parliamentarian

2.5.1. The bishop may, at his or her discretion, appoint a conference parliamentarian.

2.5.2. The parliamentarian shall assist the bishop in ensuring that the Annual Conference session is run in accordance with the rules of order set forth hereinabove.

2.5.3. The parliamentarian, should one be chosen, shall serve at the bishop's discretion.

2.6. Annual Conference Statistician

2.6.1. The statistician of the annual conference shall be elected quadrennially as outlined in ¶603.7 of *The Book of Discipline*.

3. Orientation, On-boarding, and Training for Members of Annual Conference

3.1. Lay members of the annual conference may have an orientation session prior to the first business session of the Annual Conference.

3.2. Lay and clergy members of the annual conference shall receive the conference handbook prior to the annual conference session.

3.3. There shall be a pre-conference briefing no less than 25 days prior to the opening business session of the annual conference.

4. Virtual Conference

4.1. Under circumstances deemed necessary, the annual conference planning committee may elect, in their sole discretion, and subject to such guidelines and procedures as they may adopt, to hold the Georgia Annual Conference by means of remote communication in lieu of holding a physical meeting provided they establish procedures to enable verified delegates not physically present to

- participate in the meeting,
- be deemed present in person,
- vote on matters submitted to the annual conference.

4.2. The notice of a virtual conference shall be delivered in writing or by electronic communication at least thirty (30) days prior to the date specified for the virtual meeting. The notice shall provide the methodology necessary for each delegate to participate in the virtual or electronic meeting.

4.3. For any action to be taken by the delegates at the virtual meeting, a ballot shall be provided to the delegates by electronic transmission that shall set forth each proposed action and provide an opportunity for each delegate to vote for or against each proposed action.

5. The conference service year shall be July 1 through June 30.

6. Addresses

6.1. There shall be a Laity Address given by the conference lay leader or designees.

6.2. There shall be an Episcopal Address given by the resident bishop of the annual conference.

7. Administrative Committees of the Annual Conference Session

1 7.1. Annual Conference Planning Committee

2 7.1.1. The annual conference shall have an annual conference planning
3 committee to support the work of the annual conference session by
4 coordinating agenda development; overseeing conference-session
5 readiness; coordinating logistics, communications, and technology
6 planning; and aligning session planning with worship, registration and
7 credentialing, and local arrangements.

8 7.1.2. Composition

- 9 ● The bishop or designee, serving as chairperson
- 10 ● Secretary of the annual conference
- 11 ● Executive assistant to the bishop
- 12 ● Conference lay leader or designee
- 13 ● Dean of the cabinet
- 14 ● Host district superintendent
- 15 ● Treasurer/chief financial officer
- 16 ● Director of communications
- 17 ● Conference president of the United Women in Faith
- 18 ● Conference president of the United Methodist Men
- 19 ● A representative of United Methodist Youth
- 20 ● Chair of the board of ordained ministry
- 21 ● Chair of the council on finance and administration
- 22 ● Chair of the committee on resolutions
- 23 ● Chair of the host committee
- 24 ● Chair of the registration and credentialing committee
- 25 ● A lay member per district to provide for inclusion and adequate
26 representation

27 7.1.3. Executive Committee of the Annual Conference Planning Committee

28 7.1.3.1. Composition

- 29 ● The bishop or designee, serving as chairperson

- Secretary of the annual conference
- Conference lay leader
- Treasurer/chief financial officer
- Director of communications
- Chair of the host committee
- Executive assistant to the bishop
- One lay at-large member of the annual conference planning committee

7.1.3.2. The executive committee of the annual conference shall function in an ad-interim role between meetings of the annual conference planning committee.

7.1.4. Host Committee

7.1.4.1. A host committee shall be formed by the host district superintendent in conjunction with the annual conference planning committee.

7.1.4.2. The host committee will carry out the many logistical details associated with hosting the annual conference session.

7.1.4.3. The host committee will work with the other committees having responsibilities for the annual conference session.

7.1.4.4. The chair of the host committee will be a member of the annual conference planning committee.

7.1.4.5. The treasurer/chief financial officer and the director of communications will be staff representatives attending the host committee meetings.

7.1.5. Registration and Credentialing

7.1.5.1. There shall be a committee on registration and credentialing whose composition is prescribed in the Rules of Order, nominated by the annual conference committee on nominations. The registration and credentialing committee is responsible for certifying delegates, issuing credentials, and maintaining records.

7.1.6. Committee on the Plan of Organization and Rules

1 7.1.6.1. The primary function of the committee on the plan of organization
2 and rules is to provide support that enables the session of the
3 Georgia Annual Conference to operate efficiently. These on-going
4 committees do not have programmatic responsibilities throughout
5 the year other than preparing for the annual conference session.

6 7.1.6.2. There shall be a committee on the plan of organization and rules
7 composed of up to ten (10) with no less than five (5) persons,
8 nominated by the annual conference committee on nominations,
9 plus the conference chancellor and conference secretary. The
10 committee is charged with the annual task of addressing the
11 submission of edits and amendments to the Plan of Organization
12 and Rules Order while maintaining the Plan and Rules of the
13 annual conference in the following ways:

- 14 ● Receiving requests for amendments
- 15 ● Reviewing submitted rule changes for compliance with the
- 16 current *Book of Discipline*
- 17 ● Ensuring rules maintain internal consistency
- 18 ● Making editorial changes as needed
- 19 ● Presenting changes to the conference and reviewing revised
- 20 plan and rules for publication in the conference journal

21 The committee is also charged with the quadrennial task of
22 examining the rules of the annual conference for consistency with
23 *The Book of Discipline* and to recommend any changes to bring
24 about that consistency.

25 7.1.7. Committee on the Journal

26 7.1.7.1. There shall be a committee on the journal whose composition is
27 prescribed in the Rules of Order, nominated by the annual
28 conference committee on nominations. The committee on the
29 journal is responsible for certifying the written record of the annual
30 conference and reporting to the annual conference on the
31 committee's review of the material.

32 7.1.7.2. The committee on the journal works with the editor of the
33 conference journal/annual conference secretary as needed to ensure
34 compliance with Disciplinary standards in ¶ 606.3 and for
35 clarification of the written record of the annual conference session.

1 7.1.8. Committee on Resolutions

2 7.1.8.1. There shall be a committee on resolutions whose composition is
3 prescribed in the Rules of Order, nominated by the annual
4 conference committee on nominations. The committee on
5 resolutions is to process all resolutions presented to the annual
6 conference which are not submitted to the programmatic
7 committees through dialogue with the submitter and all agencies of
8 the annual conference affected by the resolution.

9 7.1.8.2. Resolutions shall be circulated by February 1, prior to the annual
10 conference session. The resolutions committee is responsible for
11 reviewing each resolution to determine if it can properly come
12 before the annual conference, making revisions as needed in
13 consultation with the submitter of the resolution, ensuring
14 consistency with *The Book of Discipline* and The Plan of
15 Organization and Rule of Order of The Georgia Annual
16 Conference, submitting to the conference secretary by the deadline
17 for the conference handbook, and presenting resolutions to the
18 annual conference.

19 7.1.9. Committee on Nominations

20 7.1.9.1. There shall be an annual conference committee on nominations
21 whose duty shall be to nominate all lay and clergy members of the
22 boards, councils, teams, commissions, committees, and other
23 agencies of the Georgia Annual Conference with attention to
24 inclusion related to race, color, ethnicity, national origin, social
25 status, gender, sexual orientation, age, economic condition, and
26 disability.

27 7.1.9.2. Composition

- 28 ● Resident bishop, serving as chairperson
- 29 ● District superintendents
- 30 ● Extended cabinet members, as applicable
- 31 ● Conference treasurer/chief financial officer
- 32 ● Secretary of the annual conference
- 33 ● Director of connectional ministries
- 34 ● Director of communications

- 1 ● Executive assistant to the bishop
- 2 ● Chair of the council on finance and administration
- 3 ● Chair of the conference board of trustees
- 4 ● Conference lay leader
- 5 ● District lay leaders
- 6 ● Chair of the committee on plan of organization and rules
- 7 ● A representative of the commission on religion and race
- 8 ● A representative of the commission on the status and role of
- 9 women
- 10 ● Conference president of United Methodist Men
- 11 ● Conference president of United Women in Faith
- 12 ● Leader of the conference youth organization
- 13 ● Leader of the conference young adult organization
- 14 ● Up to five (5) at-large members who shall be named by the
- 15 resident bishop for inclusiveness.
- 16 7.1.9.3. The committee shall make its nominations report no later than the
- 17 second morning of the annual conference session.
- 18 7.1.9.4. There shall be an executive committee of the annual conference
- 19 committee on nominations.
- 20 7.1.9.4.1. Composition
- 21 ● Resident bishop, serving as chairperson
- 22 ● Conference lay leader
- 23 ● Director of connectional ministries or designee
- 24 ● Three (3) other members of the annual conference
- 25 committee on nominations named by the bishop
- 26 7.1.9.4.2. Scope
- 27 7.1.9.4.2.1. The executive committee of the committee on
- 28 nominations will coordinate the comprehensive
- 29 nominations process of identification, recruitment,

1 training, selection, and evaluation for the Annual
2 Conference.

3 7.1.9.4.2.2. Where vacancies in essential elected positions occur
4 between annual conference sessions, the executive
5 committee may fill the positions until the next
6 annual conference elects.

7 8. Fiduciary, Administrative, and Programmatic Committees of the Annual Conference

8 8.1. Connectional Table

9 8.1.1. Composition

- 10 ● Resident bishop
- 11 ● Director of connectional ministries, serving as chairperson and in
12 consultation with the bishop
- 13 ● District superintendents
- 14 ● Director of center for clergy excellence/ ministerial services
- 15 ● Executive assistant to the bishop
- 16 ● Treasurer/chief financial officer
- 17 ● Chair of the council on finance and administration
- 18 ● Chair of the board of ordained ministry
- 19 ● Secretary of the annual conference
- 20 ● Conference lay leader
- 21 ● Associate conference lay leaders
- 22 ● Chair of the conference commission on religion and race,
- 23 ● Chair of the conference commission on the status and role of
24 women
- 25 ● Conference president of the United Women in Faith
- 26 ● Conference president of the United Methodist Men
- 27 ● Leader of the conference youth organization
- 28 ● Leader of the conference young adult organization
- 29 ● Chair of the order of deacons

- 1 • Chair of the order of elders
- 2 • Chair of the fellowship of local pastors and associate members
- 3 • Co-chairs of the connectional ministries council,
- 4 • Annual conference staff person assigned to missions,
- 5 • Chair of the nurture discipleship team
- 6 • Chair of the outreach discipleship team
- 7 • Chair of the witness discipleship team
- 8 • Chair of the advocacy discipleship team
- 9 • Lead layperson of most recently elected delegation to general
- 10 conference
- 11 • Head clergyperson of the most recently elected delegation to
- 12 general conference
- 13 • Chair of the conference board of trustees.
- 14 • Chair of the conference board of pensions
- 15 • Director of communications
- 16 • Such at-large members as the bishop shall nominate to provide for
- 17 diversity and inclusiveness with regard to race, color, ethnicity,
- 18 national origin, social status, gender, sexual orientation, age,
- 19 economic condition, and disability.
- 20 8.1.2. There shall be a conference connectional table with responsibility to focus
- 21 and guide the mission and ministry of The United Methodist Church
- 22 within the boundaries of the Georgia Annual Conference. It shall give
- 23 leadership and guidance in setting the vision and priorities of the annual
- 24 conference and in conducting an on-going process of refining and revising
- 25 that vision.
- 26 8.1.3.
- 27 8.2. Council on Finance and Administration
- 28 8.2.1. The Georgia Annual Conference shall elect a council on finance and
- 29 administration whose composition, term of service, roles, and
- 30 responsibilities are outlined in ¶¶611-618 of *The Book of Discipline*.

1 8.2.2. The Georgia Annual Conference shall elect a conference treasurer and
2 chief financial officer whose election, term of service, roles, and
3 responsibilities are outlined in ¶619 of *The Book of Discipline* and Annual
4 Conference policies.

5 8.2.3. The Georgia Annual Conference may establish and elect a personnel,
6 practices, and policy committee, a subcommittee of the council on finance
7 and administration, whose roles and responsibilities are outlined in
8 ¶613.13 of *The Book of Discipline*.

9 8.2.4. The Georgia Annual Conference may establish and elect a human resource
10 advisory committee whose role will be to advise the resident bishop and
11 Annual Conference leaders with respect to recruitment, retention, and
12 performance management for lay and clergy in annual conference staff
13 positions.

14 8.3. Board of Pensions

15 8.3.1. The Georgia Annual Conference shall have an annual conference board of
16 pensions whose composition, term of service, roles, and responsibilities
17 are outlined in ¶638 of *The Book of Discipline*.

18 8.4. Commission on Equitable Compensation

19 8.4.1. The Georgia Annual Conference shall have a commission on equitable
20 compensation whose composition, term of service, roles, and
21 responsibilities are outlined in ¶624 of *The Book of Discipline*.

22 8.5. Board of Trustees

23 8.5.1. The Georgia Annual Conference shall elect a board of trustees of the
24 annual conference.

25 8.5.1.1. The composition, term of service, roles, and responsibilities are
26 outlined in ¶2512 of *The Book of Discipline*.

27 8.5.1.1.1. The board of trustees shall have as ex-officio members
28 (voice but without vote):

- 29 ● Annual conference chancellor
- 30 ● Conference treasurer/chief financial officer
- 31 ● Executive assistant to the bishop
- 32 ● Cabinet representative

1 8.5.1.1.2. Charters authorized by the Georgia Annual Conference
2 shall be reviewed by the conference chancellor before
3 being filed with the Georgia Secretary of State.

4 8.5.1.1.3. The board of trustees shall maintain policies for Guidelines
5 for Discontinued or Abandoned Local Church Property,
6 including a process by which the annual conference trustees
7 shall publish in the conference journal a list of real property
8 belonging to but not currently in use by The United
9 Methodist Church.

10 8.6. Board of Ordained Ministry

11 8.6.1. The Georgia Annual Conference shall elect a board of ordained ministry.
12 The composition, term of service, roles and responsibilities are outlined in
13 ¶634 and ¶635 of *The Book of Discipline*.

14 8.6.2. The Georgia Annual Conference shall have an administrative review
15 committee. The composition, term of service, roles, and responsibilities
16 are outlined in ¶635 of *The Book of Discipline*.

17 8.6.3. The Georgia Annual Conference shall have a committee on investigations.
18 The composition, term of service, roles, and responsibilities are outlined in
19 ¶2703.2b of *The Book of Discipline*. This includes alterations to the
20 composition of the committee on investigation for diaconal ministers.

21 8.6.4. The Georgia Annual Conference shall have a committee on conference
22 relations. The composition, term of service, roles, and responsibilities are
23 outlined in ¶634.1.d of *The Book of Discipline*.

24 8.6.5. The Georgia Annual Conference shall have a joint committee on clergy
25 medical leave. The composition, term of service, roles, and responsibilities
26 are outlined in ¶652 of *The Book of Discipline*. There shall be a sub-
27 committee on special relief whose composition, term of service, roles, and
28 responsibilities are outlined by policies established by the board of
29 ordained ministry and board of pensions.

30 8.7. United Women in Faith

31 8.7.1. The Georgia Annual Conference shall have an annual conference United
32 Women in Faith organization. Composition, term of service, roles, and
33 responsibilities are outlined in ¶647 of *The Book of Discipline*.

34 8.8. United Methodist Men

1 8.8.1. The Georgia Annual Conference shall have an annual conference United
2 Methodist Men's Organization.

3 8.8.2. Composition, term of service, roles, and responsibilities are outlined in
4 ¶648 of *The Book of Discipline* and the organizing documents of the
5 annual conference's United Methodist Men's Organization.

6 8.8.3. A committee on scouting shall be organized. The committee shall have its
7 composition, terms of service, roles, and responsibilities outlined in the
8 organizing documents of the Annual Conference's United Methodist
9 Men's Organization.

10 8.9. Connectional Ministries

11 8.9.1. The Georgia Annual Conference shall have a connectional ministries
12 council whose roles and responsibilities are outlined in ¶608 of *The Book*
13 *of Discipline* and within the policies of the Council.

14 8.9.2. The bishop of the Georgia Annual Conference shall name or appoint a
15 director of connectional ministries or similar officer to focus and guide the
16 mission and ministry of The United Methodist Church and who serves as
17 steward of the vision of the Annual Conference, as per ¶608 of *The Book*
18 *of Discipline*.

19 8.9.3. The connectional ministries council shall be nominated by the annual
20 conference's committee on nominations and consist of

- 21 ● Director of connectional ministries or similar office
- 22 ● Co-chairs of the connectional ministries council, one lay person,
23 one clergy person.
- 24 ● Chair and membership of the nurture discipleship team
- 25 ● Chair and membership of the outreach discipleship team
- 26 ● Chair and membership of the witness discipleship team
- 27 ● Chair and membership of the advocacy discipleship team,
28 including a religion and race representative and a status and role of
29 women representative
- 30 ● Chair of the Barnes evaluation and administrative team
- 31 ● Conference lay leader

32 8.9.4. Connectional Ministries Council Executive Team

8.9.4.1. Composition

- Director of connectional ministries, serving as convener
- Co-chairs of the connectional ministries council, one lay person, one clergy person
- Chair of the nurture discipleship team
- Chair of the outreach discipleship team
- Chair of the witness discipleship team
- Chair of the advocacy discipleship team
- A status and role of women representative (¶644)
- A religion and race representative (¶643)
- A church and society representative (¶628)
- Chair of the Barnes evaluation and administrative team

8.9.4.2. Scope of Work

8.9.4.2.1. The executive team meets as needed to coordinate the work of the discipleship teams and prepare agendas and recommendations for the full council.

8.9.4.2.2. In consultation with the bishop and cabinet, the executive team is authorized to fill vacancies that occur between sessions of the annual conference and shall report all such actions to the chair of the committee on nominations.

8.9.4.2.3. In consultation with the discipleship teams, the executive team determines the membership needs for the coming conference year. The director of connectional ministries will provide this information to the chair of the committee on nominations.

8.9.4.2.4. In consultation with the bishop, cabinet, and discipleship teams, the executive team will designate representatives to boards, agencies, and ministry groups beyond the annual conference to strengthen our shared mission across the general church.

8.9.5. Discipleship Teams

8.9.5.1. Areas of Responsibility

- 8.9.5.1.1. The nurture team shall be responsible for the annual conference's work in christian formation, education, small group ministries, worship, stewardship, membership care, age-level and family ministries (§649, 650, 651), higher education and campus ministry (§633), small membership churches (§645), and outdoor ministries.
- 8.9.5.1.2. The outreach team shall be responsible for the annual conference's work in the areas of global missions, local missions, Golden Cross, mission personnel recruitment initial screening, disaster response, United Methodist Committee on Relief, United Methodist Volunteers in Missions, and ministries through our health and welfare agencies (§632).
- 8.9.5.1.3. The witness team shall be responsible for the annual conference's work in sharing the gospel and equipping individuals for witnessing, speaking, and providing specific events to equip our congregations to reach the unchurched in our communities (§266-269, 630, 607).
- 8.9.5.1.4. The advocacy team shall be responsible for the Annual Conference's work in the areas of ministry related to religion and race (§643), ethnic local church concerns (§631), status and role of women (§644), persons with disabilities (§653), native american ministries (§654), hispanic/latino ministries (§631), pan-asian ministries, criminal justice and mercy ministries (§657), church and society (§628), and christian unity and interreligious concerns (§642).
- 9.2. Composition of Discipleship Teams:
 - 8.9.5.2.1. Each of the four discipleship teams will be composed of five (5) primary members, divided into classes, and a staff member.
 - 8.9.5.2.2. One team member of each discipleship team will be nominated as chairperson by the conference committee on nominations.
 - 8.9.5.2.3. The conference committee on nominations is asked to select the team members primarily on gifts, graces, interest, availability, and commitment to the conference's vision,

while reflecting diversity and inclusion of all ministry contexts of the annual conference.

8.9.5.2.4. Teams may enlist additional persons to assist in their work as needs arise.

8.9.5.2.5. Teams are expected and empowered to create as many short-term task groups, ad hoc groups, or networking groups as needed to carry out their work. These groups will work under the supervision of the respective discipleship team. Each sub-group will be evaluated annually by the executive team to determine whether it is to be continued.

8.9.5.3. Scope

8.9.5.3.1. Teams will be expected to consider prayerfully the full range of ministry possibilities within their scope of responsibility and to design and implement the most strategic plans in alignment with the annual conference's mission, vision, values, and action plan.

8.9.5.3.2. The four teams are expected to collaborate to maximize the potential benefits of resources offered to the local churches.

8.9.5.4. The connectional ministries council executive team will conduct annual evaluations of each discipleship team to determine whether each team's strategy and work should be affirmed or adjusted to maximize the making of disciples of Jesus Christ.

8.10. The United Methodist Commission on Higher Education and Campus Ministry

8.10.1. There shall be a Georgia United Methodist Commission on Higher Education and Campus Ministry (UM Commission).

8.10.2. The commission shall be composed of twenty-three (23) voting members. Proposed members shall be nominated by the committee on nominations from the Georgia Annual Conference receiving input from the Commission regarding nominees. The resident bishop shall designate one district superintendent from the annual conference to be a voting member of the commission. The director of connectional ministries or designated person of the annual conference shall designate one staff member to be a voting member of the commission. The executive director of the commission shall be a voting member of the commission.

8.10.3. The commission shall be governed by its constitution and By-Laws.

1 9. Housing and Homeless Council

2 9.1. There shall be a Georgia United Methodist Housing and Homeless Council whose
3 composition, term of service, roles, and responsibilities shall be governed by its
4 By-Laws.

5 10. Annual Conference Board of Laity

6 10.1. There shall be an annual conference board of laity whose roles and
7 responsibilities shall follow ¶630 of *The Book of Discipline*

8 10.2. The Board of Laity composition shall be guided by ¶630.3 of *The Book of*
9 *Discipline*.

10 10.3. From the formation of the Georgia Annual Conference until end of the
11 quadrennium, the office of conference lay leader shall be co-lay leaders, one from
12 each of the preceding annual conferences through 6/30/2028.

13 10.4. Election of conference lay leader and associate lay leader(s)

14 10.4.1. The conference lay leader and no more than four (4) associate conference
15 lay leaders shall be elected quadrennially by the annual conference upon
16 nomination of the conference committee on nominations, after
17 consultation with the board of laity.

18 10.4.2. The conference lay leader shall serve as chair of the conference board of
19 laity.

20 10.4.3. No person may serve as the conference lay leader for more than eight (8)
21 consecutive years.

22 10.4.4. No person may serve as the associate conference lay leader for more than
23 eight (8) consecutive years.

24 10.4.5. The conference lay leader and the associate conference lay leader shall be
25 members of the board of laity by virtue of their election to the offices they
26 hold.

27 10.4.6. Years of service as an associate conference lay leader shall not be
28 considered in determining the eligibility of a person to serve as conference
29 lay leader.

30 10.5. Lay Servant Ministries

31 10.5.1. There shall be an annual conference committee on lay servant ministries
32 whose roles and responsibilities are outlined in ¶630.6 of *The Book of*
33 *Discipline* and in the policies of the Committee.

1 10.5.2. There shall be an annual conference director of lay servant ministries per
2 ¶630.3.d of *The Book of Discipline*.

3 10.5.3. The committee on lay servant ministries shall provide connectional
4 support for the roles relating to lay servant ministries as outlined in ¶¶266-
5 268 of *The Book of Discipline*

6 10.5.4. Composition

- 7 ● Conference director of lay servant ministries, functioning as chair
- 8 ● Each district director of lay servant ministries
- 9 ● Director of connectional ministries or designee.
- 10 ● A district superintendent, ex officio
- 11 ● Up to four (4) at-large members, elected by the conference board
- 12 of laity as needed for inclusiveness and operations.

13 11. Committee on Episcopacy

14 11.1. The Georgia Annual Conference shall elect a committee on episcopacy whose
15 composition, term of service, roles, and responsibilities are outlined in ¶636 of
16 *The Book of Discipline*.

17 11.2. The committee on episcopacy shall also constitute the episcopal residency
18 committee with the responsibilities as outlined in ¶637 of *The Book of Discipline*.

19 12. Agencies of the Annual Conference

20 12.1. There shall be an Aldersgate Homes board of directors, nominated in accordance
21 with its Constitution and By-Laws, to be confirmed or denied confirmation by the
22 annual conference.

23 12.2. There shall be an Epworth-By-The-Sea, Inc., Board of Trustees, nominated in
24 accordance with its Constitution and By-Laws, to be confirmed or denied
25 confirmation by the annual conference.

26 12.3. There shall be a Georgia United Methodist Foundation, Inc., board of trustees
27 nominated by the Foundation to be confirmed or denied confirmation by the
28 annual conference.

29 12.4. There shall be a Magnolia Manor, Inc., board of trustees, nominated in
30 accordance with its Constitution and By-Laws, to be confirmed or denied
31 confirmation by the annual conference.

- 1 12.5. There shall be a Methodist Foundation for Retired Ministers Board of Trustees,
2 nominated in accordance with its Constitution and By-Laws, to be confirmed or
3 denied confirmation by the annual conference.
- 4 12.6. There shall be a Murphy-Harpst Children's Centers board of directors, nominated
5 in accordance with its Constitution and By-Laws, to be confirmed or denied
6 confirmation by the annual conference.
- 7 12.7. There shall be a board of directors for the North Georgia Camp and Retreat
8 Ministries, nominated in accordance with its Constitution and By-Laws, to be
9 confirmed or denied confirmation by the annual conference.
- 10 12.8. There shall be a board of directors for the Open Door Community House,
11 nominated in accordance with its Constitution and By-Laws, to be confirmed or
12 denied confirmation by the annual conference.
- 13 12.9. There shall be a board of directors for The Methodist Home for Children and
14 Youth, nominated in accordance with its Constitution and By-Laws, to be
15 confirmed or denied confirmation by the annual conference.
- 16 12.10. There shall be a board of directors for Vashti Center for Children and Families,
17 nominated in accordance with its Constitution and By-Laws, to be confirmed or
18 denied confirmation by the annual conference.
- 19 12.11. There shall be a United Methodist Children's Home now doing business as
20 Wellroot Family Services board of directors, nominated in accordance with its
21 Constitution and By-Laws, to be confirmed or denied confirmation by the annual
22 conference.
- 23 12.12. There shall be a board of directors for Wesley Community Centers of Savannah,
24 nominated in accordance with its Constitution and By-Laws, to be confirmed or
25 denied confirmation by the annual conference.
- 26 12.13. There shall be a board of directors for Wesley Glen Ministries, nominated in
27 accordance with its Constitution and By-Laws, to be confirmed or denied
28 confirmation by the annual conference.
- 29 12.14. There shall be a Wesley Woods, Senior Living Inc. board of trustees, nominated in
30 accordance with its Constitution and By-Laws, to be confirmed or denied
31 confirmation by the annual conference.
- 32 13. United Methodist Related Institutions of Higher Learning
- 33 13.1. There shall be Boards of Trustees of United Methodist related schools, nominated
34 in accordance with their Constitution and By-Laws, to be confirmed or denied
35 confirmation by the annual conference.

1 13.2. There shall be Boards of Directors of Wesley Foundations, nominated in
2 accordance with their Constitution and By-Laws, to be confirmed or denied
3 confirmation by the annual conference.

4 14. Georgia United Methodist Pastors' School

5 14.1. There shall be a Georgia United Methodist Pastors' School board of managers,
6 composed of persons by virtue of office and at-large members named by the
7 annual conference committee on nominations. The purpose of the Georgia United
8 Methodist Pastors' School shall be to provide an annual school for continuing
9 education for United Methodist clergy of the Georgia Annual Conference, while
10 modeling and promoting a spirit of cooperation and goodwill among the clergy.
11 The Georgia United Methodist Pastors' School shall be governed by a board of
12 managers composed of up to sixteen (16) clergy. The members shall be named to
13 the board of managers according to nominating guidelines established by the
14 annual conference. The officers are nominated and elected from the board of
15 managers.

16 15. Archives and History

17 15.1. The Georgia Annual Conference shall elect a commission on archives and history.
18 The composition, term of service, roles, and responsibilities are outlined in ¶641
19 of *The Book of Discipline*.

20 16. District Structure

21 16.1. The Georgia Annual Conference shall have ____ districts as established by the
22 resident bishop, in adherence to ¶415.4.

23 16.2. District Conference

24 16.2.1. A District conference may be held annually in each district (¶658-659).

25 16.2.2. A District conference shall be composed of

- 26 ● All clergy under appointment in the district
- 27 ● All retired clergy whose charge conference relationship is with a
- 28 church in the district
- 29 ● All diaconal ministers under appointment in the district
- 30 ● All retired diaconal ministers whose local church relationship is
- 31 with a church in the district.
- 32 ● All deaconesses and home missionaries under episcopal appointment
- 33 to a ministry setting within the boundaries of the district
- 34 ● District lay leader

- District United Women in Faith President
- District United Methodist Men President
- Chair of the district board of trustees
- All annual conference district-at-large members
- All local church charge-wide members of the annual conference

16.3. District Organizations (§661)

16.3.1. District Committee on Ordained Ministry

16.3.1.1. Each district shall have a district committee on ordained ministry. The composition, terms of service, roles, and responsibilities are outlined in §666 of *The Book of Discipline*. The annual conference board of ordained ministry shall select from among its own membership an official representative to serve as a member of each district committee on ordained ministry (§635.1.g).

16.3.2. District Board of Trustees

16.3.2.1. Each district shall have a district board of trustees. The district trustees serve in an advisory capacity to existing local churches. They are encouraged to offer training on endowments, building maintenance, use agreements, risk assessment, and other facility needs.

16.3.2.2. Membership

16.3.2.2.1. The district board shall consist of no fewer than three nor more than nine members in accordance with §610.5 of *The Book of Discipline*, having the same qualifications provided for trustees of local churches, as per §2525 of *The Book of Discipline*. Members shall be nominated by the district superintendent in consultation with the district nominating committee, if one exists, and elected by the district conference.

16.3.2.2.2. They shall be elected for a term of one year and serve until their successors have been elected.

16.3.2.2.3. It is recommended that the board include one third clergy, one-third laywomen, and one-third laymen, who are professing members of local churches.

1 16.3.2.2.4. They shall report annually to the district conference or
2 annual conference.

3 16.3.3. District Board of Laity

4 16.3.3.1. Each district shall have a district board of laity whose composition,
5 roles, and responsibilities are outlined in ¶667 of *The Book of*
6 *Discipline*.

7 16.3.3.2. Each district shall have a district committee on lay servant
8 ministries whose composition, roles, and responsibilities are
9 outlined in ¶668 of *The Book of Discipline*.

10 16.3.4. Committee on District Superintendency

11 16.3.4.1. Each district shall have a district committee on superintendency
12 whose composition, roles, and responsibilities are outlined in ¶669
13 of *The Book of Discipline*.

14 16.3.5. District Strategic Growth Team

15 16.3.5.1. Each district shall have a district strategic growth team that shall
16 function as the district board of church building and location
17 whose composition, term of service, roles, and responsibilities are
18 outlined in ¶2519-2524 of *The Book of Discipline*.

19 16.3.5.2. The district strategic growth team shall have additional roles,
20 responsibilities, and members as outlined by team policy
21 established by the annual conference.

22 16.3.6. District Committee on Nominations

23 16.3.6.1. Each district shall have a district committee on nominations whose
24 role shall be to advise the district superintendent on the
25 composition of the district organizational structure by identifying,
26 developing, deploying, evaluating, and monitoring Christian
27 spiritual leadership for the district.

28 16.3.6.2. The district committee on nominations shall meet at least annually
29 with additional meetings at the discretion of the district
30 superintendent.

31 16.3.6.3. Composition

32 16.3.6.3.1. The district committee on nominations shall have no more
33 than 12 members and include:

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- District superintendent
- District lay leader
- One young adult
- At least four clergy
- At least five lay people

16.3.6.3.2. All committee members shall be professing members of a United Methodist church within the district, and selection thereof shall be guided by ¶610 of *The Book of Discipline*.

**B. Rules of Order of The Georgia Annual Conference
of The United Methodist Church**

1. Rules of Order and Parliamentary Authority

Parliamentary Authority

1.1. Robert's Rules of Order (current edition) shall govern the parliamentary procedures of the Georgia Annual Conference, subject to

- The Constitution of The United Methodist Church (§§ 1–61)
- *The Book of Discipline* in effect (§ 601)
- Any applicable rules adopted by the most recent General Conference (§ 507).

1.2. Interpretation Priority

1.2.1. When interpretation services are in use, the presiding bishop shall ensure that sufficient time is allotted for interpretation before debate or voting proceeds (§ 604).

2. Order of Business

2.1. The Order of Business for each session shall be set by the bishop in consultation with the cabinet and the annual conference planning committee (§§ 415).

2.2. Each annual conference session shall begin with an opening worship service. Additional worship experiences will be conducted periodically during the session.

2.3. The order shall be published in advance and included in the Conference Handbook (§ 603).

2.4. The bishop may reorder business as needed to ensure faithful, efficient, and accessible conduct of the conference (§ 604).

3. Credentials

3.1. Members of the conference and others entitled to be seated within the voting area of the conference shall be furnished proper credentials. During balloting, ballots will be distributed to and collected from only those persons displaying the proper credentials.

4. Amending the Rules of Order

4.1. Rules of Order may be amended by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of members present and voting (§ 604).

1 4.2. No amendment may be voted upon earlier than twenty-four (24) hours after its
2 presentation to the conference (§ 604). Proposed amendments must

- 3 • be submitted in writing or electronic form to the conference secretary prior to
- 4 being read to the conference (§ 603); and
- 5 • be made available to the conference in written or electronic form
- 6 Amendments take effect immediately upon adoption unless otherwise specified.

7 5. Limiting Debate

8 5.1. Debate may be limited or extended by majority vote in accordance with Robert's
9 Rules of Order (§ 604).

10 5.2. When interpretation services are in use, time limits on speeches shall be adjusted
11 to ensure full and fair interpretation (§ 604).

12 5.3. The presiding bishop may rule speakers out of order to preserve balance,
13 decorum, and equity in debate (§§ 604, 415).

14 5.4. No member who has the floor may be interrupted except in the following cases:

- 15 • a question on the matter under consideration
- 16 • a breach of order
- 17 • a misrepresentation
- 18 • the need to direct the attention of the conference to the fact that the time has
- 19 arrived for a special order
- 20 • the need to raise a very urgent question of high privilege.

21 5.5. No member shall speak

- 22 • more than once on the same question if any member who has not spoken
- 23 desires the floor
- 24 • more than twice on the same subject under the same motion
- 25 • any longer than two minutes unless this two-minute period may be limited or
- 26 extended by a two-thirds vote of the conference.

27 6. Other Motions

28 6.1. Refer to Committee: Sends the motion to a committee. Majority vote.

29 6.2. Postpone Indefinitely: Ends the conversation with no vote on motion. Majority
30 vote.

31 6.3. Call the Question: Ends the debate and requires a vote. $\frac{2}{3}$ majority to pass

32 6.4. Move to Table: the motion is postponed until at least one business item has been
33 conducted. If the motion is not taken from the table by the end of the meeting, it is
34 dead.

6.5. Recess: Ends the motion and allows a break. Majority vote.

7. High Privilege and Suspension of Rules

7.1. A member claiming the floor for a very urgent question of high privilege shall be allowed to indicate briefly the nature of the question, and if it be adjudged by the chair to be such, the member may proceed until the chairperson judges that he or she has exhausted the privilege.

7.2. The Georgia Annual Conference Rules of Order may be suspended at any time by a two-thirds vote of the conference.

7.3. The Georgia Annual Conference Rules of Order and Plan of Organization may be amended or changed by a two-thirds vote of the conference provided the proposed change or amendment has originated in the Committee on the Plan of Organization and Rules. Alternatively, if the amendment has been presented to the conference in writing and referred to the Committee on the Plan of Organization and Rules, the committee shall report as soon as practicable taking into account all of the facts and circumstances of the proposed rule change.

8. Rights, Duties, and Privileges of Members

8.1. Conference Membership. Membership and voting rights of clergy and lay members shall be as defined by *The Book of Discipline* (§§ 32–35, 602).

8.2. Attendance at the Annual Conference Session

8.2.1. Lay Member Attendance, referencing *The Book of Discipline* §§602.4–602.6

8.2.1.1. Attend the electronic pre-conference briefing session.

8.2.1.2. Attend all the electronic sessions of the annual conference.

8.2.1.3. Attendance at all sessions of the annual conference is critical. If you must be absent, please abide by the outlined procedures for the seating of alternate lay members.

8.2.1.4. Become familiar with the organizational structure and existing programs of the annual conference, parliamentary procedure, and the conference plan of organization and rules of order as printed in the conference handbook.

8.2.1.5. Read pre-conference reports in the conference handbook available to download and print from the conference website and become familiar with specific programs and items that might be presented during the sessions. Consult with the pastor and church lay leader.

1 While the lay member is obligated only to use his or her own best
2 thinking in the conference, the dialogue with others ahead of time
3 should prove helpful in clarifying issues.

4 8.2.1.6. Participate fully in the work of the annual conference policy-
5 making decisions.

6 8.2.1.7. Prepare a report for his or her local church. This report may be
7 presented through virtual opportunities available at each local
8 church. This report should be done “not later than three months
9 after the close of the conference” (§ 251.2, *The Book of*
10 *Discipline*). Consult with his or her pastor before conference about
11 scheduling and time limit. The digital conference handbook, the
12 Georgia Annual Conference web page, georgiaumc.org, and
13 personal notes on the sessions can be used as a basis for the report.
14 Mention major issues raised, any action taken, and how they might
15 affect the local church.

16 8.2.2. Clergy Member Attendance, referencing *The Book of Discipline* ¶602.8

17 8.2.2.1. Attend the electronic pre-conference briefing session.

18 8.2.2.2. Attend all the electronic sessions of the annual conference and
19 leave only under emergency conditions and with the knowledge of
20 his/her district superintendent. Attendance is not optional. “Any
21 such person unable to attend shall report by letter to the
22 Conference Secretary, setting forth the reason for the absence.”
23 (*The Book of Discipline*, ¶ 602.8.)

24 8.2.2.3. Become familiar with the organizational structure and existing
25 programs of the annual conference, parliamentary procedure, and
26 the conference plan of organization and rules of order as provided
27 in the conference handbook and discuss with his or her lay
28 member(s).

29 8.2.2.4. Participate fully at the annual conference and help in policy-
30 making decisions.

31 8.2.2.5. Serve as interpreter of the annual conference actions along with the
32 lay member. (*The Book of Discipline* ¶ 251.2).

33 8.2.3. Equal Rights

- 1 8.2.3.1. Clergy and lay members shall have equal rights to voice and vote
2 as provided by the Constitution and *The Book of Discipline* (§§ 33–
3 35; ¶ 602).
- 4 8.2.4. Language and Accessibility. The conference shall provide
- 5 • Interpretation in languages approved by the conference (¶604)
- 6 • Reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities (§140; ¶
- 7 602)
- 8 • Accessible formats for conference materials.
- 9 9. Lay Equalization
- 10 9.1. Lay equalization shall be calculated and implemented in accordance with *The*
11 *Book of Discipline* (§ 32). Each district shall have up to ten (10) young persons
12 between thirteen (13) years of age and eighteen (18) years of age, and at least one
13 young adult eighteen (18) years of age to thirty-five (35) years of age.
- 14 9.2. Procedures for lay equalization shall be published by the conference secretary
15 prior to annual conference (§ 603).
- 16 9.3. At-Large Youth and Young Adult Members
- 17 9.3.1. At-large youth and young adult members shall be nominated by the
18 appropriate district committee on nominations. (§ 610).
- 19 9.3.2. Their number, rights, and privileges shall be consistent with *The Book of*
20 *Discipline* and annual conference policy (§§ 32, 602; ¶ 610).
- 21 9.4. Bar of the Conference
- 22 9.4.1. The bar of the conference shall include all persons entitled to seat, voice,
23 or vote under *The Book of Discipline* (§§ 32–35, 602).
- 24 9.4.2. Guests may be granted voice by the presiding bishop but shall not vote
25 unless authorized by *The Book of Discipline* (§ 604).
- 26 10. Registration and Fees
- 27 10.1. Registration is required of all participants in the annual conference (§ 603).
- 28 10.2. Registration fees shall be established by the annual conference council on finance
29 and administration (§§ 611–619).
- 30 10.3. In-person registration fees may exceed virtual participation fees to reflect actual
31 costs (§ 611).
- 32 11. Business Procedures and Consent Agenda

11.1. Routine or non-controversial matters may be placed on a Consent Agenda (§ 604).

11.2. Any member may request removal of an item from the Consent Agenda for separate consideration. Removal must be supported by a second from two (2) members (§ 604).

11.3. Consent Agenda procedures shall be published in advance (§ 603).

12. Conference Reports and Handbook

12.1. All boards, agencies, committees, commissions, teams, and groups shall submit reports no later than the deadline set (as required) by the conference secretary (§ 610).

12.2. A Conference Handbook and briefing materials shall be prepared and distributed in advance in accessible formats (§ 603).

13. Governance, Nominations, and Ethics

13.1. Nominations

13.1.1. The annual conference committee on nominations shall nominate persons for boards, agencies, committees, commissions, teams, and groups requiring conference approval (§ 610).

13.2. Conflict-of-Interest

13.2.1. The annual conference shall adopt a Conflict-of-Interest Policy consistent with fiduciary responsibilities outlined in *The Book of Discipline* (§§ 611–619).

13.3. Ex-Officio Members

13.3.1. A policy governing the roles, rights, and privileges of ex-officio members shall apply unless otherwise stipulated by *The Book of Discipline* (§ 610).

13.4. Committee Size, Composition, and Terms

13.4.1. Bodies whose size and composition are specified by *The Book of Discipline* shall conform strictly to those provisions (§§ 611–657).

13.4.2. Bodies whose size is not specified by *The Book of Discipline* shall

- Have membership composed of up to ten (10) persons with no fewer than five (5) persons
- Reflect the diversity of the annual conference, including clergy/lay balance (§ 32), race, gender (§§ 5–6), age, and geography.

13.4.3. Quadrennial bodies shall be nominated for four-year terms (§ 610).

1 13.4.4. Individuals may serve a second four-year term at the discretion of the
2 committee on nominations and approval of the annual conference (§ 610)
3 unless otherwise stipulated by *The Book of Discipline*.

4 13.4.5. Exceptions required by *The Book of Discipline*:

- 5 • Conference Council on Finance and Administration (§§ 611–619)
- 6 • Conference Board of Ordained Ministry (§§ 635–666)

7 14. Leave Policy for Committee Service

8 14.1. Clergy on family, parental, medical, or transitional leave shall not fulfill
9 committee responsibilities during the leave period (§§ 353–361).

10 14.2. When a clergy member serving as chair is on leave, the committee shall be led by
11 a designated co-chair (§ 610).

12 14.3. Temporary replacements shall be arranged through the committee on nominations
13 or committee leadership as appropriate (§ 610).

14 15. Executive Committee

15 15.1. There shall be an executive committee of the annual conference (§ 610).

16 15.2. Its composition shall be defined by conference policy published in the Conference
17 Journal (§ 610).

18 15.3. Ad Interim Authority

19 15.3.1. The Executive Committee may act between sessions of annual conference
20 except in matters reserved to the Annual Conference or prohibited by *The*
21 *Book of Discipline* (§§ 601, 610).

22 15.3.2. All actions shall be reported to the next session of annual conference (§
23 603).

24 16. Quadrennial Training

25 16.1. Members of conference boards, agencies, committees, commissions, teams, and
26 groups shall participate in quadrennial training (§ 610).

27 Training shall include the following:

- 28 • *The Book of Discipline*
- 29 • Conference policies
- 30 • Anti-racism and inclusion (§§ 5, 162)

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- Fiduciary and ethical responsibilities (§§ 611–619).

**Policies Related to Plan of Organization and Rules of Order, Appearing Separately as
Appendixes in the Future**

1. Guidelines For Hosting Annual Conference
2. Registration
3. Statement of Relationships with Annual Conference Agencies
4. Conflict of Interest Policy
5. Ex-Officio Policy
6. Barnes Evaluation and Administration Team (BEAT) Grant
7. Nominations Process
8. District Strategic Growth Team (DSGT) Policy
9. Distribution of Supplemental Materials Policy
10. Safe Sanctuaries Policy
11. Church Professional Sexual Misconduct Policy
12. Parsonage Guidelines
13. Guidelines for Discontinued or Abandoned Property
14. Elections to General/Jurisdictional Conference
15. Divorce

Part Eight – The Glossary

As with any large organization, there are terms and acronyms in abundance. A small sampling of some of The United Methodist Church's terminology is listed here. *The Book of Discipline 2020/2024* is the defining resource for The United Methodist Church.

The United Methodist Church's website is <https://www.umc.org/> with information on what we believe, how we serve, ways to grow, and more. There is an expansive glossary on the website beyond what is listed here.

As a connectional denomination with churches around the world, *The Book of Discipline 2020/2024* is an instrument for setting forth the laws, polity, and processes by which The United Methodist Church governs itself.

Annual Conference: A regional, organizational unit of The United Methodist Church and the yearly business meeting of that unit, both presided over by a bishop. The business session is composed of equal numbers of clergy and laity. At least one layperson from each pastoral charge is a member. There are 56 annual conferences in the United States and 76 outside the U.S. in Africa, Europe and the Philippines. The conference is a time to review ministry, adopt policy and resolutions, and strengthen spiritual life.

Apportionment: The share each annual conference or local church pays to support international, national and regional (annual conference) mission and ministry.

The Book of Discipline 2020/2024: *The Book of Discipline* (BOD) of The United Methodist Church is the official, quadrennially updated governing document outlining the law, doctrine, organization, and social principles of The United Methodist Church. It acts as a constitution guiding the denomination's mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ, detailing procedures for both laity and clergy. It is a fundamental book outlining the law, doctrine, administration, organizational work and procedures of The United Methodist Church. Each General Conference amends *The Book of Discipline*, and the actions of the General Conference are reflected in the quadrennial revision. Often referred to as *The Discipline*, the latest version is 2020/2024.

Conference Board of Laity (BOL): BOD ¶ 630. This group's purpose is to foster, develop, support, and promote the role of laity in the local church, district, and conference as well as in the world of the Church. They provide training for lay members of the annual conference in cooperation with the conference connectional ministries or other similar conference committees. The committee membership is recommended in the BOD.

Conference Board of Ordained Ministry (BOM): BOD ¶ 634. Board membership is defined in the BOD with the primary responsibility for the enlistment and recruitment of ministerial leadership for churches and other ministry settings in consultation with the Bishop's cabinet and the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, among other duties.

1 **Consecration:** The act of conferring a ministerial office or function through prayer and the
2 laying on of hands, as for a bishop at a session of the Jurisdictional Conference.

3 **Council of Bishops:** Bishops of The United Methodist Church provide spiritual leadership to
4 almost 12 million persons in a broad range of settings on four continents, including North
5 America, Europe, Africa and Asia. All bishops are members of the Council of Bishops, which
6 collectively is charged with the general oversight and promotion of the temporal and spiritual
7 interests of the entire Church. Bishops are specifically assigned to preside over the work of a
8 regional area.

9 **Church Conference:** A Church Conference is a meeting in which all members of a local United
10 Methodist church are invited to attend and are extended the privilege of vote. A Church
11 Conference is called to have broad participation of the members of the congregation. The Church
12 Conference shall be authorized by the district superintendent.

13 **Delegate:** A clergy or layperson elected by an annual conference as its representative to General
14 Conference, Jurisdictional Conference, or Central Conference.

15 **District within an Annual Conference:** A designated geography comprised typically by county
16 borders within an episcopal area. This geography is designed by The Bishop of the episcopal
17 area with the respective cabinet and within the number of districts designated by the annual
18 conference.

19 **Episcopal Area:** In the UMC, an episcopal area is the annual conference or conferences to
20 which a bishop is assigned by the Jurisdictional or Central conference. The bishop lives within
21 the bounds of the episcopal area and presides over the work of one or more annual conferences.

22 **General Conference:** The General Conference is an international body of nearly 1,000 delegates
23 that generally meets every four years. The delegates are elected by annual conferences (at annual
24 conference sessions) to attend General Conference. They represent all annual conferences around
25 the world. Half of the delegates are laity (non-clergy members), half are clergy. The General
26 Conference meeting is held every four years. The next General Conference meeting is scheduled
27 for May 8-18, 2028, in Minneapolis, MN.

28 **Inclusiveness:** The term in United Methodism that means that every level of the denomination is
29 to be open to all people in all settings on a fully equal basis. There is to be no distinction made
30 because of racial or ethnic background, national origin, gender, age, handicapping conditions, or
31 any other criteria. It is the policy of The United Methodist Church to be fully inclusive of all
32 persons in their participation in the life and work of the church.

33 **Judicial Council:** The Judicial Council is the highest judicial body or "court" of The United
34 Methodist Church. Its nine members are elected by the General Conference. The Judicial
35 Council determines the constitutionality of acts or proposed acts of the General, Jurisdictional,
36 Central, and Annual Conferences. It acts on these either on appeal of lower rulings or through

1 requests for declaratory decisions. It also rules on whether acts of other official bodies of the
2 denomination conform to *The Book of Discipline*. This is done in accordance with procedures
3 established in *The Book of Discipline*.

4 **Jurisdiction:** In the UMC, jurisdictions are the five geographic areas in the United States, each
5 composed of several annual conferences as determined by the General Conference: North
6 Central, Northeastern, South Central, Southeastern and Western. North Georgia and South
7 Georgia are part of the Southeastern Jurisdiction.

8 **Local Churches:** Most individuals have their initial contact with the denomination in the local
9 church. Some local church members don't realize that they are part of a bigger whole or
10 connection: an annual conference, a jurisdiction, the General Church, and churches and annual
11 conferences around the world.

12 **Membership Vows:** Membership vows are taken when a person joins a United Methodist
13 church as a baptized or professing member. By taking the baptismal and local church
14 membership vows, the individual agrees to covenant with God and the members of the local
15 church to keep the vows that are part of living the baptismal covenant and reception into
16 membership in the local church.

17 **Quadrennium:** The official four-year period beginning January 1 following each General
18 Conference, during which The United Methodist Church implements General Conference
19 legislation.

20 **Sacraments:** The United Methodist Church recognizes two sacraments, baptism and
21 communion. These two acts have a special place in the church because Jesus commanded them
22 and participated in them. Baptism marks the beginning of our lifelong journey as disciples of
23 Jesus Christ. Communion nourishes and sustains us on the journey.

24 **Southeastern Jurisdiction (SEJ):** The Southeastern Jurisdiction is currently comprised of the
25 following Annual Conferences: Alabama-West Florida, Central Appalachian, Florida, Holston,
26 Kentucky, Mississippi, North Alabama, North Carolina, North Georgia, South Carolina, South
27 Georgia, Tennessee-Western Kentucky, Virginia, and Western North Carolina.

28 **Wespath:** BOD ¶¶ 1501-1507. Wespath is the general board tasked with the supervision and
29 administration of the support, relief, and assistance and pensioning of the clergy of The United
30 Methodist Church, lay workers of various units within the church, and their families. They
31 operate, manage, and administer the mandatory benefit funds, plans, and programs established by
32 the General Board of Pensions and Health Benefits.

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Acknowledgements

With great appreciation, we would like to thank the following individuals for their contributions to the Unification Plan.

South Georgia Conference Leadership Forum

- Co-Chair – Bishop Robin Dease
- Co-Chair – Mr. Scott Cleaveland, Conference Lay Leader
- Abra Lattany-Reed
- Allison Berg
- Angela Gilbert
- Baxter James
- Ben Gosden
- Cleve White
- Daniel Medina
- Danita Knowles
- Denise Rooks
- Doreen Smalls
- Harley Lawson
- Jeanne Lindsey
- Jeff Cook
- Jennifer Bonner
- Jimmy Asbell
- John Ray
- Jonathan Smith
- Kate Peacock
- Kathryn Dennis
- Kathy Israel-McLeod
- Kelly Crane
- Kelly Roberson
- Meredyth Earnest
- Michael Culbreth
- Reggie Williams
- Richard Shinhoster
- Robert Campbell
- Scott Hagan
- Suzanne Akins
- Wade Herring
- Wright Culpepper

North Georgia Conference Common Table

- Bishop Robin Dease
- Laurie Moeller
- Rodrigo Cruz
- Adam Roberts
- Alice Rogers

1 Alissa Rothschild
2 Allison Berg
3 Anjie Rivers
4 AnnaKate Rawles
5 Ash McEuen
6 Bennett Clough
7 Beth Sanders
8 Blake Trent
9 Byron Thomas
10 Cassie Rapko
11 Doug Gilreath
12 Dyanne Cunningham
13 Elissa Marks
14 Elizabeth Coppedge-Henley
15 Elizabeth Pollard
16 Ernest Perry
17 Harold Buckley, Jr.
18 Jacqueline Twiggs
19 Jay Horton
20 Jessica Terrell
21 Jim Thornton
22 Julie Boone
23 Katie Bruner
24 Keya Hillman
25 Kim Powell
26 Lavell Sanders
27 Lee Highsmith
28 Max Vincent
29 Michael McQueen
30 Minh Chung
31 Montana Hamby
32 Natalee Hamby
33 Orlando Evans
34 Pamela Perkins Carn
35 Rachel Fullerton
36 Randy Hardy
37 Scott Parrish
38 Stephanie Dressler
39 Sybil Davidson
40 Tonya Lawrence Miles
41 Vance Ross
42 Yolanda Jones-Colton
43 Yvette Massey
44
45

- 1 **One Georgia Task Force Working Groups**
- 2 **Leadership Team**
- 3 Bishop Robin Dease
- 4 Abra Lattany-Reed – Clergy (SGA)
- 5 Allison Berg – Cabinet, Treasurer (NGA & SGA)
- 6 Bert Neal – Retired Clergy (NGA)
- 7 Jimmy Asbell – Clergy (SGA)
- 8 Kelly Roberson – Conference Staff (SGA)
- 9 Kim Powell – Lay Leader (NGA)
- 10 Linda Slaughter-Titus – Retired Clergy (SGA)
- 11 Matt Stewart – Clergy (NGA)
- 12 Rodrigo Cruz – Assistant to the Bishop (NGA & SGA) - Convener
- 13 Scott Cleaveland – Lay Leader (SGA)
- 14 Sybil Davidson – Conference Staff (NGA)
- 15 Wright Culpepper – Clergy (SGA)
- 16
- 17 **Annual Conference Session**
- 18 Daniel Medina (SGA)
- 19 David Wood (SGA)
- 20 Debora S Richards (SGA) - Convener
- 21 Jonathan Smith (SGA)
- 22 Kelly Roberson (SGA)
- 23 Max Vincent (NGA)
- 24 Meg Morrison (NGA)
- 25 Robert Gilleo (NGA)
- 26 Sybil Davidson (NGA)
- 27
- 28 **Board of Laity**
- 29 Denise Rooks (SGA)
- 30 Dyanne Cunningham (NGA) - Convener
- 31 Kim Powell (NGA)
- 32 Maribel Acevedo-Velez (SGA)
- 33 Mitchell Foster (NGA)
- 34 Randy Hardy (NGA)
- 35 Robert Campbell (SGA)
- 36 Scott Cleaveland (SGA)
- 37 Tina Stevenson (NGA)
- 38
- 39 **Board of Ordained Ministry and Ministerial Services**
- 40 Alice Rogers (NGA) - Convener
- 41 Cassie Rapko (NGA)
- 42 Chance Ward (SGA)
- 43 Dalton Rushing (NGA)
- 44 Doreen Smalls (SGA)
- 45 Jeff Cook (SGA)
- 46 Joya Abrams (NGA)

- 1 Julie Boone (NGA)
- 2 Lavell Sanders (NGA)
- 3 Meg Procopio (SGA)
- 4 Meredyth Earnest (SGA)
- 5 Michael Culbreth (SGA)
- 6 Michelle Levan (NGA)
- 7 Montana Hamby (NGA)
- 8 Stephen Grantham (SGA)
- 9 Teresa Edwards (SGA)
- 10 Tom Jones (SGA)
- 11 Tracy Wheelis (NGA)
- 12 Yolanda Jones-Colton (NGA)
- 13
- 14 **Board of Trustees**
- 15 Allison Berg - Cabinet, Treasurer (NGA & SGA)
- 16 Carolyn Stephens (NGA)
- 17 Cater Thompson (SGA)
- 18 Cathy Huffines (NGA)
- 19 Columbus Burns (SGA)
- 20 Jim Thornton (NGA)
- 21 Jimmy Asbell (SGA)
- 22 Susan Daniell (NGA)
- 23 Vance Ross (NGA) - Convener
- 24 Warren Plowden (SGA)
- 25
- 26 **Camping and Retreats**
- 27 Jimmy Asbell (SGA)
- 28 Kelly Roberson (SGA)
- 29 Laurie Moeller (NGA)
- 30 Rodrigo Cruz (NGA)
- 31 Russell Davis (NGA) - Convener
- 32 Scott Hagan (SGA)
- 33 Suzanne Akins (SGA)
- 34
- 35 **Children and Youth Ministries**
- 36 Allison Sligh (NGA)
- 37 Beth Parr (SGA)
- 38 Justis Kuykendall (SGA)
- 39 Pellum Peters (NGA)
- 40 Philip Galyon (NGA)
- 41 Reese McCurry (SGA)
- 42 Sam Halverson (NGA)
- 43 Sara Maughn (NGA)
- 44 Stephanie Smith (SGA) - Convener
- 45 Suzanne Akins (SGA)
- 46 Wanda Goodman (SGA)

- 1 **Committee on Episcopacy**
2 Adriane Burgess (SGA) - Convener
3 Bill Daniel (SGA)
4 Dargenae Patterson (SGA)
5 Deloris Carhee (NGA)
6 Gwen Yarborough (SGA)
7 Melissa Traver (SGA)
8 Rachel Fullerton NGA
9 Robert King NGA
10 Rodrigo Cruz NGA
11
12 **Communications**
13 Alina Crews (NGA)
14 Chris Shoemaker (SGA)
15 Jay Horton (NGA)
16 Joseph McBrayer (NGA)
17 Kathy Israel-McLeod (SGA)
18 Kelly Roberson (SGA) – Co-Convener
19 Moises Velez (SGA)
20 Patsy Thomas (SGA)
21 Rori Blakeney (NGA)
22 Sybil Davidson (NGA) – Co-Convener
23
24 **Connectional Ministries**
25 Abra Lattany-Reed (SGA)
26 Albert Williams, III (SGA)
27 Flo Sapp Martin (SGA)
28 Garth Duke-Barton (SGA)
29 Katie Paden (NGA)
30 Kelly Roberson (SGA) – Co-Convener
31 Laurie Moeller (NGA) – Co-Convener
32 Lee Highsmith (NGA)
33 Natalee Dukes Hamby (NGA)
34 Nate Abrams (NGA)
35
36 **Council on Finance and Administration**
37 Baxter James (SGA)
38 Ben Martin (SGA)
39 Bucky Highsmith (NGA) - Convener
40 Cyndi McDonald (NGA)
41 Esther Rainey (NGA)
42 Jenn Byrd (NGA)
43 Jimmy Asbell (SGA)
44 Ralph Thompson (NGA)
45 Reggie Williams (SGA)
46

- 1 **Disaster Response**
2 Andrew Covington (NGA)
3 Donald Mathis (SGA)
4 Glenn Martin (SGA)
5 Grace Lee Zimmerman (NGA)
6 Jamaar Pye (NGA)
7 Kelly Crane (SGA)
8 Mike Bankston (SGA)
9 Paula Lewis (SGA)
10 Sargent Nelson (NGA)
11 Scott Parrish (NGA) - Convener
12
13 **Diversity and Inclusion**
14 Abra Lattany-Reed (SGA) - Convener
15 Carol Allums (NGA)
16 Dondra Davis (NGA)
17 Laine Reichert (SGA)
18 Minho Chung (NGA)
19 Nora Colmenares (NGA)
20 Ramon Hernandez (SGA)
21 Scott Cleaveland (SGA)
22
23 **Equitable Compensation**
24 Ashleigh Murriel (NGA)
25 Ben Gosden (SGA)
26 Brian Funderburke (NGA)
27 Carolyn Fletcher (SGA)
28 Eduardo Stevens-Gonzalez (NGA)
29 Michael Stinson (NGA)
30 Nita Crump (SGA) - Convener
31 Will Reaves (SGA)
32
33 **Lay Servant Ministries**
34 Anne Bosarge (SGA) - Convener
35 Chester Harris (SGA)
36 Cynthia Holland (NGA)
37 Debra Johnson (SGA)
38 Gail Young-Morris (SGA)
39 Kurt Dukes (SGA)
40 Marjorie Woods (NGA)
41 Mary Williams (NGA)
42 Randy Brown NGA
43 Stephanie Smith (SGA)
44
45
46

- 1 **Board of Pension**
2 Angela Odegard (NGA)
3 Debora Constable (NGA)
4 Eleanor Dickson (SGA)
5 Elizabeth Schroeder (NGA) - Convener
6 Harden Hopper (NGA)
7 John Ray (SGA)
8 Marcus Tripp (SGA)
9 Margaret Johnson (SGA)
10 Ruth Knox (NGA)
11
12 **Related Agencies (Boards and Agencies)**
13 Alison Evans (SGA)
14 Cameron Bishop (SGA)
15 Doreen Smalls (SGA) - Convener
16 Elizabeth Coppedge-Henley (WNC)
17 Jimmy Cason (SGA)
18 Karen Kagiya (NGA)
19 Tom Jackson (NGA)
20
21 **Standing Rules Committee**
22 Brian Tillman (NGA)
23 Catherine Boothe Olson (NGA)
24 Cheryl King (SGA)
25 Craig Hutto (SGA)
26 Dave Allen Grady (NGA) - Convener
27 Graylin Ward (NGA)
28 Jasmine Smothers (NGA)
29 Jon Brown (SGA)
30 Yolanda Sewell (SGA)
31
32 **United Women in Faith and United Methodist Men**
33 Becky Britton (SGA)
34 Cleve White (SGA)
35 Connie Boole (SGA)
36 Desmond Johnson (NGA)
37 Earnest Perry (NGA)
38 Jessica Godfrey (NGA)
39 Kathy Cook (NGA)
40 Melvin Blackwell (SGA)
41 Tara Jones (SGA) - Convener
42
43 **Conference Staff**
44 Alina Crews
45 Barbara Moore
46 Michael Murphy-McCarthy

1
2 We would also like to thank the hundreds of individuals not listed who have participated in
3 surveys, group discussions, and other feedback loops to contribute their voices to creating a new
4 unified conference.
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Section 1: General, Jurisdictional, and Joint Agencies of The United Methodist Church

*100. Africa University

Thank you to the congregations of the North Georgia Conference of The United Methodist Church for your steady support of Africa University. In 2025, North Georgia Conference congregations generously invested in the Africa University Fund. That commitment makes a real difference in forming disciples who love boldly, serve joyfully, and lead courageously—across Africa and around the world.

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

A few highlights from 2025:

- A self-funded solar power plant now supplies 100 percent of AU campus electricity, easing pressure on Zimbabwe’s national grid and benefiting nearby communities.
 - A new collaboration with the United Nations University Institute for Water, Environment and Health advances research in food security, sustainable agriculture, and environmental resilience. Faculty and graduate researchers are developing evidence-based responses to climate stress, water insecurity, and agricultural vulnerability—equipping communities to adapt and thrive.
 - An expanded partnership supporting applied research with The United Methodist Church’s Global Ministries agency focuses on at-risk agriculture and malaria prevention, strengthening rural communities.
 - In partnership with United Methodist Communications, AU is training African church communicators in digital engagement and media strategy—strengthening the Church’s witness across diverse contexts.
 - AU’s School of Law moot court team earned the honor of representing Africa at the World Round of the Price Media Law Moot Court Competition in the United Kingdom in 2026.
- These milestones are directly connected to your generosity. As this quadrennium continues, Africa University urges South Georgia Conference congregations to maintain AUF support at the 2016 budget level and work toward 100 percent funding each year. AU also encourages churches to consider becoming a “Keystone Congregation” by committing \$7,000 annually in scholarship support for one undergraduate student—and walking alongside that student with prayer and encouragement throughout their degree journey.

Africa University remains a living expression of our worldwide connection. Because you give, research advances. Because you pray, leaders are called and formed. Because you believe in Africa University, hope expands across nations.

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

James H. Salley

President and Chief Executive Officer – Africa University (Tennessee) Inc., and Associate Vice
Chancellor for Institutional Advancement – Africa University (Zimbabwe)
jsalley@africau.org | <https://support.africau.org> | www.africau.edu

*101. Candler School of Theology

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Office of Communications
Candler School of Theology, Emory University

*102. Episcopacy Committee Report

Greetings Beautiful People!

May the grace and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be yours in abundance! We are Melissa Traver and Robert S. King. We are the chairs of the South Georgia and North Georgia Episcopacy Committees, respectively. The Book of Discipline tasks us with supporting and resourcing our Resident Bishop. We are called to support Bishop Dease as she leads in shepherding the spiritual and temporal work of the Church. We seek to assist her in both her ministry as well as in making sure she takes care of herself. God has also called us to interpret to the people of the annual conference the work of the bishop as well as interpreting the needs of the people to the bishop.

This year, we celebrate Bishop Dease's ministry as she has continued to shepherd both conferences in our One Georgia Area. She has continued to faithfully ride the circuit throughout our communities in North and South Georgia, preaching, teaching, and worshipping in the churches and ministries of our communities.

After an arduous season of disaffiliation, Bishop Dease has provided a healing presence and encouragement to existing congregations, mergers and new church starts. These congregations are celebrating the resurrection presence of Jesus as they birth new vital congregations throughout the state. Through her advocacy and presence throughout our denominational general boards and agencies, our Episcopal leader has sought to be a Christlike, non-anxious, courageous and unifying presence during times of social unrest. Most recently, she has served on the Steering Committee for the Council of Bishops for covenant groups of support.

Additionally, the Bishop's Thriving Leadership Initiative continues to engage multiple pastors, laity and congregations for transformational ministry in their communities. Both multi-ethnic and new church start contexts are engaged to continue visionary ministry that expands the Kingdom of God through disciple-making. In November 2026, Bishop Dease invited United Methodist Clergy across Georgia to re-engage and re-imagine the sermons of John Wesley for today's church and world.

Moreover, after a year and a half of discernment, engagement and study under Bishop Dease's leadership, the North and South Georgia Annual Conferences have submitted their report for unification in March 2026. This Georgia Unification plan involved diligent work from twenty working groups comprehensively covering ministry in a combined format to discern the path toward a unified conference. Members of our Annual Conferences can find the report at www.georgiaumc.org/unification-plan.

After serving for several years in both the office of the Superintendent and the Episcopacy, Bishop Dease's North Georgia Administrative Assistant, Renee Farrar, retired in December 2025. We welcome Beth Blakeley and her family to this new role as of January 2026.

We thank God for Bishop Dease! We have encouraged her to continually take time for Sabbath, hug her joys during the turbulence of ministry in this season. We are grateful for her multiple areas for love and support from her siblings, her family, and her special dog Caleb! We, along with all the members of our annual conferences, commit to the holy and joyful calling of Jesus on our lives of making disciples of Jesus Christ, including caring for the least of these, these special siblings of Christ and ours as well.

Respectfully submitted, Melissa Traver and Robert King

***103. Faith Connection Federal Credit Union**

Faith Connection Federal Credit Union began in 1960, serving pastors of the North Georgia and South Georgia United Methodist Conferences. Today, our charter has expanded to include the clergy, staff and laity across the connection in Georgia, Florida and southern Alabama, giving us over 3,000 members.

We have seen steady increases in credit card, auto and home equity loans as members have discovered the benefits of our low rates and excellent service. Our loan rates and personal service has maintained our credit card balances at nearly \$3 million, made auto loans of \$7 million, and we have \$2.5 million in secured home equity loans.

We gave back to eight annual conferences through our scholarship program and local sponsorships and donations to agencies and churches, including UMCOR and Methodist affiliated children's homes.

Every United Methodist is eligible to be a member of Faith Connection Federal Credit Union and financially benefit from our low-cost services which include:

Low interest credit cards

Auto loan buying service with incentives

Mortgage Loans

Church Loans and Accounts

Financial counseling to help manage one's budget

The Faith Connection Federal Credit Union staff and board exists to serve you with financial systems that promote Christian stewardship and are working every day to ensure the success and stability of your credit union now and in the future.

Garth Duke Barton, Chair
revgarth0810@gmail.com

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103.a. Financial Report

Assets	Summary as of 12/31/2024	Summary as of 12/31/2025
Cash	\$209,318.43	\$204,344.10
Loans To Members	\$19,110,301.98	\$18,020,452.05
Loan Participation	\$1,213,322.69	\$1,004,916.58
Allowance for Loan Losses	(\$80,622.56)	(\$79,719.42)
Other Receivables	\$148,543.54	\$201,619.66
Investments	\$11,427,886.79	\$11,574,576.21
Accrued Income	\$89,866.56	\$91,759.59
Prepaid Exp & Defer Charges	\$58,267.26	\$53,100.30
Fixed Assets	\$1,110,109.28	\$1,078,328.23
All Other Assets	\$0.00	\$0.00
Total Assets	\$33,286,993.97	\$32,149,377.30
Liabilities		
Accounts Payable	\$49,902.52	\$179,760.01
Dividends Payable	\$0.00	\$0.00
Notes Payable	\$0.00	\$0.00
Taxes Payable	\$468.49	\$1,238.29
Accrued Expenses	\$119,293.20	\$93,747.65
Deferred Credits	\$0.00	\$0.00
Other Liabilities	\$3,839.23	\$3,362.56
Total Liabilities	\$173,503.44	\$278,108.51
Equity		
Shares of Members	\$29,770,427.60	\$28,491,217.91
Reserves	\$682,937.04	\$682,937.04
Undivided Earnings	\$2,618,154.37	\$2,660,125.89
Net Income	\$41,971.52	\$36,987.95
Total Equity	\$33,113,490.53	\$31,871,268.79
Total Liabilities & Equity	\$33,286,993.97	\$32,149,377.30

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Accreditation

- ## Enrollment

- ## Fund Development

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

Candace M. Lewis

149

***105. Georgia Pastors' School**

Georgia Pastors' School convened July 14–17, 2025, at Epworth By The Sea on St. Simons Island. Our theme, “Reigniting Joy,” reflected our hope to refresh and renew clergy following a difficult season in the United Methodist Church.

We were blessed to have Bishop Robin Dease with us who offered the sermon on the first night and celebrated Holy Communion with us on our last day. Guest teachers and preachers for the week were Candace Lewis, President-Dean of Gammon Theological Seminary, and Matt Rawle, pastor of Asbury UMC in the Louisiana Annual Conference.

Our time together included nightly worship, morning teaching sessions, shared meals in the dining hall, gatherings for clergy spouses, and activities and lessons for clergy children and youth. We were thankful to our sponsors. UMC Commission on Higher Education + Campus Ministry, EO Tours, General Board of Global Ministries, UMC Foundation, Cascade Community Services, Candler School of Theology and Andrew College.

Attendance included:

- 81 active clergy
- 12 commuting clergy
- 4 lay ministers
- 25 retired clergy
- 26 spouses
- 19 children
- 9 youth

Worship offerings totaled \$2,191.86, designated for United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) to support flood victims in Texas.

We look forward to our next Pastor's School, July 13–16, 2026, at Epworth By The Sea, featuring Tod Bolsinger and Amber Lowe-Woodfork.

Will Zant
will.zant@georgiaumc.net

***106. Hinton Rural Life Center**

Hinton Rural Life Center, located in the Appalachian Mountains in the southwest corner of North Carolina, is a mission outreach and retreat center of the Southeastern Jurisdiction of the UMC. Inspired by Jesus Christ, Hinton Center serves individuals, congregations, and rural communities through retreat ministries, educational opportunities, and missional outreach. We celebrate all those who came to Retreat, Reflect, Renew, and Serve at and through Hinton Rural Life Center. We especially appreciate the 1,186 volunteers (both local and those who came individually and on mission teams beyond our region) who served over 23,755 hours last year, a value of \$826,436 to our community and a witness of our Christian faith in action. Our guests and volunteers come to Hinton through a variety of programming from confirmation retreats to Boomers on Outreach Mission! In 2025, we hosted:

- 365 confirmands and leaders participated in our Theotokos Confirmation Retreats
- 156 used our Theotokos Connections confirmation curriculum

- 664 mission participants—youth and adults—worked on Safe & Healthy Home repairs and community projects
- 27 adults, mostly 60 and older, participated in our Boomers on Outreach Mission (BOOM)—our newest mission initiative—helping with Safe & Healthy Home Repair projects, as well as learning about poverty perspectives, enjoying Appalachian culture, and worshipping together.

Through our year-round Mission Outreach ministries, we served 1,287 neighbors in Appalachia:

- 232 Safe & Healthy Home repair projects were completed on 58 homes
- 805 loads of firewood valued at \$161,000 — huge thanks to our incredible volunteer Woodchuckers!
- 511 children were provided with gifts for Christmas including coats, shoes, and clothing items
- 830 individuals participated in our rural poverty simulation, which fosters awareness and understanding of the unique challenges and complexities of rural poverty and helps cultivate empathy

Through hands-on home repair, firewood ministry, and intentional learning experiences, we continued to walk alongside our neighbors, building relationships, honoring the rich heritage of our mountain communities, and working together toward safe, healthy homes and hopeful futures. We look forward to continuing this work in 2026 as we strengthen rural communities and serve with compassion and purpose.

Dr. Jacqueline Gottlieb, CEO & President, Hinton Rural Life Center

***107. Lake Junaluska**

Lake Junaluska Assembly remains committed to its mission to be a place of Christian hospitality where lives are transformed through renewal of soul, mind, and body. The leadership and staff are grateful to be a part of your ministry and for your continued prayers and support. The Sharing Our Gifts Capital Campaign is now in its fifth and final year. More than \$16 million in support for the future of Lake Junaluska has been committed, and we deeply appreciate the outpouring of love and support for this special place. Campaign priorities include preservation of the lake and dam, enhancements surrounding the Cross, revitalization of the recreation area, development of youth and family housing, and improvements to Stuart Auditorium. Each of these projects supports Lake Junaluska's role as a place where families gather, worship is deepened, and guests experience renewal and connection.

Momentum is building, and progress is visible. Because of generous partners like you, the future of Lake Junaluska is bright. To learn more about campaign priorities, we would welcome the opportunity to share how you can help bring these next projects to life and help us continue to be a place of Christian hospitality where lives are transformed through renewal of soul, mind, and body.

Financial Update: Lake Junaluska concluded 2025 with a financial surplus, which was invested in our ongoing efforts to ensure all staff members earn a living wage. Charitable giving remained strong throughout the year, and the Annual Fund exceeded its goal for the seventh consecutive year. The Annual Fund is a budget-relieving initiative that supports Lake Junaluska's annual operating budget and helps sustain ministry and hospitality programs.

1 Ministry Programs and Events: The 2026 Summer Worship and Theologian in Residence
2 series will take place June 28-August 2. Six theologians will preach during Sunday morning
3 worship and lead educational and interactive experiences throughout the week. A variety of
4 musicians will participate each week, and the Artists in Residence program will coordinate local
5 artists to provide altar art for summer worship. We encourage you to join us.

6 Summer activity programs will also return, including yoga, QiGong, bonfires, devotions,
7 and special events. The Festival of Wisdom and Grace is scheduled for August 17-21, and the
8 37th Choir Music Weekend will be held October 16-18. We hope you will be able to attend.

9 A definitive highlight of our winter season was our Encounter confirmation weekends. We were
10 honored to welcome nearly 500 youth over two weekends under the powerful theme of
11 *Unshakable Faith*. It was a profound privilege to witness firsthand the lives changed and spirits
12 renewed as these young people deepened their walk with Christ.

13 Don't wait to book your next mountain-top experience. Explore our facilities and see how
14 we can support your ministry's vision at lakejunaluska.com. Contact our group sales department
15 to plan your next retreat at 828-454-6809 or <https://bit.ly/LJRetreats>.

16 Looking Ahead: Lake Junaluska continues to pursue the guiding aspirations adopted by
17 the Board of Trustees: preserving and enhancing the lake and grounds; providing conference and
18 hospitality experiences that exceed guest expectations; connecting more youth to Christ through
19 meaningful ministry and recreation; strengthening shared experiences that celebrate faith,
20 recreation, the arts and education; and fostering an inclusive community that offers a high quality
21 of life for residents and guests.

22 The leadership and staff invite you to visit Lake Junaluska for a conference, retreat, or
23 time of renewal. The lake and surrounding mountains provide a beautiful setting for rest,
24 reflection, and spiritual growth. Additional information about events, programs, and
25 accommodations is available at lakejunaluska.com.

26 27 28 ***108. Professional Administrators of the United Methodist Connectional Structure**

29
30 The Professional Administrators of the United Methodist Connectional Structure
31 organization was established in 1982 under the direction of the General Council on Finance and
32 Administration. The purpose of the organization is to provide members a supportive base for
33 unity and fellowship and to promote individual growth, professional development, continuing
34 education and spiritual enrichment. PAUMCS continues to fall under the authority of the General
35 Council on Finance and Administration (GCFA) of The United Methodist Church. We are a
36 connectional part of United Methodism. Book of Discipline (§807.19.)

37 PAUMCS members are actively involved in the life and ministry of United Methodist
38 organizations. They provide support in a variety of office environments...local churches, district
39 offices, extension ministries, agencies and annual conferences. PAUMCS is open to secretaries,
40 administrative assistants, office managers, financial secretaries and any other administrative
41 professionals; employees, volunteers, or retired persons. National PAUMCS membership is
42 currently open to paid administrative professionals and requires certification offered through
43 GCFA. Certification class is offered online, and an advanced certification class is offered in-
44 person. Certification requires continuing education credits to maintain, which are offered in a
45 variety of areas and avenues.

The Georgia Chapter of PAUMCS, which includes the North and South Georgia Conferences, has not held an in-person conference in recent years. The Chapter is hopeful that it will be able to revive and flourish once again.

LouAnn P. McLain
GA PAUMCS
Immediate Past President

Section 2: Conference Administration

*200. Barnes Evaluation and Administrative Team

It has been a wonderful sixth year of fulfilling BEAT grant requests for innovative missions and ministries in the North Georgia Conference. Since its inception in 2020, the BEAT grant has been used to fund more than \$5.7 million to 114 boards, agencies, churches and districts throughout the five districts of the North Georgia Conference.

In 2025 and early 2026, BEAT hosted two BEAT Academy training events, September 5, 2025 and February 2, 2026. These training events were to provide helpful information about how to prepare a BEAT grant, grant requirements, and helpful information about the criteria used to evaluate grant submissions.

The BEAT grant process was developed to evolve with the needs of our applicants and committees in mind. In 2026, BEAT moved from three funding windows to two funding windows (April and October). The amount available for funding to be awarded each year is determined by calculating 5 % of the fund's average, end-of-year balance (based on the previous three years). In 2025, the funding allocation was \$1,493,000. In 2025's May window, twelve grant applications were approved. A total of \$721,023 was awarded in May 2025! In the November 2025 Window, six grants were approved, totaling \$363,248. BEAT awarded 18 grants totaling \$1,084,271 in 2025.

In 2026, BEAT will have available funds of \$1,559,900. For more information, please visit the dashboard at www.ngumc.org/BEATdashboard.

We are grateful for all of the support we receive from our subteams: the Prescreen Team who ensures grants are complete, the Accountability Team monitors recipients' grant fruitfulness and progress, and the Innovation Team reviews BEAT applications to look for ways to simplify our processes to support more applicants.

Creating bridges to Jesus Christ is the hope of BEAT thru supporting ministries and missions across our conference.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Dr. Orlando Evans and Kim Walls Powell, Co-chairs

orlando.evans@georgiaumc.net

kwpowell5@gmail.com

*201. Center for Clergy Excellence

The Center for Clergy Excellence supports the credentialing, cultivation, and sustaining of all elders, deacons, associate members, provisional members, and local pastors within the North Georgia Annual Conference. We collaborate directly with the bishop, the cabinet, the Board of Ordained Ministry, and the five District Committees on Ordained Ministry in credentialing candidates for certification, licensing local pastors, and commissioning and ordaining provisional elders and deacons. We strive to provide resources and training that equip and nurture individuals from the discernment stage to retirement. We support and sustain our candidates and clergy by offering required training, educational growth programs, and opportunities for spiritual renewal and development. When necessary, we work with clergy at the

1 cabinet's request to provide counseling resources, leadership development training, and
2 assistance with compliance with the Book of Discipline.

3 Our cultivation work supports the educational paths of certified candidates pursuing
4 ordination or serving as licensed local pastors. The Ministerial Education Fund offers
5 scholarships for seminary and Course of Study classes. In 2025-2026, the Ministerial Education
6 Fund supported 16 candidates with \$75,000 completing master's level education. Additionally,
7 we allocated scholarship funding to 28 local pastors in the amount of \$21,000 who are
8 completing the required course of study. Our February 2026 Candidacy Summit event had the
9 largest registration since February 2020, giving us hope for an increase in the number of
10 candidates eligible for funding in 2027. We currently have 45 Certified Candidates moving
11 through the credentialing process.

12 Our credentialing efforts enable us to collaborate closely with DCOMs and the Board of
13 Ordained Ministry in managing the approval process for individuals seeking ordination as elders,
14 deacons, or full-time local pastors. In 2026, we have 7 candidates who will be commissioned and
15 6 who will be ordained.

16 A critical part of the credentialing process involves the three-year Residence in Ministry
17 program in which provisional elders and deacons participate before applying for ordination. We
18 are grateful to the RIM mentors who have worked closely with these individuals throughout this
19 three-year program. In the past year, we have partnered with the South Georgia BOM and
20 incorporated their provisional members into our RIM groups.

21 Under the leadership of Leigh Martin, we have continued our ministry supporting clergy
22 with retreats and days apart that emphasize clergy health and professional development. Some
23 offerings in 2025-2026 include: the 8-Year Renewal, in which thirty-two clergy who completed
24 their 8th, 16th, 24th, 32nd, or 40th year in ministry received financial support for a personal
25 renewal project of their choice; the Clergy Day Away at Camp Glisson, where sixty-eight clergy
26 spent the day apart singing, ziplining, meditating, and fellowshiping; the Clergy Day Away at
27 the Ignatius House, where forty-one clergy started the new year with a day of rest, retreat, and
28 planning on the 100+ acres of this Atlanta retreat center; Path to God, which focused thirteen
29 clergy on how the Enneagram helps them better understand themselves, their congregations, and
30 deepen their spiritual formation; Trust the Path, where fourteen clergy took their understanding
31 of the Enneagram to the next level through this nine-month intermediate study; The Art of the
32 Word, in which nine clergy committed to a nine-month group of making liturgical art for their
33 congregations; Group Spiritual Direction, a new enrichment offering in which 20 clergy
34 participated in six sessions at a discounted rate; the Lenten Study for pastors and laity in which
35 we partnered with the Virginia Conference to host a 7-week book study called Creation's Call.

36 The Academy of Clergy Excellence continues to focus on peer group learning and
37 currently three ACE groups are engaged in custom continuing education plans covering holistic
38 and balanced living, new ways to engage people in church, and how to make the most of the
39 "third chapter" in life in retirement.

40 In conjunction with the cabinet, our office sponsored five six-month cohorts for clergy
41 serving in new appointments: first-time pastor-in-charge, first-time associate, cross-racial
42 appointments, and first-time pastors with staff. Additionally, we offered Nourishing
43 Conversations, a monthly program that provided a space for all clergy in new appointments to
44 meet via Zoom from noon to 1:00 p.m. to discuss topics critical to church leadership. The
45 conversations were led by one of our District Superintendents each month.

1 One of our favorite offerings includes two annual retiree gatherings: a Thanksmas
2 luncheon in the fall and a new ordinand and retiree luncheon in the spring. We consistently have
3 100+ who attend these fellowship gatherings.

4 As we look ahead to 2027, we are excited about the possibilities that come with One
5 Georgia. As we join together, we will continue to create programming that empowers our clergy
6 to lead courageously and provides renewal, so they can serve joyfully without burnout and love
7 boldly.

8 Respectfully submitted,
9 P. Alice Rogers, Director
10 Michelle Levan, Assistant Director
11 Leigh Martin, Assistant Director of Program and Development
12
13

14 ***201.a. Board of Ordained Ministry**

15
16 The Board of Ordained Ministry (BOM) serves the annual conference by supporting
17 individuals in their journey toward ordination, cultivating new candidates, and encouraging
18 clergy to live out their callings faithfully. Annually, the Board interviews candidates for
19 provisional membership and ordination. Beyond these interviews, members of the Board support
20 the growth of provisional members through the Residency in Ministry (RIM) process, interview
21 and support full-time local pastors as they live out their callings, approve extension ministry sites
22 as clergy seek to serve beyond the local church, work with each District Committee on Ordained
23 Ministry (DCOM), oversee the continuing education for all clergy, and, when necessary, review
24 conference status changes, transfers and leave requests.

25 In September of 2025, the Board approved revised educational requirements for
26 ordination, allowing candidates to complete a fully online degree from one of the 13 approved
27 United Methodist schools of theology, now aligning the North Georgia Conference with the
28 University Senate policy. In February of 2026, the Board received training in interview tactics
29 from Don Lang. Finally, the Board will be adding a new question for the 2027 interviews that
30 relates to Artificial Intelligence (AI) as it continues to monitor how candidates are using this tool.

31 The BOM expresses gratitude to Julie Boone for her previous years of service as the
32 BOM Chair. The BOM also expresses gratitude to Alice Rogers and Michelle Levan of the
33 Center for Clergy Excellence for their steadfast support, the conference staff members who have
34 helped host our meetings and the members of the Board for their faithful service.

35 Josh Roberts
36 Chair, Board of Ordained Ministry
37 josh.roberts@georgiaumc.net
38
39

40 ***201.b. Fellowship of Local Pastors and Associate Members**

41
42 With humbled hearts and deep gratitude, we stand today to say thank you sincerely,
43 wholeheartedly, and with reverence for the work God has entrusted to our hands.

44 In a world marked by uncertainty and shifting priorities, we remain anchored in the
45 words of our Lord in Matthew 25:37–40: “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of
46 these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.” This is the foundation and heartbeat of our

1 ministry.

2 We are not merely called to pulpits, but to people; not only to preach, but to practice
3 compassion; not just to sanctuaries, but to streets, shelters, hospitals, prisons, and forgotten
4 places where Christ waits to be seen, served, and loved.

5 We may not always be in the spotlight, but we are always in the field. And it is there, in
6 the fields, feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and imprisoned that we
7 encounter Christ most clearly.

8 So, we serve the least, the lost, the lonely, the looked over, the let down and the left
9 behind. We serve those who cannot repay us. We serve those society often overlooks. Because
10 when we serve them, we serve Him. We remain at the table of service, feeding, visiting, caring,
11 and covering. Not for recognition, but for obedience. For our calling is not validated by title, but
12 by how we respond when Christ is in need

13 Even as we serve, we recognize there is still a lot of work to be done not only in the
14 world, but within the life of the Church. We continue to stand in expectation of a more inclusive
15 future, where all God's children called to ministry are fully seen, heard, appreciated and counted.
16 Yet, we do not allow what is still unfolding to distract us from what God has already placed in
17 our hearts and hands. Ministry does not wait. The call is still going forth, needs are still great,
18 and the people are still looking for someone to show up. So, we as Local Pastors and Associate
19 Members, keep showing up.

20 The reality of our ministry is this: we are stretched, but steady. Many of us carry multiple
21 responsibilities, moving between work and worship, family and fellowship, community and
22 calling and yet the work continues through us. Not because it is easy, but because we have been
23 entrusted. And in that trust, we remain faithful. We are faithful in preaching, in tending, in
24 standing in the gap, and in showing up again, and again and again.

25 Still, we are reminded that we are not called to run on empty. There is a sacred
26 responsibility to care for the one who cares for others. We must make room to breathe, to rest,
27 and to be renewed in the presence of God. We must cherish our families, nurture our
28 relationships, and protect the spaces that restore our souls because longevity in ministry requires
29 intentional care of the vessel.

30 To those continuing along the path of preparation through Course of Study, Advanced
31 Course of Study, Seminary, and seasons that demand sacrifice and discipline: be encouraged.
32 Your labor is not in vain. Your perseverance is producing fruit, and your journey has purpose.
33 We stand with you, believe in you, and celebrate what God is completing in you.

34 It is with great joy that we recognize those who have completed the Course of Study since our
35 last gathering: Anthony L. Singleton, Irma Jean Lewis, Sandra Stroud-Pennington, Jason Eric
36 Forster, Brett McLaughlin and Jarrett Wallace

37 Advanced Course of Study Graduates: Rick Herring and Adam Daniels
38 Seminary Graduates: Britt Carnahan, Jesse Sloan, Luke Murphy and Neil Russell Brooks
39 We honor your journey and thank God for your faithfulness.

40 In closing, when the question is asked, "When did we see You?" we will answer:
41 We saw You in the hungry and fed You through Blessing Boxes. We saw You in the thirsty and
42 met needs seen and unseen. We saw You in the stranger and welcomed You in shelters for the
43 abused and displaced. We saw You in children navigating foster care and showed up with love
44 and provision. We saw You in the sick, sitting beside You in hospitals and hospice. We saw You
45 in the elderly, reminding them they are not forgotten. We saw You in the imprisoned, carrying
46 hope into jails. We saw You in grieving families, standing with them in funeral homes. We saw

1 You beyond our borders, even in Honduras, serving wherever You sent us. We saw You in
2 broken places. We saw You in overlooked lives. We saw You in moments that required more
3 than we thought we had to give. And still, we showed up, said yes and we served. In every act of
4 compassion, in every life touched we saw You, Lord.

5 So, when we stand before You, it will not be with empty hands, but with lives poured out
6 in service, not perfect, but faithful; not flawless, but willing.

7 Once again, to the Fellowship of Licensed Local Pastors and Associate Members, we say
8 thank you! Thank you for your sacrifice, your service, and your steadfast commitment to the
9 Kingdom of God. Our charge is to continue serving Christ by serving others, until every hungry
10 soul is fed, every naked body is clothed, every homeless person is housed, every broken heart is
11 lifted, and every life we touch encounters the love of God through us.

12
13 Much Love and Light,

14 YoLanda Jones-Colton

15 FLLP and AM

16 North Georgia Conference, Chair

17 yolanda.jones-colton@georgiaumc.net
18
19

20 ***201.c. Order of Deacons**

21
22 The mission of The United Methodist Church to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the
23 transformation of the world is strengthened through the ministry of Deacons stepping out into the
24 world alongside others to expand the Kingdom of God. Deacons are uniquely called to a lifetime
25 ministry of Word, Service, Compassion, & Justice. In our partnership with Elders, deacons act as
26 bridge builders between the church and the world. Our ministry is engaged in all sorts of creative
27 and specialized areas of ministry – serving both inside and outside the church walls. This year
28 we recognize 30 years since the establishment of the Order of Deacons at the 1996 General
29 Conference.

30 Deacons have been living into the call of compassion and justice ministries just as our
31 theme at the 2026 Annual Conference calls us “Unto the Least of These.” Deacons in North
32 Georgia live out Matthew 25 just as Jesus reminded his followers that God calls us to feed the
33 hungry, visit those incarcerated, and to care for the sick. In the same ways that Matthew 25:37-
34 40 calls disciples of Christ to serve, Deacons in The North Georgia Annual Conference live out
35 this calling in many different forms of ministry. Members of our Order serve in local churches as
36 associate pastors or as pastors-in-charge, as chaplains, as leaders in non-profit organizations, as
37 therapists, as attorneys, as teachers and professors in schools. If you can imagine the ministry,
38 there is likely a Deacon serving in the role ready to work alongside you.

39 Deacons are ready to step into ministry in all places, and we faithfully are committed to
40 being the bridge between your congregations and the world. We are called to meet people on the
41 margins of society and to welcome strangers with grace. As our church moves forward together
42 in developing innovative ways of sharing the gospel, our Deacons are poised to meet you where
43 you are just as we meet others there as well.
44

45 Montana Hamby, chair

46 montana.hamby@georgiaumc.net

***201.d. Order of Elders**

The Order of Elders continues to strive for excellence and effectiveness in ministry. We are committed to the divine call of Order, Service, Word, and Table. Last year we continued to follow Jesus Christ as we exhorted others to do the same. We embraced the role of continuing to be genuine witnesses to the glory of the triune God. It was a year full of competing voices and unfolding expressions of evil, power, and greed. The Order of Elders was intentional to remain focused on the mission of the church and not the subplots of the worldly agendas.

This past year the responsibilities of Order, Service, Word, and Table took on another level of meaning. Amid a changing socio-economic and political landscape there was a heightened need for each to be done in a more excellent way. In the landscape where chaos seemed to rule the day, the church needed to operate with divine order. As The Order of Elders, we held fast to the reality that there were those that did not want to see the church operate with order because outside agencies were not doing so. We maintained that we were to be the model and be the transformative agent in the world. Governmental Services and funds were frozen that had helped so many low-income families. We realized that the ministry of peace and justice were vital as we provided leadership that focused on our sisters and brothers that are the least of these. We focused on a more passionate narrative of the Good News of the Gospel and taught and proclaimed the Word of God with a sense of urgency. In a time when so many are being excluded and left out and devalued, we were intentional to say it loud that “all are welcomed at God’s table”. No one is to be excluded for any reason based on any classification or category.

In this time of Holy Conferencing the Order of Elders embraces this annual conference of 2026, and the theme of “Unto to the Least of These.” The widening gap of despair, disengagement, and destitution, demands that we respond as the people of God to help those hurting and struggling. We are called as Elders, Deacons, Local Church Pastors, Part Time Local Pastors, laity, and clergy to be the church that sees the invisible community. We are called to create the beloved community. This means we must see all the people and we must challenge the status quo as we provide care, nurture, and resources. The Johannine community requires that we see the hungry, the naked, sick, the incarcerated as people made in the image of Holy God. No more no less. We are to enhance their lives and bring glory to God.

The Order of Elders is also planning some upcoming district-wide events. We are looking at Friday evening events such as game night, Putt-Putt Golf, and others. Stay tuned for more information. The order of Elders believe that our connection is strengthened by times of fellowship. We continue to support times of retreat and renewal for all clergy. We exhort all clergy to seek prayer partners, and form accountability groups. We recognize that self-care is very essential to the soul.

Finally, I want to thank and affirm members of the executive team of the Order of Elders. Thanks to Will Zant, Debra Stewart, Ben Wills, Orlando Evans, Jennifer Wyatt, and Jason Zemke, for your servant leadership. It is an honor to serve with each of you.

I humbly submit this report on behalf of the Order of Elders, with humility and profound gratitude!!

M. Lavell Sanders,
Chairperson, The Order of Elders
lavell.sanders@georgiaumc.net

*202. Conference Communications Office

The Conference Communications Office is responsible for the internal and external communications for The North Georgia Conference. Developing and overseeing online content, sharing news and resources with church leadership and clergy, contributing to the planning and implementation of the Annual Conference session, managing media relationships, and taking part in special projects are all part of the work of conference communications.

No two years bring the same communications strategy or needs, but reliable, steady, and trustworthy information and resources are always essential. Using the conference website, e-newsletters, social media, and video, the communications office strives to inform, celebrate, and equip North Georgia United Methodists as they carry out the mission of the church. Over the past year, conference communications especially focused on the work to study and pursue unification alongside the South Georgia Conference.

Your conference communications office serves as a connection and information point for you and your congregation as you carry out the mission of the church.

Some of the key conference communications tools include:

- **The Conference website.** www.ngumc.org, is the digital headquarters for our conference. The website sees as many as 30,000 visitors each month. Whether you are reading news, registering for events, perusing classifieds, completing forms, or exploring resources, the intent of ngumc.org is to be a valuable connection point for United Methodists who are at work carrying out the mission of our church.
- **The Weekly Update e-newsletter.** The conference sends one key e-newsletter each week, the “Weekly Update,” that includes news, featured resources, and upcoming events relevant to clergy and church leaders. If you subscribe to one conference e-newsletter, make it “Weekly Update.” It’s your best steady connection to conference news.
- **Social media.** Social media is another avenue for connecting to information and inspiration from the North Georgia Conference. Thousands of North Georgia United Methodists are part of the community on Facebook (www.facebook.com/ngaumc), Instagram (@NGUMC), and Vimeo (vimeo.com/ngumc).

The conference communications office also relates to United Methodist Communications, our denomination’s communications agency. We recommend to you the resources provided by UMCOM, including the updated UMC Handbook, the MyCom newsletter and podcast, and the ResourceUMC.org website.

Early this year the Conference Communications Office bid farewell to longtime communications director, Sybil Davidson, as she took another communications position in our denomination. This spring, the North Georgia Conference welcomed its next director of communications, Meghan Walters.

*203. Conference Statistician

The Apostle Paul shared with the Corinthian Church these words: “Examine yourselves to see if you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Don’t you understand that Jesus Christ is in you? Unless, of course, you fail the test. But I hope that you will realize that we don’t fail the test. We pray to God that you don’t do anything wrong, not because we want to appear to pass the test but so that you might do the right thing, even if we appear to fail.”

1 Since November 2025, when the District Statisticians and I met to begin this important
2 process, these words have been before us. We have faithfully, as prescribed by the *Book of*
3 *Discipline*, examined ourselves to confirm we are being faithful and that Jesus Christ is with the
4 North Georgia Conference. There is no way, then, that we can fail the examination. Our work
5 has been done with great faith and hope in the power of the Holy Spirit, guiding all of us across
6 North Georgia to be the strongest and most loving people called United Methodist that we can be
7 for Christ. When we arrived at the end of these figures for the North Georgia Conference, we
8 knew without a shadow of a doubt that we were still with God and God is still with us. God has
9 blessed the North Georgia Conference in 2025. God continues to prune out the old and dead
10 wood, so that we will be a more vital community of faith known as The United Methodist
11 Church.

12 I invite you to study the End of Year Report and to understand that the excessive growth
13 North Georgia was used to is a legacy that we can build upon as we move from simply opening
14 the doors to intentional welcome and hospitality; personal invitation. Yes, our numbers are down
15 as we get a clearer picture of who we are after disaffiliation and in the current world situation.
16 Now, it will take each faithful United Methodist to witness and invite others to come and be
17 empowered by the Holy Spirit, love boldly, serve joyfully, and lead courageously in local
18 communities and worldwide connections. Invite them to be a part of a Church on the move for
19 Christ and His kingdom.

20
21 Churches

22 401 – down from 411 in 2024

23
24 Membership

25 196,836 – down from 203,358 in 2024

26
27 Average Worship Attendance

28 38,896 – down from 39,218 in 2024

29 Professions of Faith

30 1,031 – up from 982 in 2024

31
32 Baptisms

33 1,241 – up from 1,186 in 2024

34
35 While the numbers are lower in some categories and show growth in others, the work of
36 ministry is no less shared and offered in North Georgia. Those who remain are evangelists and
37 disciple makers, and we are grateful for their faithfulness to the mission of The United Methodist
38 Church. Let us not forget that each number, regardless of its direction, up or down, is a soul and
39 a child of God. We give thanks for each one and celebrate each one. The United Methodist
40 Church in North Georgia is still with God. God is doing a mighty work in and through us.

41 I owe a debt of gratitude to all my District Lead Statisticians and their teams: Stephanie
42 Hannah, Stacey Rushing, Richard Jarvis, Bryan Smith, and Betty Jean Bowers. These leaders
43 have worked with each local church and pastor in collecting the cleanest and clearest data to give
44 an honest report. I also must thank the District Administrative Assistants for their never-ending
45 support. I am also, as always, grateful to Michael Murphy McCarthy for his encouragement and
46 ability to make me keep on keeping on.

1 All statistical data from 2002 to 2025 can be found at www.ngumc.org/eoy and is always
2 available by church, district, and conference. A year-to-year comparison is also available.

3 With a grateful heart and a belief that God is with us, I am
4

5 Dana A. Everhart, Conference Statistician
6 dana.everhart@georgiaumc.net
7
8

9 ***204. North Georgia Conference Housing and Homeless Council**

10
11 According to the most recent data available from the Department of Housing and Urban
12 Development (HUD) an estimated 12,290 people experience homelessness on a given night in
13 the state of Georgia. It is widely acknowledged that this count, though large, misses many
14 unhoused individuals, such as those residing in extended stay hotels and families doubled-up in
15 single family dwellings. Despite challenges to public funding for low-income individuals in
16 2025 and the continued lack of affordable housing in all communities, we celebrate that faithful
17 United Methodists continue to provide needed help to bridge these gaps and serve neighbors in
18 need. This commitment is a powerful witness to our shared faith and our calling to love and
19 serve others.

20 The Housing and Homeless Council (HHC), an agency of the North Georgia Conference,
21 supports United Methodist congregations in their work to serve those who are experiencing
22 poverty and homelessness through education, advocacy, and the administration of capital and
23 operational grants. Our Council is made up of dedicated lay and clergy representatives from each
24 district, at-large members, and ex-officio representatives, who generously give of their gifts and
25 time to support and strengthen this work. We are deeply grateful for their leadership and faithful
26 service.

27 Twice a year, the Council awards grants to churches and their non-profit partners across
28 North Georgia that provide housing and other essential services to persons experiencing
29 homelessness and poverty. In 2025, the HHC awarded grants totaling \$100,400 to twenty-one
30 ministries in the North Georgia Conference. These capital and operational grants supported
31 diverse work in all five districts to address homelessness. We invite you to learn more about
32 these impactful ministries at www.nghhc.org/2025-grantees.

33 The Homeless Offering, collected annually on the 4th Sunday of February, is more than a
34 simple donation. It is an act of shared discipleship. One hundred percent of gifts given are
35 returned to local communities through HHC grants, offering critical support where it is most
36 needed. In 2025, \$74,593 was given by 73 local churches, a 26.5% increase from 2024. Though
37 the need for grant funding exceeded the total collected in the offering, the balance was made up
38 of funds from the endowment.

39 We are thankful to the earlier work of the North Georgia Conference to establish the
40 Housing Trust Fund, which is invested with the Georgia United Methodist Foundation. This
41 endowment allows the Housing and Homeless Council to cover all administrative expenses and
42 contributes to funds awarded through grants. The Housing Trust Fund ended the year with a
43 value of \$1,902,429.72. This strong financial foundation ensures the sustainability and growth of
44 this vital ministry.

45 The Housing and Homeless Council remains committed to the work that this annual
46 conference called us to over thirty years ago: “to make a significant and lasting contribution to

homeless persons, especially addressing the need for transitional and permanent housing.” To make the biggest impact, we must collectively across our conference, engage every local church and every community. In the year ahead, we look forward to expanding participation in this ministry as we share with more North Georgia United Methodists about the good work of the Housing and Homeless Council. Together, we can continue to respond faithfully and make a meaningful difference in the lives of our neighbors in need.

Respectfully submitted,
Stacey Rushing, Director
director@nghhc.org
Brian Hooker, Chair

204.a. Capital Grants 2025

Clifton Sanctuary Ministries, Inc.	\$10,000.00
Family Promise Hall County	\$10,000.00
Habitat for Humanity – Dekalb	\$5,000.00
Helping Hands of Paulding County	\$10,000.00
Impact 46, Inc.	\$10,000.00
Ivy and Roses Community Fund, Inc.	\$5,000.00
Rainbow Community Center	\$10,000.00
Rainbow Village, Inc.	\$10,000.00

Operational Grants 2025

Acworth UMC	\$2,500.00
Atlanta First UMC	\$1,500.00
The Extension, Inc.	\$2,500.00
Family Promise of New Rock	\$1,500.00
First UMC of Pine Mountain	\$2,500.00
Gateway Domestic Violence Center	\$2,500.00
Hart Interdenominational Ministry	\$2,500.00
Impact West Georgia	\$2,500.00
LifeTools Community Development Center/The Pantry	\$2,500.00
Morrow First UMC	\$2,500.00
Murphy-Harpst Evolve Center, Augusta	\$2,500.00
MUST Ministries, Inc.	\$2,500.00
Trinity UMC Atlanta	\$2,400.00

205. North Georgia Conference Board of Pension and Health Benefits

Pre-1982 Pension Plan

The Conference Board of Pension & Health Benefits (CBOPH) works closely with Wespath (formerly Wespath Benefits & Investments) to provide pensions, welfare plans, and health insurance. Since 1982, clergy pension and welfare plans have been denominational plans as directed by General Conference. Health insurance is provided at the discretion of the annual conferences.

The Pre-82 pension plan's 2026 annuity rate (Past Service Rate) is \$848 and is for clergypersons with years of service prior to 1982. For those clergy who have a pension benefit under the Pre-82 plan, the benefit is calculated by multiplying PSR times the number of years prior to 1982 for which the clergy person has service pension credit.

As of December 31, 2025, the Pre-82 plan remains fully funded. The funded status based on 2024 for 2026 contribution calculations is 131%. The projected funded status assuming no PSR increase for 2027 is projected to be 125%. Our target funded ratio is 1.10%.

The CBOPH elected to stay the PSR at \$848 in 2027 due to Wespath's recent decision to pool or combine each Conference's Pre-82 assets into a single denominational fund. Each conference will determine a final PSR, PSR Increase Rate, and Contingent Annuitant % in 2027 that will begin 1/1/2028. The funding target for each conference will be 95% of market liability and all final contributions can be made immediately or via a 7-year plan. This will eliminate the annual adoption agreement process, the need for further actuarial reports, and will de-risk the funding liability for Pre-82.

The Compass Retirement Plan

Active and retired clergy may be covered by Compass, the Clergy Retirement Security Plan (CRSP), the Ministerial Pension Plan (MPP), and/or the Pre-82 plan, depending on when their service in the pastorate occurred.

As a result of action at the 2024 General Conference, a new denominational pension plan, Compass, began this year on January 1st and the previous denominational pension plan CRSP, closed at the end of 2025. Under the Compass plan, the North Georgia Conference (NGC) elects to cover all clergy appointed half time or greater. Any local church with a clergy person employed at half time or greater will be required to contribute 7% of a clergy's salary to the plan. In addition, they will contribute a flat dollar amount of \$150 a month (this is pro-rated for $\frac{3}{4}$ & $\frac{1}{2}$ time clergy) which will increase by 3% every year in \$5 increments. For 2026, the annual amount of the flat dollar amount will be \$1,800. Churches or employers with clergy covered by this plan will be direct billed monthly by the NGC for the cost of this plan. Part-time local clergy (PL) will have the option to opt out by signing a waiver form.

All newly enrolled clergy are auto-enrolled at 4% with a 1% auto-escalation every January 1, capping at 10%. Clergy have the option of changing their election or opting out of auto-escalation at any time, however it is strongly encouraged by the CBOPH and the Benefits Office that all clergy elect at least 4% so as to optimize the match by their church, unless they are using the school loan provision to match their 4%.

The United Methodist Pension Plan

The United Methodist Pension Investment Plan (UMPIP) continues to be available to conference lay employees and part-time local pastors who are at ¼ time. As of July 1, 2025, clergy are no longer auto-enrolled in UMPIP and will need to opt-in to the program.

Health Insurance Program Healthflex

For active full-time clergy, the NGC mandates participation in the HealthFlex Exchange offered by Wespath. In 2027, this exchange will consist of four medical/pharmacy plans, most of which include a health savings account (HSA) or health reimbursement account (HRA) to help offset out-of-pocket expenses; three dental plans; and three vision plans; Medical Reimbursement Accounts; and Dependent Care Accounts. Wespath provides robust wellness initiatives, including a comprehensive Employee Assistance Program (EAP) that provides counseling services and work/life services to help balance work and personal responsibilities. Wespath has eliminated two of their medical plans, H2500 & C3000. **If clergy & lay members are currently enrolled in either of those plans in 2026 and they do not elect a new plan during annual enrollment for 2027, all participants in the H2500 plan will be moved to the H2000 plan and those in the C3000 plan will be moved to the C2000 plan.**

In a group policy, the cost of premiums is directly related to prior claims experience. The premium increase in 2027 (23%) is higher than in 2026 (11%) due to an unfavorable claims experience of 143% in 2025 (meaning for every \$1.00 paid in premiums, the insurance claims averaged \$1.43). Due to this increase we are recommending increases to the pre-tax employee cost of each plan as shown in 2026 Recommendations by the North Georgia Conference Board of Pensions and Health Benefits. The recommendations also reflect an increase in the amount billed to the churches for the clergy health benefits, bringing the total per clergy participant at each church to \$1,600/month. Active health coverage is direct billed to churches monthly.

As we have in previous years, we will be redeploying funds from the accumulated health plan reserves to help keep the costs of insurance down for both our churches and participants. The total projected cost to reserves will be \$2,057,652 with \$845,082 coming from North Georgia's reserves and \$1,212,918 coming from South Georgia's reserves. The split in cost to reserves is based on the proportional loss ratio in each Conference.

HRA Retiree Benefit Via Benefits

The following categories of individuals are eligible to participate in the Via Benefits Plan:

1. **Retired Clergyperson.** For this purpose, "Retired" means clergy in good standing who have been granted retired status with at least ten years of service in the North Georgia Conference.
2. **Retired Lay Employee of the North Georgia Conference Office.** For this purpose, "Retired" means lay employees in good standing who have retired from the Conference Office with at least ten years of service in the North Georgia Conference.
3. **Spouse or Dependent of Clergy who retired prior to 12/31/2021.** The Spouse or Dependent must be eligible for Medicare due to age and/or disability.

1 However, to become and remain a Participant, an eligible individual must be enrolled in
2 Medicare Part A & B, as well as a Medicare Supplement or Advantage Plan with Via Benefits.
3 Accordingly, this benefit is not a vested benefit. The total amount that the clergy person would
4 receive is a vested amount based on years of service, but the right to the benefit is not vested.
5 Individuals who opt out of Social Security and are not eligible for Medicare are not eligible for
6 Via Benefits and as such will not receive the retiree HRA.

7 Beginning 1/1/2019 North GA clergy appointed to another Annual Conference under
8 2016 BOD paragraph 346.1 are eligible, upon retirement, to participate in NGC Via Benefits
9 HRA using only service years accrued in appointments to North GA churches,
10 district/conference offices, and/or North GA related agencies as noted by Statements of
11 Relationship in North GA Journal. This exception eliminates, for clergy in this specific situation,
12 the “5-year coverage immediately prior to retirement” rule but limits service year consideration
13 for HRA amount to those years spent in North GA. Beginning 7/1/2020 for clergy ordained in
14 another Annual Conference who subsequently transfer into the North Georgia Conference, the
15 funding amounts for participating in the ViaBenefits program for these clergy will be solely
16 predicated on their number of years’ service while appointed to: UM churches, District Offices,
17 or UM Center ministries in the North Georgia Episcopal area, and/or agencies related to the
18 North Georgia Conference as specified by formal Statements of Relationship published in the
19 Annual Conference Journal.

20 If a clergyperson *who has already retired and started receiving HRA* contributions under
21 the Plan surrenders his/her United Methodist Church credentials, the clergyperson will lose
22 eligibility for future HRA contributions. If the withdrawing clergy person has a balance in their
23 HRA, the balance will remain until expended. If a clergyperson *who has not yet retired and, as*
24 *such, has not started receiving HRA contributions under the Plan* surrenders his/her United
25 Methodist Church credentials, the clergyperson will lose eligibility for future HRA contributions.

26 Retirees and their dependents who retired prior to 2005 will receive 100% funding of the
27 HRA. For 2027, the CBOPH approved a 10% increase over the 2026 rates for all retirees and
28 their dependents who retired after 1/1/2005. They will receive a graduated funding of the HRA
29 based upon years of service:
30

<u>Years of Service</u>	<u>Tier</u>	<u>2026 Rate</u>	<u>2027 Rate</u>
35+ years	100%	\$3,600	\$3,960
25-34	80%	\$2,880	\$3,168
15-24	60%	\$2,160	\$2,376
10-14	40%	\$1,440	\$1,584

36
37 HRA contributions and benefits are *not* vested, which means that they are not guaranteed
38 to continue and there is no contractual right to receive HRA contributions or benefits. The North
39 Georgia Conference reserves the right to stop or decrease contributions to or benefits from an
40 HRA at any time.

41 A Participant may carryover all of their unused HRA balance from one calendar year to
42 the next.

43 If a Participant divorces, any HRA contributions to the Participant’s former Spouse will
44 terminate effective on the date of the divorce.

45 If a Participant is rehired by the North Georgia UMC to active employment status after
46 retirement, HRA contributions will be paused such that no new contributions and no

1 reimbursements for Eligible Medical Care Expenses incurred during the return to service can be
2 made.

3 If a Claim is denied by Via Benefits, the Claimant may submit a written appeal to North
4 Georgia Conference requesting a review of the decision. The written appeal must be submitted to
5 benefits@ngumc.org within 60 days of the Claimant receiving the initial Claim denial. The
6 written appeal should clearly state the reason or reasons why the Claimant disagrees with Via
7 Benefits' decision. The Claimant may submit written comments, documents, records, and other
8 information relating to the Claim even if such information was not submitted in connection with
9 the initial Claim for eligibility. Additionally, upon request and free of charge, the Claimant may
10 have reasonable access and copies of all Plan documents, records, and other information relevant
11 to the Claim.

12 The North Georgia Conference will generally decide an appeal within 60 days. If special
13 circumstances require an extension of time for reviewing the Claim, the Claimant will be notified
14 in writing. The notice will be provided prior to the commencement of the extension, describe the
15 special circumstances requiring the extension and set forth the date the Plan Sponsor will decide
16 the appeal, which date will be no later than 60 days from the end of the first 60 day period. If the
17 Claim on appeal is denied in whole or in part, the Claimant will receive a written notification of
18 the denial. The notice will include the specific reason(s) for the denial.

19 The North Georgia Conference reserves the right to amend, modify, or terminate the
20 policies described in this document in any manner, for any reason permitted by law, at any time
21 and without prior notification by means of a Conference Board of Pension and Health Benefits
22 vote.

23 **Comprehensive Protection Plan**

24
25
26 As a result of action at the 2016 General Conference, ordained clergy appointed at $\frac{3}{4}$ time
27 or greater are covered by the Comprehensive Protection Plan (CPP), the denominational welfare
28 plan, which provides both disability coverage and death benefits. Churches or employers with
29 clergy covered by these plans are direct billed monthly by the NGC for the cost of these plans.
30 Beginning January 1 of this year, the North Georgia Conference began offering CPP to Part-time
31 Local Pastors who serve at $\frac{3}{4}$ time and CPP will also be paid for those on Medical Leave.

32 The cost of clergy on medical leave with disability benefits remains steady, as reflected
33 in the budgets for disability premiums. We have 8 clergy receiving CPP benefits as of December
34 31, 2025. The CPP plan pays 70% of plan compensation plus Compass pension contributions.
35 The conference pays for the medical plan.

36 Beginning 7/1/2024, the NGC resumed offering Sub-Adoption Agreements to the Local
37 Church in order to offer denominational benefits for their lay employees. The Conference will
38 require that all churches that enter into a new agreement be current on their benefit and
39 apportionment payments. The agreement requires that 75% of eligible employees (full time/at
40 least 30 hours) be enrolled in a HealthFlex plan. The Benefits Office will do an annual check-in
41 with the local church who hold sub-adoption agreements to review policies, re-confirm that 75%
42 of eligible employees are enrolled, and assess benefit and apportionment payments.

43 Please review the Comprehensive Benefits Funding Plan that follows.

44 Elizabeth Schroeder, Chair
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**205.a. 2026 Recommendations of the
North Georgia Conference Board of Pensions and Health Benefits**

Recurring:

1. That the 2026 annuity rate for each year of service rendered by our clergypersons prior to 1982 (aka the Past Service Rate) be set at \$848.
2. That the Annual Conference approves the 2027 Comprehensive Funding Plan recommended by the Board of Pensions and Health Benefits.
3. That the Compass Pension Plan Adoption Agreement with the Wespath (formerly Wespath Benefits & Investments) will cover clergy appointed ½ time or greater. Churches will be billed at 7% of the clergy's salary, plus \$1800 annually. Clergy will be automatically enrolled at 4% with a 1% annual auto escalation, that will cap at 10%.
4. That the Comprehensive Protection Plan (CPP) Adoption Agreement with Wespath cover part-time local pastors at ¾ time as well as Provisionals, Elders in Full Connection, and Fulltime Local Pastors that are on Medical Leave, for 2026.
5. That the \$10,000 benefit payment for the death of full-time active clergy covered by CPP remain in effect for 2027.
6. That the Annual Conference approves the Resolutions Relating to Rental/Housing Allowances for Retired, Disabled, or Former Clergypersons of the North Georgia Annual Conference
7. That the Annual Conference continues to offer the HRA stipend to retired clergy and retired lay employees of the North Georgia Annual Conference as outlined in the supplemental policy for the Medicare Marketplace & HRA Program.
8. That the Benefits Office continue offering Sub-Adoption Agreements to the Local Church for their lay employees if their benefits and apportionment payments are current.
9. That UMPIP will be available for Lay Employees and Part-time Local Pastors who opt into the program.

New for 2027:

1. That all participant premiums for the HealthFlex private exchange health insurance program be established as follows:

2027 Pre-tax Employee HealthFlex Rates					
	B1000/Year	B1000/Month	C2000/Year	C2000/Month	
Single	\$ 4,164.00	\$ 347.00	\$ 2,772.00	\$ 231.00	
2-party	\$ 9,288.00	\$ 774.00	\$ 6,648.00	\$ 554.00	
Family	\$ 12,708.00	\$ 1,059.00	\$ 9,096.00	\$ 758.00	

	H2000/Year	H2000/Month	H5000/Year	H5000/Month	
Single	\$ 2,184.00	\$ 182.00	\$ (708.00)	\$ (59.00)	
2-party	\$ 5,520.00	\$ 460.00	\$ 36.00	\$ 3.00	
Family	\$ 7,548.00	\$ 629.00	\$ 48.00	\$ 4.00	

Optional Dental & Vision Plans - Monthly Rates					
	Dental			Vision	
	PPO 2000	PPO	HMO	VSP	VSP Premier
Single	\$ 61.00	\$ 50.00	\$ 18.00	\$ 9.00	\$ 15.00
2-party	\$ 122.00	\$ 100.00	\$ 32.00	\$ 14.00	\$ 25.00
Family	\$ 183.00	\$ 150.00	\$ 56.00	\$ 22.00	\$ 40.00

The excess premium credit for H5000 single coverage will be applied first to dental and/or vision rates and then any remaining amount will be deposited into an HSA for any participant who chooses that plan.

2. That the amounts billed to churches for clergy health insurance be increased to a flat rate of \$1,600 per month. Churches who provide health insurance for their lay staff through the Conference plan will be billed \$1,304/month for single plans, \$2,363/month for two-party plans, and \$3,234/month for family plans.

3. That the 2027 annuity rate for each year of service rendered by our clergypersons prior to 1982 (aka the Past Service Rate) remains at \$848.

4. That the HRA stipend offered to retired clergy and retired lay staff of the North Georgia Annual Conference be increased across all tiers by 10%.

<u>Years of Service</u>	<u>Tier</u>	<u>2026 Rate</u>	<u>2027 Rate</u>
35+ years	100%	\$3,600	\$3,960
25-34	80%	\$2,880	\$3,168
15-24	60%	\$2,160	\$2,376
10-14	40%	\$1,440	\$1,584

206. Comprehensive Benefit Funding Plan
North Georgia Conference (711)
2027 Comprehensive Benefit Funding Plan

This funding plan incorporates, to the best of our understanding, the plan sponsor's obligations and funding of the benefits provided to clergy and laity, as noted below.

It is understood by the signees that defined benefit plan liabilities [Pre-82 Plan, Ministerial Pension Plan (MPP) and Clergy Retirement Security Program Defined Benefit (CRSP DB) and other sponsored defined benefit plans] continue until the last benefit is paid to participants and their surviving spouses irrespective of the funding level of the plan. That is, even if the assets in the plan are larger than the liabilities in the plan, the plan sponsor still has a liability (obligation) and potential future contribution due to the plan.

Benefit Obligations Summary

Plan Contributions for 2027

Clergy Retirement Security Program (CRSP) DB	\$0
Clergy Retirement Security Program (CRSP) DC	\$0
Ministerial Pension Plan (MPP)	\$0
Pre-82 Plan (Pre-82)	\$0
United Methodist Personal Investment Plan (UMPIP) Lay	\$82,487
United Methodist Personal Investment Plan (UMPIP) Clergy	\$33,402
Other Defined Contribution (DC) Obligations	\$2,643,599
Other Defined Benefit (DB) Obligations	\$0
Health—Active Participants	\$8,907,693
Health—Additional Sponsored Coverage	\$244,763
Post-Retirement Medical (PRM)	\$1,733,823
Comprehensive Protection Plan (CPP)	\$827,141

Ongoing Funding Contributions

Pre-82 Plan (Pre-82)	\$0
Post-Retirement Medical (PRM)	\$0

North Georgia Conference (711) 2027 Comprehensive Benefit Funding Plan

Conference Benefit Officer (or equivalent)	Angela Odegard	05/07/2026
Conference Treasurer	Allison Berg	05/08/2026
Conference Board of Pension Chair	Elizabeth Schroeder	05/17/2026
Council on Finance and Administration Chair		



Opinion on **North Georgia Conference 2027** Comprehensive Benefit Funding Plan

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

Wespath Benefits and Investments

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

North Georgia Conference (711) 2027 Comprehensive Benefit Funding Plan

Accounts

Wespath Accounts		Market Value as of 12/31/2024	Market Value as of 12/31/2025	
CURRENT/ACTIVE BENEFITS RES		\$4,727,698	\$5,715,142	
Pre-82 designated assets	\$0	Investment Objective	Intermediate-term	
PRM designated assets	\$0	Actual Allocation	Equity	65.00%
			Fixed	35.00%
			Short-term	0.00%
NORTH GEORGIA SUPERANNUATE		\$81,915	\$107,247	
Pre-82 designated assets	\$0	Investment Objective	Long-term	
PRM designated assets	\$0	Actual Allocation	Equity	65.00%
			Fixed	35.00%
			Short-term	0.00%
OUT OF PLAN CRSP AND MPP		\$28,474,365	\$32,971,139	
Pre-82 designated assets	\$0	Investment Objective	Intermediate-term	
PRM designated assets	\$0	Actual Allocation	Equity	65.00%
			Fixed	35.00%
			Short-term	0.00%
OUT OF PLAN PRE-1982		\$428,864	\$493,944	
Pre-82 designated assets	\$0	Investment Objective	Intermediate-term	
PRM designated assets	\$0	Actual Allocation	Equity	65.00%
			Fixed	35.00%
			Short-term	0.00%
\$ RETIREE HRA PLAN RESERVE		\$19,431,501	\$22,217,369	
Pre-82 designated assets	\$0	Investment Objective	Long-term	
PRM designated assets	\$20,981,041	Actual Allocation	Equity	65.00%
			Fixed	35.00%
			Short-term	0.00%

North Georgia Conference (711)

2027 Comprehensive Benefit Funding Plan

Non-Wespath Accounts		Market Value as of 12/31/2024	Market Value as of 12/31/2025	
\$	GUMF Retiree Medical	\$23,395,756	\$26,309,536	
	Pre-82 designated assets	\$0	Investment Objective	Long-term
	PRM designated assets	\$21,546,216	Actual Allocation	Equity 75.00%
				Fixed 25.00%
				Short-term 0.00%
\$	A portion of this account has been designated as plan assets. The allocated amounts will be shown separately on the Allocation screen and will not be included in the Market Value for this account.			

North Georgia Conference (711) 2027 Comprehensive Benefit Funding Plan

Incoming Money

Primary Sources

Estimated amount for 2027

Apportionments	\$2,027,366

Annual Apportionment	\$2,134,069

x Expected Collection Percentage	95.00%

Direct Billing

Refer to the following "Allocate Funding Sources" pages for actual amounts allocated from the above funding sources.

North Georgia Conference (711) 2027 Comprehensive Benefit Funding Plan

Allocate Funding Sources to Benefit Obligations

Funding Sources		Current/Active Benefits Res	North Georgia Superannuate	Out Of Plan Crsp And Mpp	Out Of Plan Pre-1982	Retiree Hra Plan Reserve
Available Balance		\$5,715,142	\$107,247	\$32,971,139	\$493,944	\$1,236,328
Total Allocated		\$102,268	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Remaining Balance		\$5,612,874	\$107,247	\$32,971,139	\$493,944	\$1,236,328
Plan Contributions for 2027						
CRSP DB						
CRSP DC						
MPP						
Pre-82						
UMPIP Lay	\$82,487	\$82,487				
UMPIP Clergy	\$33,402					
\$10,000 Death Benefit for active participants in C	\$35,000					
Compass Retirement Plan	\$2,575,038					
MetLife Death Benefit	\$19,781	\$19,781				
UNUM Lay LTD	\$13,780					
Health Active	\$8,907,693					
Health Additional	\$244,763					
Post-Retirement Medical	\$1,733,823					
CPP	\$827,141					
Ongoing Funding Contributions						
Pre-82						
Post-Retirement Medical	\$0					

North Georgia Conference (711)

2027 Comprehensive Benefit Funding Plan

Allocate Funding Sources to Benefit Obligations

Funding Sources		Gumf Retiree Medical	Apportionments	Direct Billing	Pre-82 Surplus	Prm In-Plan & Outside Assets
Available Balance		\$4,763,320	\$2,027,366		\$4,174,487	\$42,527,257
Total Allocated		\$0	\$2,027,366	\$12,343,274	\$0	\$0
Remaining Balance		\$4,763,320	\$0		\$4,174,487	\$42,527,257
Plan Contributions for 2027						
CRSP DB						
CRSP DC						
MPP						
Pre-82						
UMPIP Lay	\$82,487					
UMPIP Clergy	\$33,402			\$33,402		
\$10,000 Death Benefit for active participants in C	\$35,000		\$35,000			
Compass Retirement Plan	\$2,575,038			\$2,575,038		
MetLife Death Benefit	\$19,781					
UNUM Lay LTD	\$13,780		\$13,780			
Health Active	\$8,907,693			\$8,907,693		
Health Additional	\$244,763		\$244,763			
Post-Retirement Medical	\$1,733,823		\$1,733,823			
CPP	\$827,141			\$827,141		
Ongoing Funding Contributions						
Pre-82						
Post-Retirement Medical	\$0					

North Georgia Conference (711) 2027 Comprehensive Benefit Funding Plan

Plan Contributions for 2027		Funding Needed
CRSP DB		\$0
CRSP DC		\$0
MPP		\$0
Pre-82		\$0
UMPIP Lay	\$82,487	\$0
UMPIP Clergy	\$33,402	\$0
MetLife Death Benefit	\$19,781	\$0
Compass Retirement Plan	\$2,575,038	\$0
\$10,000 Death Benefit for active participants in C	\$35,000	\$0
UNUM Lay LTD	\$13,780	\$0
Health Active	\$8,907,693	\$0
Health Additional	\$244,763	\$0
Post-Retirement Medical	\$1,733,823	\$0
CPP	\$827,141	\$0

Ongoing Funding Contribution for 2027		Funding Needed
Pre-82		
Post-Retirement Medical	\$0	\$0

North Georgia Conference (711)

2027 Comprehensive Benefit Funding Plan

Clergy Retirement Security Program (CRSP)

Plan Overview: The Clergy Retirement Security Program (CRSP) is an Internal Revenue Code section 403(b) retirement program providing lifetime income and account flexibility designed for those who serve as clergy of The United Methodist Church. The plan is designed to provide participants with one portion of their overall retirement benefits. CRSP replaced the Ministerial Pension Plan (MPP) effective January 1, 2007.

CRSP consists of two components:

- A defined benefit (DB) plan--provides a monthly benefit at retirement based upon years of credited service to the Church
- A defined contribution (DC) plan--provides a retirement account balance established and funded by the annual conferences

Elections and Estimates

	Final
Eligibility requirement	50%+
Conference Full Time Equivalents (FTE)	0.00
CRSP Defined Benefit (DB)	
Required contribution for 2027	\$0
CRSP Defined Contribution (DC)	
Expected average future annual increases	0.00%
Estimated contribution for 2027	\$0

CRSP DB Denominational Information as of 1/1/2025

Total plan liability	\$(2,949,957,940)
Total plan assets	\$2,631,802,091
Total plan funded status	\$-318,155,849
Total plan funded ratio	89%
Plan sponsor's liability percentage	2.7492%

North Georgia Conference (711) 2027 Comprehensive Benefit Funding Plan

Key Actuarial Assumptions Used in CRSP DB Cost Calculations

Discount rate	5.50%
Future Denominational Average Compensation (DAC) increases	2.00%
COLA increases for actives	2.00%
Mortality	Pri-2012 TQ Adj, generational projection using MP2020

Calculated values are based upon the assumptions and methods documented in the actuarial valuation report issued in September, 2025.

North Georgia Conference (711)

2027 Comprehensive Benefit Funding Plan

Ministerial Pension Plan (MPP)

Plan Overview: Supplement Three to the Clergy Retirement Security Program (CRSP), also known as the Ministerial Pension Plan (MPP) provides clergy with a pension benefit for their years of ministry with The United Methodist Church from 1982 through 2006. MPP is an Internal Revenue Code section 403(b) retirement plan. MPP requires that exactly 65% of the account balance must be annuitized when it is to be distributed. The remainder may be rolled over to UMPIP, another qualified plan or an IRA, or paid in a lump sum.

Elections and Estimates

	Final
Required contributions for 2027	\$0

MPP Denominational Annuities Information as of 1/1/2025

Total MPP annuities liability	\$(4,052,570,651)
Total plan assets	\$4,319,544,633
Total plan funded status	\$266,973,982
Total plan funded ratio	107%
Plan sponsor's liability percentage	2.2134%

Future MPP Denominational Annuitants Information as of 1/1/2025

Total participant account balances	\$1,782,782,771
Plan sponsor's participant account balances	\$50,262,523

Key Actuarial Assumptions Used in MPP Annuities Cost Calculations

Discount rate	5.35%
Benefit increases	Based on increases selected by participant
Mortality	Pri-2012 TQ Adj, generational projection using MP2020

Calculated values are based upon the assumptions and methods documented in the actuarial valuation report issued in September, 2025.

North Georgia Conference (711)

2027 Comprehensive Benefit Funding Plan

Pre-82 Plan (Pre-82)

Plan Overview: Supplement One to the Clergy Retirement Security Program (CRSP), also known as the Pre-82 Plan, provides clergy with a pension benefit for their years of ministry with The United Methodist Church prior to 1982. The Pre-82 Plan was replaced by MPP effective January 1, 1982. If a clergyperson retires within the conference (and does not terminate), the minimum benefit payable is based on two factors:

- 1) Years of service with pension credit--approved by each conference on the recommendation of the Conference Board of Pensions (CBOP) in accordance with plan provisions and The Book of Discipline.
- 2) The conference pension rate (past service rate)--the dollar amount chosen by the conference as the amount payable for each approved year of service with pension credit (may change from year to year).

The number of years of service with pension credit is multiplied by the PSR, and the product is the minimum annual benefit payable to those clergy eligible for Pre-82 Plan benefits. In certain situations, the benefit received from the Pre-82 plan may vary based on the applicability of what is referred to as Defined Benefit Service Money (DBSM), which is the defined contribution feature of the Pre-1982 Plan. At the time that a participant retires, the DBSM account is converted to a life-based benefit. At that point, the clergy's benefit is the greater of the PSR benefit or DBSM benefit. If the conference increases the PSR, the clergy's benefit is recalculated; however the DBSM-based benefit does not change.

Elections and Estimates

	Final
Past Service Rate (PSR)	848
Estimated PSR cost-of-living increase	2.00%
Contingent Annuitant Percentage (CA%)	75 %
Discount rate	6.0000%
Minimum contribution for 2027	\$0
Advanced funding contribution for 2027 payable in 2026	\$0

Rationale for each change

BOP voted not to increase the PSR by 2% for 2027.

North Georgia Conference (711) 2027 Comprehensive Benefit Funding Plan

Funding Plan Contribution

Funding plan liability as of 1/1/2025	\$(25,933,956)
Total of in-plan and outside assets	\$32,346,703
Funded status	\$6,412,747
Funded ratio	125%
Funded status projection as of 12/31/2026	\$5,035,532
Proposed ongoing funding contribution for 2027	\$0

Funding strategy

No funding contribution needed for 2027.

Pre-82 Denominational information as of 1/1/2025

Total plan liability	\$(1,318,896,811)
Total plan assets	\$1,564,956,823
Total plan funded status	\$246,060,012
Total plan funded ratio	119%

Calculated values are based upon the assumptions and methods documented in the actuarial valuation report issued in September, 2025.

North Georgia Conference (711) 2027 Comprehensive Benefit Funding Plan

Health—Active Participants

Elections and Estimates

	Final
Health plan offered to actives	Self-Funded - HealthFlex
Actual annual plan benefit cost paid in 2025	\$6,583,661
Budgeted annual plan benefit cost for 2026	\$7,242,027
Projected annual plan benefit cost for 2027	\$8,907,693
Expected average future annual increases	23.00%

Rationale for each change

Based on 2027 rate increase.

North Georgia Conference (711)

2027 Comprehensive Benefit Funding Plan

Health—Additional Sponsored Coverage

Categories of participants who are provided health benefit coverage during periods of non-employment. Without plan sponsor-funded premiums, these participants would not be provided coverage or benefits.

- ☒ Clergy or lay on disability (including pending disability)

☒ Surviving spouses or children of deceased active participants

☒ Clergy or lay on leaves of absence

☒ Medical Leave

Coverage Obligations

Covered Category	Estimated obligation as of 12/31/2024	Estimated obligation as of 12/31/2025
Clergy or lay on disability (including pending disability)	\$931,104	\$767,520
Surviving spouses or children of deceased active participants	\$67,416	\$64,860
Clergy or lay on leaves of absence	\$0	\$0
Medical Leave	\$0	\$0
Total	\$998,520	\$832,380

Annual cost calculation

The following calculations are not a present value of future costs.

Total estimated obligation as of 12/31/2025		\$832,380
Average number of years of remaining coverage	÷	5.1450
Estimated annual cost as of 12/31/2025	=	\$161,784
Expected average future annual increases	x	23.00%
Projected annual cost as of 12/31/2027	=	\$244,763

North Georgia Conference (711) 2027 Comprehensive Benefit Funding Plan

Post-Retirement Medical (PRM)

Valuation

The most recent actuarial valuation was provided by Willis Towers Watson as of 01/01/2026.
Per *The Book of Discipline*, your next PRM biennial actuarial valuation is required as of 01/01/2028.

PRM Actuarial Valuation as of 01/01/2026

Valuation report (in-plan) assets	\$0
EPBO net plan sponsor cost	\$24,071,782
APBO net plan sponsor cost	\$20,981,041
Service cost net plan sponsor cost	\$297,415
Annual plan benefit cost	\$1,708,200
Intention regarding PRM	Retain current plan benefit

Participant counts by category	
Active participants	376
Active dependents	259
Retirees	308
Surviving spouses	93
Dependents of retired participants	145
Total participants	1,181

Key actuarial assumptions	
Census date	01/01/2025
Discount rate	5.20%
Expected return on assets	0.00%
Valuation year medical trend or inflation rate	7.50%
Ultimate medical trend or inflation rate	5.00%
Fiscal year for ultimate medical trend	2036

North Georgia Conference (711) 2027 Comprehensive Benefit Funding Plan

Elections and Estimates

Description of Benefit

HRA

	Final
Health plan benefit offered to retirees	Via Benefits
Expected average future annual increases	1.50%
Projected annual plan benefit cost as of 2027	\$1,733,823

Rationale for each change

Didn't mean to change the percentage; changed it back.

Funding Plan Contribution

The following calculations are not a present value of future costs.

Net PRM assets		\$42,527,257
APBO net plan sponsor cost	-	\$20,981,041
Funded status	=	\$21,546,216
Portion of funded status payable (\$0 if Funded status ≥ \$0)		\$0
Funding plan service cost (\$0 if Net PRM assets ≥ EPBO)	+	\$0
Ongoing funding contribution for 2027	=	\$0

Rationale for each change

Lowered previous amount from GUMF Retiree Medical account.

North Georgia Conference (711) 2027 Comprehensive Benefit Funding Plan

Comprehensive Protection Plan (CPP)

Plan Overview: The Comprehensive Protection Plan (CPP) provides death, long-term disability and other welfare benefits for eligible clergy of The United Methodist Church and their families. It is an Internal Revenue Code 414(e) “church plan” funded by plan sponsor insurance premiums. Generally, clergy are eligible to participate in CPP if they satisfy the eligibility requirements, including full-time appointment with plan compensation of at least 25% of the Denominational Average Compensation (DAC). Plan sponsors may elect to cover participants with three-quarter time appointments and/or to continue to cover clergy who, due to certain leaves or appointments, are not otherwise eligible to continue coverage.

The CPP adoption agreement executed by the NORTH GEORGIA contains its elections to cover or not to cover categories mentioned above.

Elections and Estimates

	Final
Expected average future annual increases	1.60%
Estimated premium for 2027	\$827,141

Rationale for each change

Annualized December 2025 amount and rolled forward 2 years.

North Georgia Conference (711) 2027 Comprehensive Benefit Funding Plan

United Methodist Personal Investment Plan (UMPIP)

Plan Overview: The United Methodist Personal Investment Plan (UMPIP) is an Internal Revenue Code section 403(b) defined contribution retirement savings plan for clergy and lay employees of The United Methodist Church and affiliated organizations. Participants may make before-tax, Roth and/or after-tax contributions through payroll deductions. Participant contributions, various optional plan sponsor contributions and investment earnings comprise the individual's retirement account balance.

United Methodist Personal Investment Plan (UMPIP) Lay

Elections and Estimates

	Final
Expected average future annual increases	3.00%
Estimated contribution for 2027	\$82,487

Rationale for each change

Reduction in staff in 2026

United Methodist Personal Investment Plan (UMPIP) Clergy

Elections and Estimates

	Final
Expected average future annual increases	0.00%
Estimated contribution for 2027	\$33,402

Rationale for each change

Annualized March 2026 invoice for .25 time clergy that are still contributing to UMPIP.

North Georgia Conference (711) 2027 Comprehensive Benefit Funding Plan

Other Defined Contribution (DC) Obligations

Name	Estimated annual contribution
\$10,000 Death Benefit for active participants in C	\$35,000

Description

\$10,000 Death Benefit for active participants in CPP

	Final
Expected average future annual increases	0.00%
Estimated contribution for 2027	\$35,000

Name	Estimated annual contribution
Compass Retirement Plan	\$2,575,038

Description

Compass Retirement Plan (UMC contributions: 3%, Flat Dollar & Employer Match)

	Final
Expected average future annual increases	1.50%
Estimated contribution for 2027	\$2,575,038

Rationale for each change

Annualized March 2026 Contribution Remittance

Name	Estimated annual contribution
MetLife Death Benefit	\$19,781

Description

MetLife Death Benefit

	Final
Expected average future annual increases	0.00%
Estimated contribution for 2027	\$19,781

Rationale for each change

Based on renewal rates from Metlife

North Georgia Conference (711)

2027 Comprehensive Benefit Funding Plan

Name	Estimated annual contribution
UNUM Lay LTD	\$13,780

Description
UNUM Lay LTD

	Final
Expected average future annual increases	5.00%
Estimated contribution for 2027	\$13,780

Rationale for each change
Staff reduction in 2026

207. Commission on Equitable Compensation Guidelines

207.a. Summary Report – 2027 Commission on Equitable Compensation

The Commission on Equitable Compensation (CEC) is composed of laity and clergy representing each district, the Cabinet, and Conference staff. Our purpose is to recommend standards, provide resources, and offer accountability for ensuring our pastors are compensated fairly and treated with dignity. Our goal is that churches and clergy may work together with a common and affirmed expectation of pastoral support.

In addition to recommending minimum compensation and housing guidelines for pastors, the commission provides grants for assistance in funding full-time clergy in churches that are experiencing financial difficulties. The commission also supports district superintendents as they identify missional churches which provide either a unique ministry or a United Methodist presence otherwise lacking in a community. The intent of these direct grants is to be a short-term solution and not long-term support.

The commission also monitors and identifies churches that are in arrearage for their pastor's pension and insurance premiums due to less than full payment for periods of three months and greater. These arrearages constitute "unintended" grants, as the conference covers the cost of unpaid pension and insurance premiums to prevent a lapse in benefits for the pastor; however, benefits arrearages remain an ongoing liability for the church. The CEC reminds churches to prioritize paying clergy benefits before submitting apportionment payments. Benefits arrearages accrue, with the balances carried over into the next year.

As we look toward 2027 and the possible unification of the two conferences in the Georgia Episcopal Area, the CEC is recommending maintaining the current levels of minimum compensation for 2027. Both conferences currently have the same minimum compensation levels. Should both conferences choose to move forward with unification, the aligned baseline amounts will allow them to approach their work in the Fall 2026 from the same benchmark.

The CEC continues to encourage all churches to bear in mind their specific situations and consider providing cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs) for their clergy in the range of 2% to 3% for 2027 (207.g).

Thank you to the laity and clergy of the North Georgia Conference for your faithful work in the ministry we share in Christ.

Michael D. Stinson, Chair
michael.stinson@georgiaumc.net

Commission on Equitable Compensation Guidelines

207.b. Equitable Compensation Guidelines:

Paragraph 624.1 of *The 2020/2024 Book of Discipline (BOD)* provides that in each annual conference there shall be a commission on equitable compensation. The purpose of this commission is found in ¶624.2, where it states: *It is the purpose of the commission on equitable compensation to support full-time clergy serving as pastors in the charges of the annual conference by: (a) recommending conference standards for pastoral support; (b) administering funds to be used in base compensation supplementation; and (c) providing counsel and advisory material on pastoral support to district superintendents and committees on pastor-parish relations; and (d) submitting an arrearage policy to be adopted by the annual conference; and (e) recommending the amount needed to fund the Equitable Compensation Fund as described and secured in ¶¶ 614.1e and 624.7. For pastors receiving equitable compensation, once the base compensation supplementation has been paid by the annual conference, and the minimum base compensation and base compensation supplementation has been received by the pastor, the annual conference shall have no further financial obligation or responsibility to the pastor, the charge or anyone else regarding the pastor's compensation.*

How this purpose is to be carried out can be found in the balance of ¶¶624.3-13. The policies and procedures contained in this report detail how the North Georgia Conference will strive to accomplish the disciplinary task of equitable compensation.

207.c. Conference Arrearage Policy

Paragraph 623 of *The 2020/2024 BOD*, entitled *Payment Obligation*, explains the steps that should be taken when a church or charge is unable to pay any portion of the pastor(s) Full Compensation when due. Paragraph 624.2.d allows each annual conference to establish an arrearage policy.

Paragraph 623 states: *"Each church or charge has an obligation to pay the base compensation, the benefits adopted by the annual conference, and other ministerial support (including housing) adopted by the charge conference, to its pastor(s). If it becomes apparent that a church or charge will be unable to so provide the base compensation, support, and benefits adopted by the charge conference, the church or charge SPRC chair, finance chair, or treasurer, shall immediately notify, both in writing and verbally, the pastor, district superintendent and congregation. This communication shall indicate all avenues explored to meet the base compensation, support, and benefits, including requesting consideration for a short-term emergency subsidy grant from the Equitable Compensation Fund (¶624.7)"*

207.d. Arrearage Policy:

Any church that is unable to pay its pastor(s)'s salary and/or benefits when due must notify the appropriate district superintendent within 24 hours of making that determination. Notification can include telephone call and/or email. Upon receipt of such notice, the district superintendent will notify the Conference Commission on Equitable Compensation of the issue for its expeditious disposition.

Further, churches or charges with full-time clergy that are in arrears to the annual conference with respect to benefits payments (pension and insurance) will be reported in the annual conference *Handbook* and *Journal* as "churches receiving equitable compensation." These specific churches or charges will be reported based on the following methodology:

1. If the total balance due as of December 31 of the current year is greater than the total balance due as of December 31 of the previous year by an amount exceeding three months invoice amount, said church or charge will be reported as a church or charge having received Equitable Compensation Funds.
2. The amount recorded in the report will equate to the total difference between this year's total balance due and last year's total balance due.
3. Churches with benefits arrearage who pay their pastor(s) above minimum cash compensation have 18 months from January 1, 2025, to pay the previous year benefits in full or reduce base salary to the conference minimum cash compensation.

207.e. Conference Pastors Payment: It is the policy of the North Georgia Annual Conference that all pastors are paid in advance. This measure alleviates undue hardship on pastors and their families from a salary delay when going to a new appointment. Any payment(s) due to the conference or other designated office(s) for the pastor(s) pension and insurance is to be paid at the first of each month in compliance with ¶623.1 and the conference's arrearage policy. In the event a church cannot make full payment of both apportionments and clergy benefits in a given month, the pension and insurance payments should be priority.

207.f. Conference Standards for Pastoral Support: The following items are included in the definition of full clergy financial support:

1. Base compensation, which includes cash compensation payments, payments to cover or assist personal Social Security taxes of the pastor and any other cash benefits paid to the pastor.
2. Annual conference pension plan payments and life and health insurance premiums.
3. Provision for a parsonage or a housing allowance.
4. Reimbursement for travel/business expenses and continuing education, and any other expenses as may be required by the annual conference.

Note: Base compensation may be divided into salary and a utilities/furnishings allowance to minimize a pastor's tax liability. Local churches should be familiar with Internal Revenue Service requirements for pastors receiving nontaxable reimbursement when establishing compensation.

207.g. Minimum Compensation

The CEC acknowledges that the last several years have been particularly challenging for all churches with the follow-on effects of the pandemic, disaffiliations, church attendance patterns and other matters. Amid these unprecedented times, many churches have struggled to maintain ongoing levels of staffing and salaries, and clergy have been stressed in exceptional ways which in some cases has involved displacement due to a church disaffiliation, all of which the rising cost of living has compounded.

As we look toward 2027 and the possible unification of the two conferences in the Georgia Episcopal Area, the CEC is recommending maintaining the current levels of minimum compensation for 2027. Both conferences currently have the same minimum compensation

1 levels. Should both conferences choose to move forward with unification, the aligned baseline
2 amounts will allow them to approach their work in the Fall 2026 from the same benchmark.

3 The CEC continues to encourage all churches to evaluate their specific situations and
4 consider providing cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs) for their clergy in the range of 2% to 3%
5 for 2027. This range is respectively framed by the recommended 2026 COLAs for conference
6 staff and the 2026 recommendation from the Social Security Administration of a 2.8% increase
7 for Social Security Benefits.

8
9 The Commission recommends the following minimum salary levels for 2027:

11	Category	2026	2027
12	(*) Full Connection	\$48,489	\$48,489
13	Associate Member	\$43,539	\$43,539
14	(*) Provisional Member	\$43,539	\$43,539
15	Full Time Local Pastor	\$40,814	\$40,814
16	(**) Part Time Local Pastor	\$13,599	\$13,599

17
18 The amounts above represent the total of Sections I and II of the "Clergy Financial Support
19 Worksheet" as found on the conference website under Forms, Clergy and Financial Support.

20 * Full Connection and Provisional refer to both Elders and Deacons.

21 ** This amount is *per appointment*, based on a minimum of ten hours per week, and is
22 established to assure equitable pay for Part Time Local Pastors (PTLP). Churches served by a
23 PTLP are NOT eligible for Equitable Compensation funds.

24
25 **207.h. Accountable Reimbursement Plan:** Local churches shall reimburse pastors for
26 travel/business expenses and continuing education expenses under an accountable
27 reimbursement plan that complies with Internal Revenue Service regulations. These IRS
28 regulations require that reimbursements made outside an accountable reimbursement plan be
29 reported as taxable income. The local church shall budget sufficient funds to meet the
30 anticipated cost of pastoral travel and business expenses based on the most current year's actual
31 expenses or the amount determined with the pastor.

32 33 **207.i. Continuing Education and Spiritual Growth:**

34 The local church shall budget sufficient funds to meet the pastoral continuing education
35 expectation of the Pastor (Staff)-Parish Relations Committee as outlined in *The 2020/2024 BOD*
36 in ¶258.2g(8). This amount shall be no less than \$800 annually.

37 *The 2020/2024 BOD* ¶351 deals with continuing education and spiritual growth. The
38 Commission would like to emphasize that this paragraph in the *BOD* states that each clergy's
39 continuing education and spiritual growth program should include at least one week each year
40 and at least one month during one year of every quadrennium. Additionally, such leaves shall
41 not be considered as part of the minister's vacations. For more information on this subject,
42 please refer to *The 2020/2024 BOD* ¶351, page 294.

207.j. Vacation Recommendations: The CEC recommends that all churches/charges of the conference provide their pastor(s) annual vacation periods of at least the following schedule and make necessary financial arrangements for pulpit supply during the pastor's absence. Guidelines for vacation periods shall be based on the pastor's credited years of service as indicated in the Directory and Service Record published annually in the conference journal:

Credited Years of Service Vacation Recommendation

1 to 5 years	3 weeks (including 3 Sundays)
6 to 10 years	4 weeks (including 4 Sundays)
11 plus years	5 weeks (including 5 Sundays)

Vacation shall be calculated based on the conference year July 1-June 30.

207.k. 2026 Equitable Compensation: The Commission recommends the following items be included in the Annual Conference Equitable Compensation Plan for 2027:

Estimated Costs associated with a Full Connection Deacon or Elder:

	2026	2027
Minimum Total Compensation	(1) \$ 48,489	\$ 48,489
Minimum Housing allowance	(2) \$ 18,600	\$ 18,600
Pension	(3) \$ 6,497	\$ 6,497
Health Insurance	\$ 19,200	\$ 19,200
Continuing Education	(4) \$ 800	\$ 800
Total Estimated Cost	\$ 93,586	\$ 93,586

- (1) May be broken out between gross base salary, other cash compensation, utilities allowance and parsonage-related allowances as identified on the Clergy Financial Support Worksheet in sections I & II.
- (2) Where parsonage is not provided. See Guidelines and Standards for Housing Allowance and Parsonage for further explanation.
- (3) Actual cost may vary. The amount listed is an estimate from the conference benefits office.
- (4) This amount is the minimum as set by the annual conference. The basis is found in ¶258.2g (8) and ¶350.1 of *The 2020/2024 BOD*.

207.l. Equitable Compensation Fund

The Commission on Equitable Compensation administers the Equitable Compensation Fund to assure each pastor receives a minimum compensation approved by the annual conference (¶624.3 *The 2020/2024 BOD*). The Commission will make disbursements from the Equitable Compensation Fund in accordance with *The 2020/2024 BOD*, ¶342, ¶623, and ¶624 and the policies contained in this report.

All clergy members of the annual conference who are in good standing and serving full-time as pastors in the charges of the annual conference are eligible to receive grants from the North Georgia Equitable Compensation Fund. Clergy membership of the annual conference consists of elders and deacons in full connections, provisional members, associate members, and local pastors under appointment (¶33 *The 2020/2024 BOD*).

1 Churches may not receive salary supplementation funds from both the Commission on
2 Equitable Compensation and other designated funding sources such as the Barnes fund. A local
3 church that demonstrates the ability to maintain a full-time pastor may apply to its district
4 superintendent for a grant. It is recommended that the cabinet and the Commission on Equitable
5 Compensation use available resources to limit the number of consecutive years a church can
6 receive Equitable Compensation Funds.

7 Before a pastor can receive Equitable Compensation Funds, approval must be obtained
8 from the bishop, cabinet, and the Commission on Equitable Compensation. For a pastor to
9 receive Equitable Compensation Funds for the coming conference year, the Commission must
10 receive a request from the pastor's district superintendent by April 15. This request must include
11 the following information: district, church name, pastor's name, and a breakdown of the funds
12 that are being requested. If a request must be made for the period of January 1-June 30, this
13 request must be received by the Commission by October 15. In extreme situations, the cabinet
14 may request funds at any time.

15 The Commission will assemble advisory material, including but not limited to
16 denominational resources, annual conference resources and such information helpful in
17 understanding and establishing compensation in The United Methodist Church. The
18 Commission will provide such material and/or consultants from the Commission upon request by
19 district superintendents or committees on staff/pastor relations or in any event, where such
20 information would be beneficial in developing or maintaining an effective compensation package
21 or program.

22 The Commission will be responsible for making adequate requests from the Conference
23 Council on Finance and Administration as needed for approval of budget and expenditures.

24 If Equitable Compensation Fund requests exceed the approved conference budgeted
25 amounts for the Equitable Compensation Fund, the Commission is required to notify the
26 Conference Council on Finance and Administration.

27 The Commission shall report to the annual conference the charges and the clergy
28 members receiving Equitable Compensation Funds or who have received disbursements from the
29 Equitable Compensation Fund during the past calendar year. This report will include the number
30 of years such funds have been disbursed to the charge and the clergy member.

31 **207.m. Guidelines and Standards for Housing Allowance and Parsonage**

32 Every church must provide adequate housing for its pastor. The church or charge may
33 meet this need by means of a parsonage (owned or rented by the church/charge) or by providing
34 a housing allowance sufficient to buy or rent a home in the area served by the church. The
35 minimum housing allowance for 2026 is \$18,600. The district superintendent must approve any
36 exception to a housing allowance at less than the minimum standard.

37 The allowance should respect the Internal Revenue Service regulations and rulings. The
38 housing allowance will be clearly established, recorded in the charge conference minutes, and
39 excluded from Box 1 but listed in Box 14 in the W-2 form provided to the pastor. If a pastor has
40 any questions concerning his/her compliance with the IRS regulations, he/she should consult a
41 professional tax consultant or a certified public accountant.

42 **207.n. Minimum Standards for Church-provided Parsonages**

43 These guidelines provide direction and goals for local church leaders in decisions
44 regarding the construction of new parsonages, upgrading and maintenance of existing
45
46

1 parsonages, and/or the renting of appropriate housing in the area served by the church. While the
2 CEC understands that many parsonages within the annual conference do not meet these
3 minimum standards, it is expected that measures will be taken by the local church to bring their
4 parsonage(s) within these standards as soon as possible. In addition to these standards, it is
5 expected that everything in the parsonage will be in working order.
6

- 7 1. **Bedrooms:** The parsonage shall have three, *preferably* four bedrooms of at least 120
8 square feet each with ample lighted closets in each bedroom. The primary bedroom shall
9 have its own bath. It is recommended that the master bedroom be located on the main
10 level. At least one bedroom and bath shall be on the main level.
- 11 2. **Bathrooms:** There shall be at least two full baths in the house with GCFI outlets.
- 12 3. **Kitchen:** The kitchen shall be large enough for family eating space or a breakfast nook as
13 well as built-in cabinets, double sink, at *least a 4-eye* cooking range, self-cleaning oven,
14 dishwasher, and frost-free refrigerator with a large freezer and icemaker. *The kitchen*
15 *must have adequate outlets that are GCFI connected.*
- 16 4. **Climate control:** Central heat and air are required, along with insulation to meet present
17 day building codes. Energy efficient windows and doors are to be provided to conserve
18 energy. Screens must also be provided for all windows.
- 19 5. **Office:** An office with adequate office equipment and furniture for a functioning office
20 shall be provided either at the church or the parsonage.
- 21 6. **Living/Dining Area:** There shall be common living space consisting of a living room,
22 family/recreational room, and dining room for entertaining.
- 23 7. **Floor coverings:** The church shall provide proper floor coverings in the parsonage with
24 either carpeting or hardwood flooring in living spaces and tiled or vinyl flooring in the
25 kitchens and bathrooms.
- 26 8. **Window treatments:** The church shall provide blinds or shades for all windows.
27 Curtains may be provided but are not required.
- 28 9. **Telecommunications:** The parsonage shall have connections for cable, *fiber*, or satellite
29 television, telephone, and high-speed internet. If these services are desired and activated
30 by the pastor, the pastor shall pay the fees for such services.
- 31 10. **Utility area:** There shall be an indoor utility area to include an automatic clothes washer
32 and dryer provided by the church.
- 33 11. **Wiring/Plumbing:** All wiring and plumbing must conform to present-day codes and are
34 to provide for present and future needs in order that all appliances and computer
35 equipment may be used safely. All receptacles must be properly grounded, *with kitchen*
36 *and bathrooms having GCFI receptacles.*
- 37 12. **Security and Safety:** The church shall provide smoke alarms and fire extinguishers,
38 *carbon monoxide detectors/alarms (which shall be installed near furnace, kitchen, water*
39 *heater and sleeping areas).* Carbon monoxide detectors/alarms should be installed near
40 the furnace, kitchen and water heater areas and sleeping areas if said appliances use gas.
41 All exterior doors shall have dead bolt locks. It is recommended that the church provide
42 a security system for the parsonage with the pastor paying for the monitoring services.
- 43 13. **Parsonage grounds:** Parsonage grounds should have foundation shrubbery, shade trees,
44 and adequate yard space for children. *A fence is recommended for the yard.* It is
45 recommended that the church provide lawn maintenance service for the parsonage; if not,
46 a self-propelled lawn mower must be provided for the parsonage. The mower should be a

riding mower if the yard is larger than ½ acre. Maintenance of the mower is the responsibility of the church. A fenced play area is recommended.

14. **Garage/Carport and storage:** A two-car garage or covered carport shall be provided and a minimum of 120 square feet of outdoor storage space shall be provided.

15. **Insurance:** An amount of insurance equal to at least 80% of the replacement value of the parsonage and church-owned contents should be carried by the church (fire and extended coverage). **The pastor must carry adequate renters' insurance to cover the pastor and the pastor's family's personal belongings and furnishings. The church does not insure the pastor's personal belongings either at the parsonage or at the church building.**

16. **Parsonage Updates and New Acquisitions:** All parsonages shall be updated or renovated to conform as nearly as possible to the suggested minimum standards in these guidelines, which were approved by the Annual Conference in 2016 and adapted and confirmed each succeeding year. For any parsonages that are acquired, either newly built or purchased, the recommendation is that they have four bedrooms.

17. **Any parsonages not meeting the standards must be approved for usage by the district superintendent on an annual basis.**

207.o. Guidelines for Renting a Parsonage

In some areas of the Annual Conference the prospect of purchasing property is beyond the financial capacity of the church. This is largely true in urban areas or areas that are experiencing gentrification. It is the hope that each pastor will live within the community where the church is planted. Therefore, it might be more financially viable, a better use of resources, and a better witness of stewardship to rent a residence (home, condominium, apartment, or other dwelling) for the pastor and their family. One advantage in renting a parsonage is the church does not have to shoulder maintenance and repair responsibilities.

This option will follow discussion with the District Superintendent and their approval. In this case the Guidelines and Standards for Parsonage should be followed in choosing a dwelling for the pastoral family in every instance.

In addition to parsonage standards, factors of homeowners' association fees, access to schools for children, security, and controlled rent should be given consideration. The rental and homeowners' association fees are the responsibility of the church with the pastoral family handling other costs the same as with a church-owned parsonage.

207.p. General Guidelines for Parsonages

Guidelines for Privacy: Although the parsonage is the property of the church, it must be understood that it is also the private home of the parsonage family. Courtesy dictates that the parsonage be visited only upon invitation by the parsonage family. Even the annual mandatory parsonage review and parsonage committee meetings must be scheduled with the parsonage family with at least two weeks' notice.

Guidelines for Care of Property: The parsonage family shall take care of the house, furnishings, and property, making it a policy to leave them in good condition. The best results will be obtained as the parsonage family and parsonage committee work together, feeling free to discuss the needs with each other. It is understood that there will be a natural depreciation of property and contents, which calls for annual maintenance, repairs, and replacements.

Guidelines for Parsonage Upkeep:

1. It is recommended that the church's annual budget include a parsonage fund equivalent to at least 3% of the value of the property for the purpose of repairs, maintenance, pest control, and insurance. Unused yearly funds should be placed in an interest-bearing account to be used for capital expenses of the parsonage to include the future purchase of a new parsonage where the current does not meet minimum parsonage standards.
2. The parsonage family shall be consulted in the selection of color schemes, window treatments, and equipment.
3. The parsonage shall be kept well painted inside and out. *In the event of a pastoral change, the inside of the parsonage should be repainted in preparation for receiving the new parsonage family.*
4. Every parsonage shall have a parsonage file. The parsonage file is to be maintained by the parsonage family and shall include all guarantees, repair parts lists, instructions for use of equipment, and an inventory of all church-owned contents. The file shall also include a maintenance log which will list when and from whom items were purchased, who to call for repairs, when and by whom improvements were made, and any other information helpful to future parsonage families. A pictorial record, preferably in video format, should be taken as soon as possible on or after each moving day. This record will be invaluable for insurance purposes in case of fire or other catastrophe. It also would serve as a record of the parsonage's initial condition. An extra copy of the pictorial record and the parsonage file shall be updated and stored in a secure place away from the parsonage.
5. HVAC systems shall be cleaned periodically to include ductwork and inspection for mold in the system and dwelling, at least upon the change of the parsonage family.

Guidelines for Pets and Guide or Service Animals: Keeping animals outside the parsonage is recommended. It is understood, however, that family pets, guide or service animals kept inside the home bring much comfort and joy. Therefore, if they are kept inside the parsonage, the following guidelines must be met:

1. The church trustees must be kept informed of any pet inside or outside the parsonage.
2. Only a domestic pet, which will be defined as a dog, cat, caged bird or aquarium fish can be kept in the parsonage. Guide and service animals are not to be considered pets. Any other animal requires the approval of the church trustees. Also, more than one indoor pet or service animal requires the approval of the trustees.
3. All damages incurred by any pet or service animal will be the responsibility of the pastor and will be reported to the church trustees and assessed. Payment for repairs should be immediate, but no later than moving day. Flea and tick treatment is required.
4. Upon the change of the parsonage family, if animals have been kept inside, the parsonage family must make an extra effort to thoroughly clean the entire parsonage to eliminate any evidence of the animals having been present, which includes fleas, ticks, pet hair, pet dander, stains, excrements, etc. This cleaning would include having all carpet / rugs professionally cleaned.

Guidelines for Smoking: There shall be no smoking or vaping inside the parsonages.

Guidelines for Handling Unusual Damages:

The Pastor/Staff Relations Committee and the Board of Trustees shall have regular inspections of the parsonage (see *Mandatory Parsonage Review Guidelines* below). This will permit all parties to review the general condition of the parsonage to identify deficiencies of the parsonage and define programs and time schedules for improvement.

1. Any unusual damage caused by the parsonage family shall be reported to the district superintendent.
2. Unusual damages caused by the parsonage family shall be paid for by the pastor involved. Various approaches for repayment of damage repair expenses may be necessary, including but not limited to the following:
 - a. Payment in full to the church for any unusual damage when identified.
 - b. Payment in full to the church prior to moving to next appointment (or retirement).
 - c. Creating a repayment schedule which may follow the pastor to his/her next appointment (or retirement).
 - d. In every case, the handling of such matters must be done in consultation with the supervising district superintendent.

Guidelines for Utilities:

Arrangements should be made by the pastor with appropriate companies to prorate all utility bills up through moving day. The moving pastor shall not have the utilities turned off. It is recommended that the church have the utility accounts in the church's name with the pastor paying the amounts due for the utilities to the church a week prior to the due date. This will prevent any transfer issues arising from pastors moving.

Mandatory Parsonage Review Guidelines:

1. A meeting concerning the parsonage will be conducted each year prior to charge conference.
2. This meeting will be held in the parsonage and will include a mandatory review of the entire parsonage—inside and out.
3. The attendance of the following individuals is expected: the pastor, the trustee chairperson, the parsonage committee chairperson, if one exists, and the chairperson of the pastor/staff relations committee (see *The 2020/2024 BOD*, ¶2533.4). If the pastor has a spouse, he/she should also be included.
4. The specific date can be set any time during the year, but it must be set at least two weeks prior to the church's annual charge conference with all parties agreeing to the date set.
5. Even though this mandatory meeting takes place to satisfy a disciplinary requirement, it is recommended that other parsonage committee meetings be held to consider parsonage improvements and other concerns.
6. A parsonage report detailing the findings and recommendations made during the meeting will be completed and signed by all in attendance at the parsonage review. This report will be submitted to the district superintendent during the charge conference. One copy of the report shall be placed in the parsonage file at the parsonage and a second copy shall be kept at the church or away from the parsonage grounds.
7. Any concern by either the pastor or church may be addressed at a later meeting. The district superintendent may become involved, if deemed necessary by either party.

1 8. Patterns of parsonage abuse will be documented and stored in each pastor's file.

2
3 **Check List When a Parsonage is Being Vacated:** The following checklist shall be completed
4 when a parsonage family is moving. It is the responsibility of the parsonage family to clean
5 thoroughly both the parsonage and grounds. It is not the responsibility of the church to clean the
6 parsonage. A walk through by the parsonage committee should be conducted prior to the new
7 pastor's arrival to confirm the following items have been completed and it is ready for the new
8 family.

- 9
10 1. Windows cleaned inside.
11 2. Window blinds/shades cleaned.
12 3. Rugs and carpets vacuumed (shampooed if needed, professionally cleaned if pets or
13 service animals were kept in the parsonage).
14 4. All hard-surface floors cleaned.
15 5. All appliances cleaned inside and out.
16 6. All cabinets cleaned inside and out.
17 7. Basement, closets, and shelving cleaned.
18 8. Light bulbs replaced, as necessary.
19 9. Bathrooms thoroughly cleaned, including fixture, tile grout, shower doors/curtains,
20 medicine cabinets, walls, and floors.
21 10. Garage, carport, and outside buildings swept and left orderly.
22 11. The lawn shall be left in a well-maintained order.
23 12. All trash is properly disposed of. (It is recommended that the church provide an extra
24 refuse container during move week.)
25 13. A list of all items needing attention provided to the parsonage committee.
26 (The incoming pastor may use this checklist to rate items upon move-in as excellent,
27 satisfactory, or poor.)
28

29 **207.q. Summary statement for parsonages** The parsonage is a witness of the church, and it is a
30 symbol of the stewardship of the congregation; therefore, the parsonage should receive the same
31 kind of care as the church building.
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**207.r. Current year statistics to assist Staff Parish Relations Committees
in establishing a fair and equitable package for their pastor(s):**

Salary and Housing Data for "pastors-in-charge" appointed to a church at minimum salary or above (Does not include associate pastors)		
Total Members	Number of Churches	Avg Salary + Utilities
4500 plus	6	\$190,039.67
2500-4499	11	\$130,513.18
1500-2499	8	\$112,906.63
1000-1499	22	\$94,567.14
750-999	18	\$89,103.17
500-749	21	\$77,724.76
300-499	31	\$65,979.35
200-299	23	\$62,553.87
100-199	13	\$58,834.00
99 and less	17	\$56,450.76

Average Salaries and Utilities for ALL those appointed to a church at minimum salary or above		
District	Avg Salaries and Utilities	Number of Churches
All Districts	\$76,743.83	224

Average Housing Allowance by district for ALL those appointed to a church at minimum salary or above		
District	Avg. Housing Allowance	Number of Churches
District South Central	\$26,367.97	39
District North West	\$23,525.96	26
District North East	\$26,158.31	42
District South East	\$24,492.24	21
District South West	\$26,997.66	32
All Districts	\$25,730.86	160

**207.s. Pastors Receiving Equitable Compensation Jan-Jun 2026
(figures are annualized)**

Clergy Eq. Comp.	Received	Classification	# Year
Miki McNeal Chastain	\$29,426	PD	1
Willie Greene	\$50,379	FE	1
Edward Landrum	\$19,315	FE	2
Nathan Donghun Lee	\$26,426	PE	1
Song Soo Park	\$42,379	FE	3
Juan Quintanilla	\$23,494	FE	2

207.t. Churches/Charges Receiving Equitable Compensation Jan-Jun 2026
(figures are annualized)

Church	District	Eq. Comp	# Years
Oconee Street UMC	D7SE	\$29,426	1
Headland Heights UMC	D8SW	\$50,379	1
Moore's Chapel UMC	D5NW	\$19,315	2
Atlanta Bethany UMC	D6NE	\$26,426	1
Immanuel Korean UMC	D1CW	\$42,379	3
Cartecay UMC	D5NW	\$23,494	2

207.u. Churches receiving equitable compensation due to LESS THAN FULL PAYMENT
of the pastor's pension and insurance premiums in 2025 (>3 months behind):

District	#	Church	Arrearage Balance	Months in Arrears
North West	1252	St Luke UMC Mableton	\$1,145.12	3.48
North East	1714	St Paul UMC Summit Street	\$16,626.65	5.18
South Central	1137	East Lake UMC	\$14,462.04	5.35
South West	1341	Atlanta First UMC	\$34,195.91	7.49
South West	1226	Laster's Chapel UMC	\$1,417.68	10.20
South Central	1289	Ebenezer UMC Conyers	\$17,108.02	10.86
North East	2265	Suwanee Worship Center UMC	\$27,574.20	12.00
North East	2307	Atlanta Bethany UMC	\$18,903.90	12.00
North West	2089	Vann's Valley UMC Mableton	\$588.00	12.00
North West	2100	Cassville UMC	\$75.00	12.00
North West	1231	Midway UMC Douglasville	\$725.05	12.00
South Central	1285	Lithonia UMC	\$3,178.25	12.00
South West	1374	Warren Memorial UMC	\$41,376.12	12.00
South West	1980	Wilson Chapel UMC	\$1,215.00	12.00
Total			\$178,590.94	

208. Conference Treasurer / Chief Financial Officer

As we look ahead to a potential change in our conference structure through unification with the South Georgia Conference, I want to thank you for your faithfulness, generosity, and support of our United Methodist mission and ministry here in North Georgia and beyond. We United Methodists benefit from the balanced, transparent systems that are core to our denomination and our Wesleyan heritage. They offer us timeless safeguards and strategic transformation opportunities. Our lay/clergy partnership and the checks and balances of our committee structures are among those gifts.

Our Conference committees consist of faithful United Methodist laity and clergy. Each year, your Conference Council on Finance & Administration develops our budget prayerfully and thoughtfully. With this continued focus on enabling ministry through good stewardship, we are recommending a 2027 budget to underwrite our conference spending in line with who we are today. Let us first look at where we have been on our journey as of the end of fiscal year 2025.

2025 Financial Review

The North Georgia Conference approved a 2025 apportionment budget of \$11,043,808, a 25% reduction from the 2024 budget. In 2025, apportionment payments from local churches were \$9.9 million, or 89.7% of the approved budget, down from 92.8% collected in 2024. Beginning January 2025, the total number of North Georgia Conference churches was 408 including newly emerging congregations and missional churches. A total of 303 churches, or 74.3%, paid 100% of their apportionments in 2025, representing the prioritization of our connection for our local churches, even through the season of continuing change for churches, conference, and denomination.

The North Georgia Conference paid a total of \$3.3 million in General Church apportionments in 2024, which reflects the collections rate of 89.7% for general church categories. We remit to the General Church only what we collect from the churches. Of the total apportionment budget, the General Church portion represented 33.5% of total apportionments. These general church apportionments provide for our episcopal leader, the episcopal office funding, ministerial education scholarships, disaster relief funding through UMCOR, as well as for denominational and connectional priorities and worldwide mission and ministry.

An interesting metric to note is that even with all the changes our conference and United Methodist denomination have experienced in recent years, the North Georgia Conference remains the third highest conference in the United States if ranked by apportionment giving to the General Church.

North Georgia 2025 actual spending compared to budget was \$10.0 million or 90.6% of the North Georgia conference approved budget of \$11.0 million, slightly higher than the apportionment collection rate of 89.7%. This amount over the collections amount will be funded from reserves.

Beginning in January 2026, we have 393 apportionment paying churches. Our current year 2026 approved apportionment budget is \$10,493,931, a 5% reduction over 2025.

In the North Georgia Conference, our local church apportionments have decreased significantly over the last five years. This is possible because we have established responsible funding mechanisms, such as the Barnes Fund and external grants, which allow us to maintain the core functions of the conference while also responding to needs as they arise, carrying out initiatives, and investing in innovative and fruitful ministry.

1 The annual conference financial statement audit will conclude after the annual conference
2 session. The previous year's 2024 conference audit is posted on the North Georgia Conference
3 website, and the 2025 audit will be posted upon completion. No material adjustments nor
4 recommendations are anticipated.

5 6 **Investment Summary**

7 Conference funds are invested strictly in accordance with the Investment Guidelines
8 approved by the annual conference in 2016 and published on pages 58- 63, Volume I, 2022
9 Annual Conference *Journal*. Investment maturities and rates of return vary based on projections
10 of cash needs, as well as on market fluctuations.

11 The gain on invested balances in 2025 was approximately 12.1%, primarily unrealized.
12 The conference maintains a long-term view and investment strategy.

13 Total investments as of December 31, 2024, were \$170.6 million of which \$72.9 million
14 were investments designated for health and pension benefits programs, \$48.8 million designated
15 for the Barnes Fund for church development and congregational excellence, and \$13.2 million
16 designated as quasi-endowments for strategic initiatives and clergy excellence.

17 The conference's net assets increased \$19.9 million over 2024, primarily due to growth in
18 earnings in our benefits and other long-term investments.

19 20 **Appreciation for Treasury, IT, and Benefits Staff!**

21 As members of the Georgia Episcopal Area, the Treasurer and Administrative Services
22 staff along with the Bishop, Executive Assistant to the Bishop and the Administrative Assistant
23 to the Bishop continued to provide shared services to the South Georgia Conference throughout
24 2025 and so far in 2026. The team continues to seek ways to optimize processes, incorporate
25 efficiencies and offset administrative costs to better provide for the ministry needs for our
26 churches and stakeholders in North Georgia.

27 Staff in treasury, benefits, and information technology departments provided from 10% to
28 50% of their efforts to support South Georgia depending on the specific function. They also
29 continue to provide key oversight and support for events and building operations in our newly
30 owned space at the UM Center in Duluth. They have taken on accounting, financial reporting,
31 benefits, payroll, data management, IT support and help desk operations for South Georgia
32 Conference, all while consistently providing excellent service to stakeholders in the North
33 Georgia Conference.

34 Treasury, IT, and Benefits Staff:

35 Bruce Cooper, CPA, CFE

36 Ann Beesley

37 Valerie Henry

38 Michael Murphy-McCarthy

39 Angela Odegard

40 Chase McKoon

41 I want to acknowledge and thank our great staff for their amazing resilience, diligence,
42 integrity, and professionalism, and always going the extra mile. And I also want to say thank you
43 to the members of the North Georgia Annual Conference for your stewardship and ongoing
44 support as we navigate the many challenges and opportunities ahead.

45 Allison Berg

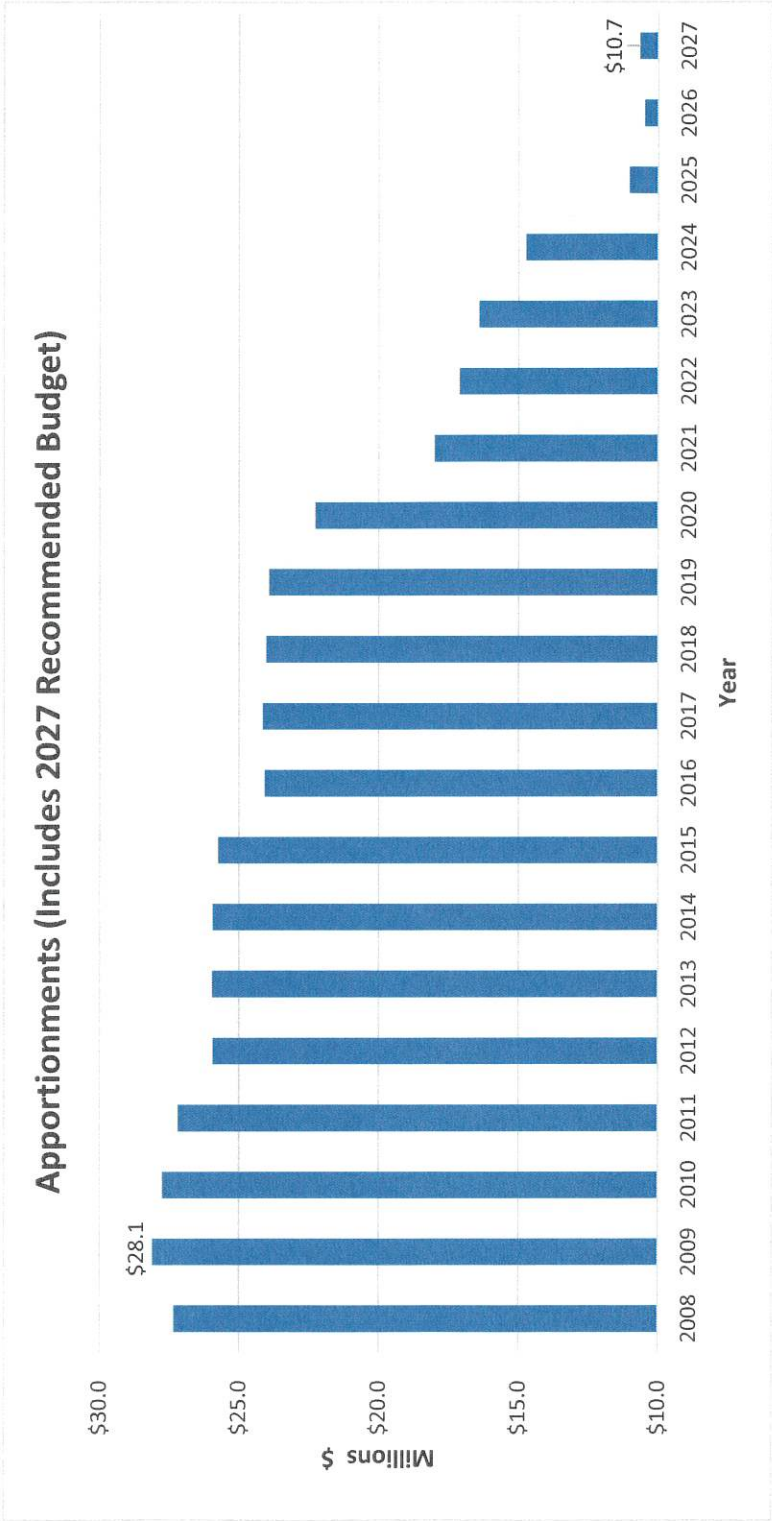
46 Conference Treasurer and Chief Financial Officer

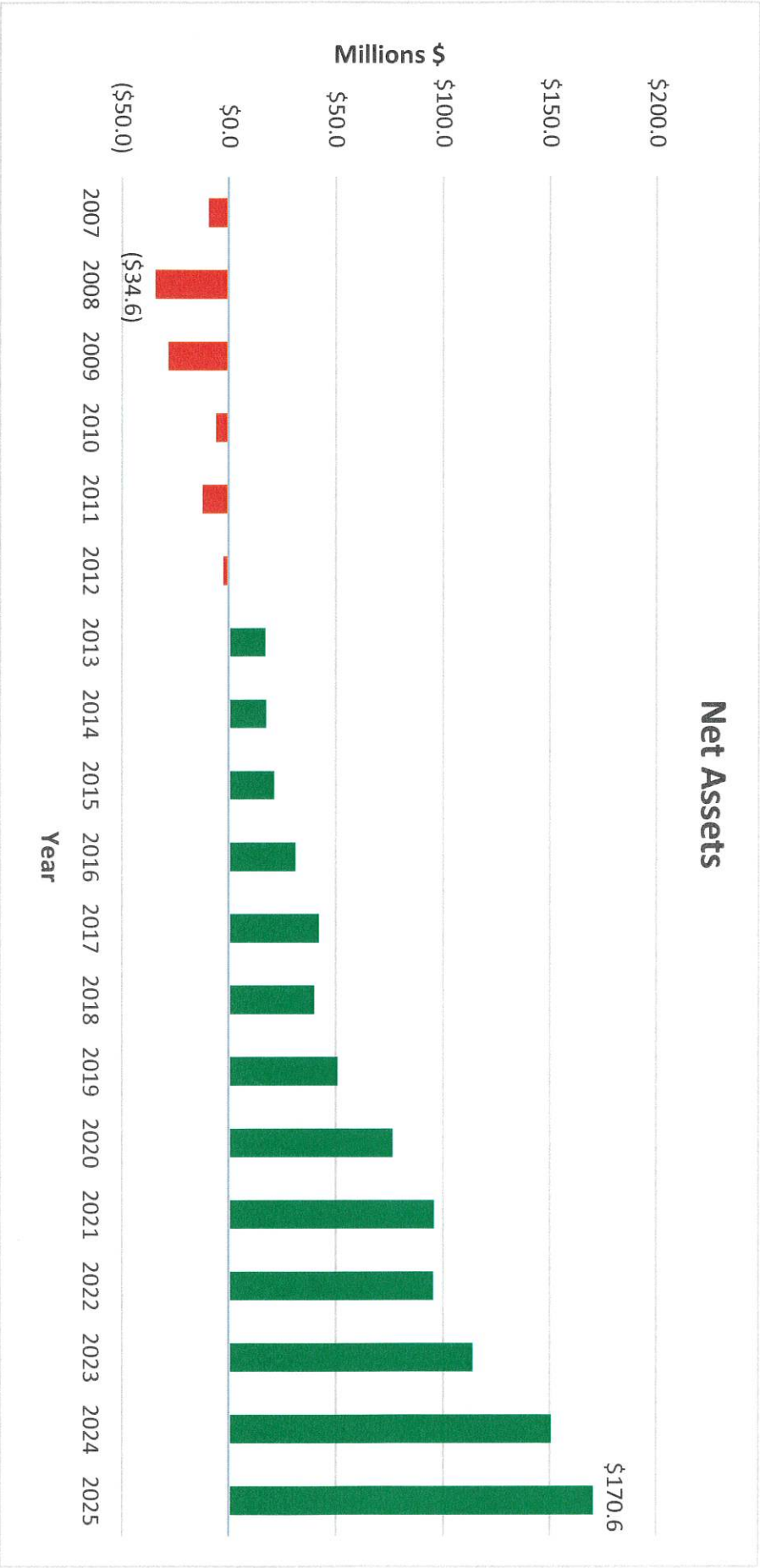
Exhibit I, Apportionments by Funds

Period #



		2024				2025				
fundname		Prior Apport	Month	Prior Paid	P %	Apport	Monthly	Paid	%	+ -
Conference										
2	Retired Ministers Pension & Insurance Benefits	\$1,394,984	\$115,042	\$1,294,239	92.8%	\$1,149,998	\$131,092	\$1,030,235	89.6%	-3.2
4	Conference Benevolences	\$234,504	\$19,276	\$217,277	92.7%	\$812,277	\$92,798	\$727,355	89.5%	-3.1
1	Ministerial Support	\$2,474,992	\$203,931	\$2,296,700	92.8%	\$1,921,298	\$229,336	\$1,729,595	90.0%	-2.8
12	Church Development	\$1,184,012	\$105,874	\$1,106,372	93.4%	\$0	\$0	\$5,000		
5	Capital Funding	\$22,500	\$1,840	\$20,755	92.2%	\$20,008	\$2,481	\$17,916	89.5%	-2.7
3	Conference Administration	\$3,152,694	\$260,849	\$2,928,555	92.9%	\$2,675,948	\$303,856	\$2,395,407	89.5%	-3.4
6	Higher Education	\$1,035,836	\$31,969	\$909,151	87.8%	\$727,491	\$83,759	\$651,592	89.6%	1.8
Group Total		\$9,499,522	\$738,781	\$8,773,049	92.4%	\$7,307,020	\$843,322	\$6,557,100	89.7%	-2.6
General Church										
11	Africa University Fund	\$81,420	\$6,665	\$75,157	92.3%	\$52,185	\$6,731	\$46,971	90.0%	-2.3
10	World Service Fund	\$2,700,620	\$224,669	\$2,507,138	92.8%	\$1,690,242	\$195,603	\$1,514,961	89.6%	-3.2
14	Episcopal Fund	\$799,754	\$66,272	\$742,103	92.8%	\$833,144	\$95,752	\$745,709	89.5%	-3.3
15	General Administration Fund	\$320,674	\$26,376	\$295,951	92.3%	\$285,657	\$35,411	\$258,119	90.4%	-1.9
8	Ministerial Education Fund	\$912,143	\$75,377	\$846,658	92.8%	\$584,649	\$67,313	\$524,621	89.7%	-3.1
9	Interdenominational Cooperation Fund	\$12,410	\$1,607	\$12,053	97.1%	\$24,191	\$3,000	\$21,671	89.6%	-7.5
7	Black College Fund	\$363,838	\$29,892	\$335,847	92.3%	\$233,212	\$30,080	\$210,071	90.1%	-2.2
Group Total		\$5,190,859	\$430,859	\$4,814,906	92.8%	\$3,703,280	\$433,890	\$3,322,122	89.7%	-3.0
Southeastern Jurisdiction										
16	SEJ's Mission and Ministry Fund	\$43,522	\$6,940	\$43,510	100.0%	\$33,506	\$4,153	\$29,990	89.5%	-10.5
Group Total		\$43,522	\$6,940	\$43,510	100.0%	\$33,506	\$4,153	\$29,990	89.5%	-10.5
Report Total		\$14,733,903	\$1,176,579	\$13,631,465	92.5%	\$11,043,806	\$1,281,365	\$9,909,212	89.7%	-2.8





208.d. Council on Finance and Administration

The Council on Finance and Administration (CFA) serves as the steward of the North Georgia Annual Conference's finances. Our goal is straightforward: to sustain the ministries of the conference while strengthening the capacity of local churches to do ministry where it matters most.

Over the past seven years, CFA has made deliberate choices to reduce the financial burden on local churches. Through decreases in conference and general church apportionments, reductions in budget line items, use of reserves, and external funding, we have lowered the overall demands placed on churches year after year (yearly reductions below):

- 2020 – 7.8%
- 2021 – 19.0%
- 2022 – 5.0%
- 2023 – 4.0%
- 2024 – 10.2%
- 2025 – 25.0%
- 2026 – 5.0%

This pattern reflects a clear conviction: ministry happens most directly through the local church, and our financial decisions should support that reality.

This budget is presented as a North Georgia-only budget. At the same annual conference session, members will also vote on a proposed unification with the South Georgia Conference. If unification is approved, a new, unified conference budget will be developed by the CF&A teams of both conferences and submitted to a joint special session of both annual conferences later in 2026 for implementation in 2027.

This means the budget before you reflects the most responsible plan for North Georgia as it currently exists, while recognizing that a new, shared structure may soon shape how we fund ministry together across the state.

At this annual conference session, CFA presents for your approval a North Georgia-only budget of \$10,663,773 for 2027, an increase of \$169,842, or 1.6%, over 2026. This modest increase comes at a time of real change and pressure, including:

- The impact of recent and anticipated church closures on apportionment collections
- The conclusion of funding (June 30, 2026) from the Lilly Foundation, which had supported key ministry positions such as regional developers
- The need to sustain ministries that strengthen existing churches and support new church starts
- The assumption that General Conference apportionments will remain at similar levels during the quadrennium
- Continued shared services across the Georgia Episcopal Area with the South Georgia Conference, which both offset administrative costs and serve as a step toward deeper collaboration in a potential unified conference

With the end of Lilly funding, the salaries of regional developers, which were previously grant-funded, must now be supported through apportionments. In alignment with the bishop's

1 leadership and vision for strengthening local churches and supporting new church starts, CFA
2 determined that continuing these roles is essential to the long-term health of the conference.

3 To respond to these pressures, CFA continues to use an All Source Model for Income.
4 This reflects a shift from relying primarily on apportionments to a broader mix of funding,
5 including reserves, investments, and external sources. This approach allows us to sustain
6 conference ministries while limiting the financial demands placed on local churches and adapting
7 to a changing financial landscape.

8 As a result, the 2027 conference budget represents 6.4% of the total giving of our local
9 churches. This means a greater share of financial resources remains in the local church for
10 ministry, strengthening congregations and their ability to serve their communities. This
11 percentage is also significantly lower than that of many other conferences in the United
12 Methodist Church.

13 CFA remains committed to financial discipline and accountability. The amount allocated
14 to conference ministries is directly tied to the apportionments actually received, and we monitor
15 giving trends closely to ensure spending aligns with real income.

16 This commitment is reflected in compensation decisions for 2027. A 3% increase is
17 included for apportionment-funded conference staff. At the same time, there is no increase in
18 district superintendent salaries, reflecting both the bishop's leadership and CFA's shared
19 commitment to balancing fair compensation with responsible stewardship in a constrained
20 environment.

21 The North Georgia Annual Conference remains financially strong, with a healthy balance
22 sheet and prudent reserves. Through careful stewardship, we seek to support the mission of the
23 United Methodist Church: to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

24 I am grateful for the leadership of Allison Berg and her staff, and for their faithful and
25 effective work on behalf of our conference.

26
27 In Christ,
28 Cyndi McDonald
29 President, Council on Finance and Administration
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North Georgia Annual Conference
Summary Budget
2027 Budget Recommended by CFA

		2025 Approved Budget	2025 Actual Spending	2025 Exp vs Appr %	2026 Approved Budget	2027 Recommended Budget	2027 vs 2025 Exp Inc/(Dec) Amount	2027 vs 2025 Exp Inc/(Dec) %	2027 vs 2026 Budget Inc/(Dec) Amount	2027 vs 2026 Budget Inc/(Dec) %
North Georgia Conference										
I.	Min Support & Eq Comp	\$1,921,303	\$1,610,005	83.8%	\$1,940,743	\$1,868,654	\$258,649	16.1%	(\$72,089)	-3.7%
II.	Ret Min Pension & Ins	1,150,000	1,030,400	89.6%	870,000	870,000	(160,400)	-15.6%	0	0.0%
III.	Administrative Budget	2,675,950	2,602,780	97.3%	2,538,840	2,602,207	(573)	0.0%	63,367	2.5%
IV.	Conference Benevolences	812,278	744,712	91.7%	735,318	913,882	169,170	22.7%	178,564	24.3%
V	Capital Funding	20,000	17,900	89.5%	17,500	17,500	(400)	-2.2%	0	0.0%
VI.	Higher Ed & Campus Ministry	727,475	651,592	89.6%	654,728	654,728	3,136	0.5%	0	0.0%
XII.	Congregational Excellence	0	0	-	0	0	0	-	0	-
	Contingency Reserve	0	0	-	0	0	0	-	0	-
Total North Georgia Conference		7,307,006	6,657,389	91.1%	6,757,129	6,926,971	269,582	4.0%	169,842	2.5%
General Church										
VII.	Black College Fund	233,212	210,071	90.1%	233,212	233,212	23,141	11.0%	0	0.0%
VIII.	Ministerial Education	584,650	524,621	89.7%	584,650	584,650	60,029	11.4%	0	0.0%
IX.	Interdenominational Coop	24,194	21,671	89.6%	24,194	24,194	2,523	11.6%	0	0.0%
X.	World Service Fund	1,690,244	1,514,961	89.6%	1,690,244	1,690,244	175,283	11.6%	0	0.0%
XI.	Africa University	52,192	46,971	90.0%	52,192	52,192	5,221	11.1%	0	0.0%
XIV.	Episcopal Fund	833,147	745,709	89.5%	833,147	833,147	87,438	11.7%	0	0.0%
XV.	General Church Administration	285,663	258,119	90.4%	285,663	285,663	27,544	10.7%	0	0.0%
Total General Church		3,703,302	3,322,123	89.7%	3,703,302	3,703,302	381,179	11.5%	0	0.0%
XVI.	Southeastern Jurisdiction	33,500	29,990	89.5%	33,500	33,500	3,510	11.7%	0	0.0%
Grand Total		\$11,043,808	\$10,009,502	90.6%	\$10,493,931	\$10,663,773	\$654,271	6.5%	\$169,842	1.6%

**Interpretation of
2027 Recommended Conference Apportionment Budget**

The Conference budget for 2027 is \$10,663,773, an increase of \$169,842, or 1.6%, versus the 2026 budget. CFA worked diligently to develop an apportionment budget that supports the connectional work and ministry of the conference while taking into consideration the financial challenges facing the local church.

CONFERENCE FUNDS:

AREA I.	MINISTERIAL SUPPORT	
	Episcopal Office/Discretionary	\$ 271,644
	Conference Communications	203,260
	District Superintendents' Compensation	978,750
	Equitable Compensation Fund	275,000
	Board of Ordained Ministry	<u>140,000</u>
	 Total Area I	 <u>\$ 1,868,654</u>

The Office of the Resident Bishop Fund provides the conference share of financial support for the North Georgia Conference Bishop and the Executive Assistant to the Bishop. Additional funding for the Office of the Resident Bishop is provided to the conference from the General Church Episcopal Fund referenced in Area XIV.

District Superintendents' Compensation line item represents salaries, health insurance and pension benefits for the district superintendents of our conference.

The Equitable Compensation Fund enables our conference to fulfill the mandate of “security of appointment,” meaning that all appointed clergy will receive the Annual Conference approved minimum compensation.

The Board of Ordained Ministry is responsible for credentialing clergy. Additionally, it coordinates the provision of support for conference clergy through myriad services, continuing education activities, seminars, etc. This ministry enables our conference to meet the high standards and expectations of local church congregations.

AREA II. RETIRED MINISTERS PENSION/INSURANCE

Retired Minister Insurance Premiums	\$ 750,000
Disability Premiums	120,000
Retirees' Past Service Pension (Pre-1982)	<u>0</u>
Total Area II	<u>\$ 870,000</u>

Retired Minister Pension/Insurance reflects “fully funded status” as of 12/31/2025 (unaudited) for both the ViaBenefits defined contribution funding for the Health Reimbursement Account for retired/eligible clergy and conference staff, as well as the pre-1982, CRSP and MPP plans. The premiums noted for Retired Ministers insurance (HRA) are based on claims expenses passed on to the conference by ViaBenefits. Retiree Medical fund reserves are being utilized to offset the impact to the budget. The benefit per retired clergy is currently capped at \$3,600/annum. Due to the 2021 Conference Board of Pension and Health Benefits recommendation approved by the Annual Conference there was a substantial decrease in this program’s liability.

Apportionments for pre-1982 were discontinued starting in 2023 based on the actuarial valuation of the liability.

AREA III. ADMINISTRATIVE FUND

Annual Conference Session/Journal/Handbook \$ 360,000

This line item represents total direct Annual Conference session production expenses including documentation.

The following Area III office "sub totals" include director and staff salaries and benefits and office related expenses.

Office of Treasurer/Benefits/Admin/IT Services \$ 782,046

This office develops, maintains, and administers a comprehensive plan of fiscal and administrative policies, and benefits systems/processes and provides services for all the Conference's administrative ministries. Additionally, the office assures compliance with all external audit and tax requirements, provides Help Desk function to clergy and laity, and makes available information through various media for clergy and laity who serve as church treasurers, financial secretaries, business administrators and finance committee chairpersons. This office administers all conference databases and computer equipment delivering the technology tools necessary to support the needs of the Conference. In 2025, the Treasurer's Office began providing shared services for the South Georgia Conference.

Office of Ministerial Services and Spiritual Formation \$ 423,025

This office provides for the many needs of those who have dedicated their lives to God's service through the church, including maintenance of clergy service records/files. This department also administers the credentialing and support of all conference clergy.

BOT Methodist Center Operating Expenses \$ 185,000

This represents net operating expenses for the conference offices, including insurance and telephone service for the leased space.

Council on Finance and Administration \$ 100,000

This includes conference audit fees, legal fees, and meeting expenses for CFA.

District Administration \$ 712,136

This budget line item replaces "district work funds" and includes the District AA's salaries and compensation, and the expenses associated with the District Office operations. Note that DS compensation is included in Area I.

Cabinet Expenses \$ 40,000

This represents expenses for Cabinet members related to Cabinet meetings, including Annual Conference session and Pastor's School.

Total Area III \$2,602,207

AREA IV. CONFERENCE BENEVOLENCES

Connectional Ministries:

Administrative Support & Staff	\$ 753,564
Camp and Retreat Ministries	137,268
Conference Leadership Development	<u>2,500</u>
Sub Total Connectional Ministries	\$ 893,332

The Connectional Ministries functions are responsible for equipping and training local church leaders for effective ministry. **In 2025, the Connectional Ministries Administrative Support and Staff moved from Area XII aligning with the Bishop's conference staff restructuring plan and strategic initiatives.**

Housing and Homeless Council \$ 8,550

This line item will partially fund staffing and office expenses.

Ministry of the Laity \$ 12,000

The Conference Board of Laity fosters awareness of the role of laity both within the local congregation and through their ministries, develops and promotes stewardship, provides for training of lay members, provides support and direction for ministry of the laity, and provides organization, direction, and support for the development of local church leaders.

Total Area IV \$913,882

AREA V. CAPITAL FUNDING

This area is for computers and other equipment.

Total Area V \$17,500

AREA VI. HIGHER EDUCATION AND CAMPUS MINISTRY

Total Area VI \$654,728

This line item represents the ongoing support to the North Georgia Episcopal Area United Methodist Colleges and Universities, and Wesley Foundations on college campuses. This line item also supports the office expenses and capital funding.

AREA XII. CONGREGATIONAL EXCELLENCE

Total Area XII \$ 0

Center for Congregational Excellence - See **Connectional Ministries note in Area IV**. The salaries, benefits, and expenses for personnel in the Center for Congregational Excellence have been merged with staff and program support for Connectional Ministries.

CONTINGENCY RESERVE \$ 0

SUB TOTAL

2027 CONFERENCE BUDGET \$6,926,971

GENERAL CHURCH FUNDS:

AREA VII. BLACK COLLEGE FUND

Total Area VII \$ 233,212

This line item represents our denomination's support, via supplements, of the operations and capital funding of historically black colleges and medical schools related to the United Methodist Church, including Clark Atlanta University and Paine College.

AREA VIII. MINISTERIAL EDUCATION FUND

Total Area VIII \$ 584,650

This ministry provides our churches financial support for the recruitment and education of our future pastors and bishops. Please note that our conference retains 25% of the fund balance for use in our conference. The retained fund balance as of 12/31/2024 is \$220,748. Scholarship grants can total \$1,000 per semester for undergraduate studies (certified candidates only) and \$3,000 per semester for seminary students with a lifetime maximum per student of \$28,000.

AREA IX. INTERDENOMINATIONAL COOPERATION FUND

Total Area IX \$ 24,194

This fund enables United Methodists to have a presence in the activities of ecumenical organizations and provides our United Methodist share of the basic budgets of those organizations which relate to the ecumenical responsibilities of the Council of Bishops and the General Commission on Christian Unity and Inter-religious Concerns. Included in this fund in 2024 is estimated support for:

National Council of Churches
World Council of Churches
World Methodist Council
Pan-Methodist Commission
Ecumenical Office and Travel
Interreligious Relations

AREA X. WORLD SERVICE FUND

Total Area X \$ 1,690,244

The World Service Fund enables our denomination to strengthen its evangelism efforts, stimulate church growth, expand Bible studies, and enrich spiritual commitment. This fund allows us to share in a worldwide ministry, including support for missionaries.

AREA XI. AFRICA UNIVERSITY

Total Area XI \$ 52,192

This fund supports the development of the first private university for young men and women from all over Africa. Courses of study include agriculture, theology, medicine and dentistry, education, technology, and management.

AREA XIV. EPISCOPAL FUND

Total Area XIV \$ 833,147

This fund pays the annual salaries and benefits of active bishops worldwide and some support for the retired bishops worldwide, and a small portion of episcopal residence expenses. It also funds episcopal travel and moving expenses. Jurisdictional and Central Conference bishops receive support from this fund. The estimated “fully loaded” cost of an

Episcopal leader is \$350,000. Note that our apportionment is roughly two times that amount, meaning NGA is, in essence, funding one other Episcopal leader in addition to our own.

AREA XV. GENERAL ADMINISTRATION FUND

Total Area XV \$ 285,663

This area funds those General Church activities that are specifically administrative in nature, such as the General Council on Finance and Administration, General Conference session, Archives and History and Judicial Council.

SUBTOTAL 2027 GEN CHURCH BUDGET **\$3,703,302**

AREA XVI. JURISDICTIONAL MISSION & MINISTRY FUND

Total Area XVI \$ 33,500

This area supports the administrative functions of the Southeastern Jurisdiction.

GRAND TOTAL 2027 BUDGET **\$10,663,773**

How Are Apportionments Computed?

Step 1: Conference determines annual budget, consisting of several ministries and programs, including retired ministerial support, Connectional Ministries, district office support, General Church and Jurisdictional apportionments to the North Georgia Conference.

Step 2: At calendar year-end, the local church completes the Local Church Report to the Annual Conference. (For the 2027 recommended budget, the latest available reports are the 2025 year-end reports.)

Step 3: The Treasurer's Office accumulates all local church reports and determines each local church's **operating expenses**. **Operating expenses** consist of salaries, pension benefits, clergy housing-related expenses, expense reimbursements, current program expenses, expenses related to commercial insurance and other current operating expenses. Operating expenses (also referred to as "decimal" expenses) do NOT include: HealthFlex insurance expenses, payments on indebtedness, or capital-related expenditures. Also, expenses related to "self-sustaining" activities and local benevolences are NOT considered operating expenses.

Step 4: The Treasurer's Office totals the local church operating expenses for the approximately 390 North Georgia United Methodist churches. For year-end 12/31/2025, this total was \$139,212,103.

Step 5: We determine "the decimal." This is the conference budget divided by total church operating expenses (from step four). The decimal for 2027 is **.0766, or 7.66%**.

Step 6: We multiply an individual church's operating expenses by the decimal, arriving at the total gross apportionment. We then prorate the gross apportionment to fifteen individual apportionment line items.

Step 7: We sum the apportionment for each district and send this information to the district offices. District Superintendents review the apportionments as calculated **and may adjust the calculated amounts**. Such adjustments should be made only after discussion with the church's senior pastor. Note that the District's aggregate apportionments cannot be changed.

Step 8: District superintendents notify local churches of their apportionment amounts. This information is provided to the pastors via "Local Church Apportionment Reports" at the summer/fall district set-up meetings.

Please note that churches that are considered "newly constituted" have 3 years (a change from the previous 5 year policy) to transition into their full computed apportionment. In effect, the difference between their *computed* apportionment and what they are *actually* apportioned is subsidized by the other churches in the Conference for a three-year period. (This is accomplished generally by apportioning in increments of 33.3% of computed apportionments per year for 3 years – 33.3% in year 1, 66.7% in year 2, etc.) The District

1 **208.g. North Georgia Conference Council on Finance and Administration**
2 **HOW THE 2027 RECOMMENDED CONFERENCE**
3 **APPORTIONMENT BUDGET WAS DEVELOPED**
4
5

- 6 1. The "General Church" sets priorities and develops programs at the General Conference
7 Session for a four (4) year period (the quadrennium). The new quadrennium begins in 2025
8 and runs through 2028.
9

10 The financial support for those worldwide ministries is apportioned to the Annual
11 Conferences, which, in turn, apportions those amounts to the local churches. The 2027
12 General Church Apportionments included in the total Conference budget are \$3,703,302
13 or 34.7% of the 2026 recommended Conference Budget.
14

15 The United Methodist Church is a worldwide, connectional denomination and every
16 United Methodist church supports, via apportioned giving, the denomination's worldwide
17 ministries.
18

- 19 2. Conference-based and Conference-subsidized programs, ministries, benefits, and
20 administration requested funding based on their plans and priorities for the upcoming year.
21 These plans were developed by gathering input from staff as well as those serving on boards
22 and committees, such as the Bishop and Cabinet, the Board of Pension and Health Benefits,
23 the Center for Clergy Excellence, the Board of Trustees et.al. Representatives from
24 conference departments and program ministries then submitted requests to CFA. CFA
25 reviewed these requests on February 24, 2026.
26

27 The requests were then put in the draft budget.
28

- 29 3. On March 24, 2026, CFA met to review the draft budget. During this meeting, CFA adjusted
30 the draft budget based on several factors, including budget changes compared to change in
31 local church expenditures; apportionment collection rates from prior years; feedback from
32 the local churches, and the missional priorities established by the cabinet. The percentage
33 allocable to mission and ministry initiatives continues to remain high. The total
34 recommended budget for 2027 is **\$10,663,773 an increase of \$169,842 (1.6%)** from the
35 approved 2026 budget.
36

- 37 4. Annual Conference members were briefed on the 2026 recommended budget during the
38 annual conference briefing session held on May 24, 2026.
39

- 40 5. During the Annual Conference Session, the budget was presented to members of annual
41 conference, who represent all local churches.
42

43 Conference staff will calculate the local church apportionments, which represent each
44 church's "share" of the Conference and world-wide ministry and mission, using the
45 apportionment calculation methodology described in the "Budget Interpretation."
46

1 *The apportionments will be provided to each District Superintendent, who may alter*
2 *individual apportionments within their district, but not the total amount for the district.*
3 *It is expected that the DS will have conversations with the affected churches about any*
4 *changes in the calculated apportionments.*

5
6 Final apportionments are distributed, by church, by the DS at their appointed District set-
7 up meeting in late summer/early fall.

8
9 **The Conference Treasurer's Office will NOT communicate apportionments to any**
10 **church, nor post the 2027 apportionments on the Conference website until after the**
11 **2026 District set up meetings are concluded! (Once the set-up meetings have**
12 **concluded, 2027 apportionments will be posted on the Conference website.)**

209. Conference Board of Trustees

The Conference Board of Trustees (CBOT) oversees real property and other assets entrusted to us for the benefit of the Annual Conference in accordance with *The Book of Discipline*. Additionally, CBOT fulfills a fiduciary role with respect to properties for which we are responsible because of United Methodist polity and secular law. We practice transparency and accountability in all ways possible as we oversee and support various initiatives and programs through judicious use of these assets which we report to the annual conference and its leadership

Your conference Board of Trustees is comprised of twelve dedicated, prudent, and knowledgeable laity and clergy persons. We have a shared commitment to faithful stewardship of the God given resources entrusted to our Annual Conference. Knowing we are engaged in holy work is foundational to our discussions, decisions, and actions. We strive to do what is best for the vital ministries and missions here in North Georgia, and far beyond the geographic boundaries of our Conference.

United Methodist Center Utilization

Last June we reported on the recent relocation of conference offices to the new United Methodist Center in Duluth. In one short year the conference-owned facility has been the site of many large gatherings and meetings. The space enables many missional opportunities, including space for connectional agencies and conference committees to meet. The property is now the permanent home of our Mission Hub. In the past year, the United Methodist Center has hosted Thriving Leadership Initiative meetings, Wellroot's Reaching Teens Summit, Board of Ordained Ministries interviews, UMC Discipleship Ministries' Bridging Visions event, BEAT Team meetings, Next Gen Ministries gatherings, Pan-Asian events, and many other meetings and events. We are so thankful for the wonderful property and invite you to visit.

Park Eye Fund

CBOT is responsible for oversight of the Louise D. Park Eye Fund, which in partnership with the Emory Eye Clinic provides access to critical eye care for individuals who otherwise may not be able to afford it. In the past year \$14,352 was disbursed for three individuals. In the past seven years, 2019-2025, \$877,497 has been disbursed to assist individuals retain the gift of sight. The Park Eye Fund is a shining example of a life-changing ministry of the North Georgia Conference.

Closed Church Property Net Sales Proceeds Review

In October 2025, CBOT conducted the required annual review of the Barnes Fund spending distribution percentages for church property sales. After consideration of data from the previous year, CBOT unanimously approved maintaining the distribution allocations as follows: BEAT innovative ministry grants (5%), emerging congregations grants (40%), ethnic ministries program funding (7.5%), church property revitalization district grants (35%), Methodist Center property reserves (10%), and contingency and lawsuit funding (2.5%).

BEAT Team Recommendation for North and South Georgia Funds

Conference Trustees considered detailed information provided by BEAT Team Co-Chairs on the unification of North and South Georgia funds to support BEAT grant funding.

1 BEAT recommended that CBOT approve the receipt of South Georgia Conference innovative
2 grant funds into the Barnes Fund for Church Development, to be combined with North Georgia
3 Conference funds in the Barnes Fund, for distribution in accordance with the Barnes Fund
4 distribution allocation guidelines. CBOT unanimously approved the BEAT recommendation.
5

6 **Conclusion**

7 It is a privilege to serve alongside the other Trustees and the exceptional staff of the
8 Conference CFO's office who support every CBOT endeavor. I extend my heartfelt appreciation
9 to these individuals for your faithfulness, integrity, and commitment to the work for which we
10 are called. As well, thank you to the cabinet, Bishop Dease, and the annual conference for your
11 continued support, and confidence in the important work of the Conference Board of Trustees.
12 The Board of Trustees has no matters before you for vote.
13

14 Respectfully submitted,
15 Susan J. Daniell
16 Chair, Conference Board of Trustees
17 susan.daniell@gmail.com

Superintendent has discretion to review and accelerate a new church's proration amount depending on the health of the church.

Information Only

Note: Information reported by our churches on the year-end "Table III" report which is a report of revenues, indicates the following:

Total "normal" giving as reported on **2025** year-end report - \$166,049,842

Recommended **2027** Apportionment Budget - \$10,663,773

The 2027 Conference budget, expressed as a percentage of aggregate 2025 revenues, is 6.4%.

Total "normal" giving as reported on the **2024** year-end report - \$160,686,944

Approved **2026** Apportionment Budget - \$10,493,931

The 2026 Conference budget, expressed as a percentage of aggregate 2024 revenues, is 6.5%.

Previous Years:

- 2025 – 6.9%
- 2024 – 6.1%
- 2023 – 6.5%
- 2022 – 6.7%
- 2021 – 6.6%
- 2020 – 7.80%

Section 3: Conference Ministries

300. Director of Connectional Ministries

The past year, the work of Connectional Ministries has been focused on getting into churches and working with laity and clergy on development and creating new pathways for ministry. Our Regional Developers (RDs) have traveled many, many miles across the annual conference leading churches in discerning God's presence and purpose. We have been so blessed by the wonderful generosity of the Lilly Foundation: Thriving Congregations Grant, which has allowed us to experience the strategic work of Regional Developers. The salaries and benefits packages of the Regional Developers have been provided through the Lilly Endowment, Inc.'s Thriving Congregations Initiative grant for the 24/25 and 25/26 conference years.

The first year, the RDs spent time connecting with the churches of their assigned districts and building relationships and discerning what steps might need to be taken for congregations to thrive in an era of post-disaffiliation. In addition, each RD focused on the following areas:

- Minho Chung: North East District, Next Gen Ministries (Youth and Children), and Pan Asian Church Development
- Keya Hillman: South Central District, Black Church Development, General Counsel of Religion and Race (GCORR) liaison
- Heather Jallad: South West District, Discipleship, and Fresh Expressions
- Ash McEuen: North West District - Hispanic/Latine Church Development, Immigration support and education.
- Alissa Rothschild: South East District, Project Coordinator for Thriving Leadership Initiative

We have offered individual churches coaching and leadership, as well as group training opportunities. In January we held an online training for new and returning church council, SPRC, trustees, finance chairs, lay leaders, and stewardship chairs. In February and March, each district chose a specific ministry focus and hosted in person trainings for the conference which included: Next Generation Leadership with Russell Davis and Camp Glisson, Church Finances (NE District), Stewardship and Generosity Initiatives (SW District), Disaster Response (SE District), Next Generation Discipleship (SC District), and Community Engagement (NW District).

The Thriving Leadership Initiative (TLI) continued to grow this year as one of the most significant leadership development efforts within our annual conference. Created to equip clergy and laity to faithfully lead the church in today's rapidly changing world, TLI has become more than a training program—it has become a transformational learning community.

Participants gathered through both large in-person learning events and monthly online Learning Labs focused on topics such as adaptive leadership, spiritual leadership, financial wellness, team systems, conflict transformation, discipleship pathways, and community engagement. One of the unique strengths of TLI is the intentional integration of clergy and laity learning side-by-side, creating deeper connectional relationships and

1 broader perspectives for ministry.

2 Participants consistently named the value of community, encouragement, and
3 practical application:

4
5 “The opportunity to learn alongside laity—because I mostly learn alongside clergy.”
6

7 “Ministry can be isolating at times...thank you for bringing us together off our islands
8 and out of our silos.”
9

10 “Each time we gather, I realize more and more how much I learn from the listening.”
11

12 Many participants also shared that TLI helped them reconnect with their sense of calling and
13 hope for ministry:

14
15 “Reestablishing my connection with my call...we can get so busy working that we forget
16 that God is concerned with our being.”
17

18 “The acknowledgment and naming of the struggles that every church is facing in today’s
19 world is powerful...but also the reminder that God IS on the loose and on the move.”
20

21 Others described how the learning is already shaping ministry in tangible ways within their local
22 churches and communities:

23
24 “Because of Bishop Rivas’s teaching, I am working on starting a nonprofit to help with
25 food insecurity among public school students.”
26

27 “We are having a visioning session in the spring and our TLI participants are going to
28 lead different sessions to translate to the church.”
29

30 “As a Lay Leader, I have applied the learnings into the worship service liturgy, prayer,
31 and class participation.”
32

33 Perhaps most significantly, participants repeatedly described TLI as different from many
34 previous leadership experiences:

35
36 “I have attended countless seminars, workshops, and retreats over the course of my
37 ministry...and by far THIS one is different. It causes my heart to soar, refreshing my
38 spirit and giving me practical ideas to put to use.”
39

40 We are deeply grateful for the Lilly Endowment’s support through the Thriving
41 Congregations Initiative, which continues to make this work possible. The fruit of TLI is already
42 being seen through renewed leadership, stronger connectional relationships, and new expressions
43 of ministry emerging across the Annual Conference.

44 In August we held a retreat for the District Superintendents, Regional Developers and
45 Lay Leaders of each district at the Ignatius Jesuit Retreat Center. In April, Next Gen leaders from
46 across the North and South Georgia Conferences' children's, youth, and campus ministries

1 gathered for a facilitated retreat to create key areas of focus and an action plan for the next 12-18
2 months of ministries.

3 I am grateful for the entire staff for their commitment to the local church and the work we
4 do to support laity and clergy. We look forward to the work we will do together in the future!

5
6 Respectfully Submitted,
7 Rev. Laurie Moeller
8
9

10 **300.b. North Georgia Annual Conference Policy for Reducing the Risk of Abuse for**
11 **Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults In District and Conference Ministry Programs**
12 **and Events**
13

14 God calls us to make our ministries safe, protecting children and other vulnerable persons from
15 abuse and exploitation. God calls us to create communities of faith where children and adults can
16 be safe and grow strong.
17

18 We recognize that children are people under the age of 18. Vulnerable adults are those 65 and
19 older, and those over 18 years of age with cognitive and/or physical disabilities. Our Christian
20 faith calls us to offer both hospitality and protection to those in our care, as well as to those who
21 are committed to engaging in ministry as volunteers and employees.
22

23 Jesus said, "If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones...it would be
24 better for you if a great millstone were fastened around your neck and you were drowned in the
25 depth of the sea." (Matthew 18:6 NRSV) We affirm our responsibility for the safety of children
26 at each child's baptism by our congregational response, pledging:

27 "With God's help we will so order our lives after the example of Christ, that this child,
28 surrounded by steadfast love, may be established in the faith, and confirmed and strengthened in
29 the way that leads to life eternal."

30 (from the Book of Worship, Baptismal Covenant, Congregational Pledge 2)
31

32 The Social Principles of the United Methodist Church state that "...children must be protected
33 from economic, physical, and sexual exploitation and abuse."
34

35 Building on our theological and spiritual foundation, we must act in ways that secure for
36 children, youth and vulnerable adults a safe place in our ministries. It is also our responsibility to
37 assure that those who make the commitment to work with our children, youth, and vulnerable
38 adults as volunteers or paid staff, are protected from the possibility of false allegations.
39

40 Although it is our fervent hope and prayer that abuse does not occur in our District and
41 Conference programs, we must put into place sufficient mechanisms to reduce the risk of abuse
42 of children, youth, vulnerable adults, and those who work with them. For that purpose, our
43 ministries shall implement the following procedures in District and Conference ministry
44 programs and events.
45

46 RECRUITING/SCREENING WORKERS

1 All persons employed to serve in a supervisory capacity for children/youth shall:

- 2 · Be at least 21 years of age. In certain circumstances, such as Camp and Retreat
- 3 Ministries leadership, 18 years shall be the acceptable minimum age when combined with
- 4 adequate training in the Conference policies and procedures and competent oversight by a
- 5 qualified adult.
- 6 · Complete an Application/Commitment Form.
- 7 · Provide three character references.
- 8 · Be interviewed by the Director of the ministry/program.
- 9 · Consent to a criminal records check and a driver's license record check. This process
- 10 can sometimes take up to 2 weeks; therefore; care should be taken to recruit workers and
- 11 collect necessary information for submission to proper authorities with enough lead time
- 12 to fully meet the policy requirements).

13
14 All volunteers serving in a supervisory capacity for children/youth shall:

- 15 ● Be at least 21 years of age.
- 16 ● Be at least five (5) years older than the group they are supervising.
- 17 ● Be a member in good standing at a United Methodist Church for at least six (6) months.
- 18 ● Complete an Application/Commitment form.
- 19 ● Be interviewed by the Director of the ministry/program.
- 20 ● Consent to a criminal records check and driver's license records check.
- 21 ● Provide three character references.

22
23 All volunteers serving in a helping capacity for children/youth shall:

- 24 ● Be at least five (5) years older than the group they are helping.
- 25 ● Be a member in good standing at a United Methodist Church for at least six (6) months.
- 26 ● Complete an Application/Commitment form.
- 27 ● Be interviewed by the Director of the ministry/program.
- 28 ● Consent to a criminal records check and driver's license records check.
- 29 ● Provide three character references.

30
31 In the event that a substitute worker needs to be brought in under last minute circumstances, that

32 person must:

- 33 ● Be at least five (5) years older than the group they are helping.
- 34 ● Be a member in good standing at a United Methodist Church for at least six (6) months.
- 35 ● Complete an Application/Commitment form.
- 36 ● Provide a character reference who can be contacted by the Director immediately.
- 37 ● Complete a basic orientation/training provided by the Director or other supervisor before
- 38 actually beginning work.

39 40 TRAINING

41 Training must be a mandatory component of each Event's design. The Design Team shall be

42 responsible for assuring that adequate insurance for the specific event and/or activities either

43 from the Conference or the District is in place. The Design Team must also have a person

44 available at the event who is designated to receive any report of allegations of abuse and follow

45 through according to the Conference guidelines and the requirements of State Law. All workers

46 shall be trained in safety, first aid, and abuse prevention.

1
2 Training shall include information, explanation, and discussion of:

- 3 · The Annual Conference Policy.
- 4 · Behaviors or other indicators which may signal problems.
- 5 · Requirements of Georgia law for reporting incidents of abuse.
- 6 · Procedures for response to incidents of abuse and for reporting incidents of abuse.

7
8 All workers and leaders will sign a covenant to abide by the Conference policy at the conclusion
9 of each training prior to an event.

10 11 REGULAR OPERATIONS FOR PROGRAMS AND EVENTS

12 All District and Conference ministries with children/youth shall be governed by these guidelines:

- 13 · Two adults shall be present at all times.
- 14 · If both boys and girls are participants, then the adult leaders should also include both
15 men and women.
- 16 · The number of workers required for each event (above the minimum of two) will be
17 determined by the number and age of the participants and the nature of the activities.
- 18 · Unauthorized visitors will not be allowed to remain with the group.
- 19 · Participants will not be allowed to leave the designated meeting area without
20 permission/supervision.
- 21 · During ministry events, one-on-one activities shall not be conducted “behind closed
22 doors” or in isolated area away from trained supervisory persons.
- 23 · All ministry events will be carried out in appropriate locations with adequate
24 equipment and trained adult supervisors present.

25 26 REPORTING INCIDENTS

27 All reporting of alleged incidents or actual incidents of abuse must strictly follow Georgia law.

28
29 A worker who has reasonable cause to suspect that abuse has occurred should secure the safety
30 of the child, if possible, and then immediately report the incident to the Director/Supervisor of
31 the ministry event. It is never the responsibility of a worker with children or youth to investigate
32 allegations of child abuse. The Director/Supervisor will then follow all appropriate procedures
33 for reporting to the child’s parents or guardian, authorities of the Annual Conference and/or
34 District, and local law enforcement or child protective service agencies. In the event that the
35 Director/Supervisor is the alleged perpetrator, reports should be given to the District
36 Superintendent for the District holding the event, or in the case of a North Georgia Conference
37 sponsored event, the Director of the Center for Congregational Excellence will receive the
38 report.

39 40 CONCLUSION

41 We take our policies to reduce risk of abuse seriously and we are committed to their enforcement
42 for the safety and security of all our children, youth, vulnerable adults, and those who work with
43 them. All Conference and District ministry events are required to comply with these policies.
44 Each Conference ministry event shall be subject to review by the Executive Committee of the
45 Center for Congregational Excellence and the Conference staff person related to that event.

Each District ministry event shall be subject to review by the Executive Committee of the District Leadership Team or its equivalent. Conference and District ministry events not sponsored by the Office of Connectional Ministries or the District Leadership Team or its equivalent will be subject to review by the Team, Committee, or Board that initiates the event. Non-compliance with these policies shall result in potential loss of sponsorship by the Office of Connectional Ministries, District Leadership Team, or the sponsoring Team, Board, or Committee. The Office of Connectional Ministries shall review these policies and procedures at least every quadrennial.

These policies and procedures were unanimously adopted by the 1998 session of the North Georgia Annual Conference. Implementation of the training procedures began by the 1999 session of the Annual Conference and continue in Conference and District events. This policy was reviewed and updated for the 2026 session of the Annual Conference.

301. Connectional Ministries Team Report

The Connectional Ministries Team (CMT) is a collection of ministry teams centered around the Connectional Table's Five Areas of Focus: New Faith Opportunities & Communities, Scriptural Literacy & Imagination, Racial Justice & Healing, Health & Wellbeing, and Community Engagement. Informed by these five areas of focus, CMT's work is framed by three areas of responsibility: Advocacy, Discipleship, and Resources/Stewardship.

Advocacy: CMT understands the importance of advocacy as a part of the church's DNA. Members of CMT participated in the Georgia Interfaith Public Policy Event held at Oak Grove UMC in October. Through the efforts of Pamela Carns, our Advocacy Chair and her team, CMT was kept informed of advocacy opportunities throughout the year, from Creation Care to Gun Violence Prevention. A complete list of CMT's advocacy efforts can be found at the CMT page on the North Georgia Conference website.

Discipleship: Discipleship is foundational to the work of CMT. We view discipleship as a process that helps move people from "just knowing the story, to living the story." This is not a program, but a movement of the Holy Spirit. In an effort to continue our collaboration in developing a discipleship process model, we added a page on the CMT website which offers resources and pilot programs for churches in the area of discipleship. That page can be found at: <https://www.ngumc.org/discipleship>.

Resources/Stewardship: CMT evaluates grant applications from UM affiliates outside of the local church before they are sent on to the Barnes Evaluation and Administration Team (BEAT) for final review.

CMT also develops and evaluates Church of Excellence (COE) Awards in five areas of focus: Scriptural Literacy & Imagination, Health & Wellbeing, Community Engagement, Racial Justice & Healing, and New Faith Opportunities & Communities. CMT presented COE Awards to 14 churches at the 2025 Annual Conference in four of these areas. CMT has received almost 20 applications for 2026 CEO Awards. These awards recognize churches which have gone above and beyond in their pursuit of dynamic mission and ministry.

CMT continues its work to strengthen the local church and annual conference through discipleship, through the prophetic voice of advocacy that calls us to be better, and through identifying resources for ministry.

Anjie Peek Rivers, Clergy Co-chair of Connectional Ministries Team
Lee D. Highsmith, Lay Co-chair of Connectional Ministries Team

302. Connectional Ministries - Advocacy Committee

In 2025, the Advocacy ministry pledged during its Advocacy Committee meeting to continue to “amplify advocacy” in the North Georgia Conference. The ministry provided support to Advocacy Committee team members and engaged in a number of social justice issues:

- Established an Advocacy web page on the North Georgia Conference website - <https://www.ngumc.org/advocacy>.
- Provided all team members access to the *Church and Society Building Power Together: A Toolkit for Advocates in Leadership* training materials and shared online access to the 2025 Faith & Facts Cards for Bible study and advocacy.
- Participated in GBCS’s *Grace over Greed* webinar and campaign advocacy.
- Continued Anti-Death Penalty awareness by sharing advocacy and engagement opportunities, including Georgians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty Day at the Capitol, legislation advocacy, and GFADP’s vigil for life.
- Supported calls to action on issues, including environmental justice, Medicaid expansion, SNAP funding, poverty elimination, and gun safety.

Pamela Perkins Carn, Chair,
Advocacy Committee,
perkinspl@bellsouth.net

303. Conference Commission on Religion and Race (CCORR)

CCORR’s foreparent, the General Commission on Religion and Race (GCRORR) originated in the UMC in 1968. A response to the racial strife of the 1960s, it was to assist the church in discontinuing the sinful sickness of systemic racism in the new denomination.

North Georgia’s commissioners commit to this discontinuing. As such, CCORR grieves the direction of the United States of America federal government. Intentional offensives such as deaths in California and Minnesota at the hands of federal agents, the continued abduction and detention of persons without due process, and acts of war against Venezuela and Iran as antithetical to the gospel. We join with the conference in speaking out and in offering ministries that challenge bigotry and work to heal our land. CCORR celebrates work that includes:

- New Facebook Page: With the North Georgia Conference Connectional Ministries and communications director, CCORR developed a Facebook page. This has been important for social media responses to actions and ideas that oppose the gospel of Christ and the dignity of humans across the globe.

- Nominations: CCORR continues active participation in the conference nominating process. We celebrate that annual conference leadership, more and more, reflects the demographics of Georgia and the world. Those we seek to reach are represented in those positioned as spiritual leaders.
- Racial Justice and Healing Academy (RJHA): As Georgia merges, CCORR will continue to advocate for this work as essential to unification. North Georgia leads the denomination in developing this work and requiring participation in ministry like this (and GCORR bias training) to qualify for conference leadership. Collaborating with the Board of Ordained Ministry, the Board of Laity, and the cabinet remains essential to this.
- Conference Reparations work: This work shall be transferred, via the direction of our bishop, from the definition and limitations of a task force to a conference committee on Jubilee. We look forward to this expansion and continuation of biblical and social repair.
- Restoration of the Director of Inclusion and Advocacy staff position: CCORR remains convinced that this office is essential to the conference's work in recognizing, acknowledging, and healing division at this time in our history. Critical to the development of RJHA, the Reparations Task Group, the nominations teams' intentional work on inclusion; cabinet agreement to use proceeds from Black church property sales to fund Black Congregational Development grants, and clergy candidate training, we remain convinced that the church must offer a deliberate alternative to the structural elimination of such positions in government and businesses.

As always, CCORR thanks Bishop Robin Dease and the cabinet for supporting our conference ministry.

Rev. Dr. Vance P. Ross, Chair

304. Conference Commission on the Status and Role of Women

The Commission on the Status and Role of Women (COSROW) advocates for the full and equal participation of women in the total life and mission of the Church. The Book of Discipline assigns each annual conference's COSROW the task of raising awareness about women's status and collaborating with church, district, and conference leaders to achieve full and equal participation of women in the church's life.

During the annual conference, COSROW volunteers will monitor sessions to ensure inclusivity, recording demographic data of speakers and observing interactions. This effort aims to foster self-awareness and equitable inclusion of all voices. A monitoring report will be submitted to both the annual conference and General COSROW, contributing to broader data collection.

Since our annual conference last gathered, COSROW has made significant progress in advancing our advocacy work. Here are a few key highlights. We proposed a Parental Leave Policy to the Board of Ordained Ministry, and we're pleased to share that it was adopted. We began a mentoring program that pairs clergywomen with experienced colleagues for guidance and support. We also created a support system for clergy who have experienced a sexual ethics violation. In addition, we have been in active communication with the conference's salary equalization task force. Finally, we developed educational materials to help churches and Staff Parish Relations Committees (SPRCs) prepare to welcome a woman pastor.

1 COSROW continues to grow in mission and reach, and we look forward to building a
2 UMC where the call and ministry of all people are valued. COSROW encourages all local
3 churches to consider how they are supporting the ministry of women in leadership and to use
4 gender-inclusive language in all aspects of ministry.

5 At this annual conference, we celebrate the 70th anniversary of the ordination of women
6 in The United Methodist Church! We hope you reflect on the women who have helped you be
7 faithful followers of Jesus Christ and consider who you might encourage to do the same for
8 future generations.

9 Lindsey Solomon, COSROW Representative
10 Lindsey.Solomon@georgiaumc.net
11
12

13 **305. Disaster Response Ministries** 14

15 We are grateful for the ongoing growth of every North Georgia UMC church as a United
16 Methodist Committee On Relief partner as it's our praying, giving, and serving together that
17 brings disaster response ministry to life. In this past year, we are thankful for United Methodist
18 Committee on Relief (UMCOR) support to allow us to add Jamaar Franklin Pye as our NGUMC
19 Disaster Response Associate. Jamaar assists congregations and districts creating a disaster
20 response plan, implementing Connecting Neighbors curriculum, or training an Early Response
21 Team (ERT). Pye's work has focused on church preparation for disaster, and how we can
22 coordinate effectively in partnership locally and statewide. It is crucial every UMC congregation
23 be ready to serve the community after a disaster.

24 We are grateful that Grace Lee-Zimmerman continues very effectively leading the
25 Disaster Ministries warehouse at Impact and the MissionHub at the Conference Center. Find
26 more details and registration at <https://www.ngumc.org/warehouse> for your church to send a
27 mission group to serve in creating or transporting UMCOR hygiene or cleaning kits. In both ERT
28 and warehouse/logistics we are working closely with the South Georgia Conference to serve the
29 state.

30 A major effort with UMCOR recovery ministry continues in the Augusta area since
31 September 27, 2024 as the UMC leads the way in a 3 county area rebuilding homes and lives.
32 Our NGUMC disaster response has formed the core of local recovery of vulnerable neighbors
33 unable to rebuild from Hurricane Helene without assistance.

34 We created an UMCOR recovery staff including disaster case managers, construction
35 coordinators, volunteer coordinator, and financial/ grant administrator. This created a core team
36 that allowed us to confirm hurricane damage of over 200 uninsured and under-insured residents
37 in Richmond, McDuffie, & Columbia Counties. This allows our community ministry:

38 -to receive 472 requests for unmet needs, & confirm and move into case management for major
39 and complete rebuild of 214 projects (as of 3/16/26).

40 -to secure grant funding for rebuild projects from NGUMC Conference Offering, UMCOR, the
41 Community Foundation of the CSRA, Southeastern Synod of the ELCA, and the American Red
42 Cross long term recovery, plus a number of NGUMC churches providing ongoing special project
43 support, especially the DARE (Disaster Aid and Recovery) monthly team out of Roswell UMC
44 and over a dozen partner churches from metro Atlanta and across NGUMC.

45 -to attract national recovery rebuilding partners including Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS)/
46 Disaster Aid Ohio, Christian Disaster Service (CDS) of the Brethren Church, Methodist

1 NOMADS, monthly teams from DARE from Roswell and metro Atlanta, & many volunteer
2 teams from churches across the United States. Through late October until the end of March we
3 often hosted 80-120 volunteers every day working a dozen worksites. May 2026 will have a
4 historic partnership with NECHAMA, the national Jewish disaster response team, as they send
5 groups for 4 weeks to assist our recovery. We anticipate MDS, CDS, & NOMADS returning in
6 the fall 2026. We continue to need Georgia UMC teams to assist.

7 This community ministry created a dynamic system so that in November 2025 these
8 incredible partners supplied 208 volunteers working 11,209 hours in November; in December
9 172 volunteers working 9417 hours; in January 2026 we hosted 342 volunteers working 13403
10 hours; & in February fielded 421 volunteers working 13,356 hours.

11 The result of our UMCOR disaster recovery leadership results in very robust UMC
12 witness and leadership as homes are rebuilt or repaired so that hurricane survivors can lead a
13 more normal life. Such extraordinary partnering results in renewed community as our UMCOR
14 and UMC leadership leads the way with over 100 homes repaired or rebuilt in the past year, and
15 anticipation of completing 100 more homes rebuilt in the next year.

16
17 Scott Parrish
18 Mission and Disaster Response Specialist
19
20

21 **306. Global Ministries & United Methodist Volunteers in Mission**

22

23 Historically and practically, United Methodists are at our best when we are missionally
24 active through congregation, conference, and the larger connection. This practical expression of
25 faith is lived out in our local communities and around our state, nation, and world. Our faith
26 shared in the public arena, both with nearby neighbors and around the world, is a way for us to
27 follow Jesus and to help alleviate pain and suffering as we share Good News by our actions.

28 In 2025, we had 19 North Georgia United Methodist churches send mission teams in
29 coordination with United Methodist Volunteers in Mission (UMVIM). Belize, Brazil, Costa
30 Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Kenya, and Nicaragua were among the
31 UMVIM partner destinations. It is exciting to see churches continue international partnerships,
32 and to utilize UMVIM best practices including adding international team insurance.

33 <https://umvim.org/insurance>

34 North Georgia Conference continues to celebrate the ways congregations support mission
35 through the UMC General Board of Global Ministries (GBGM) and The United Methodist
36 Committee on Relief (UMCOR). For 2025, our North Georgia giving to GBGM and UMCOR
37 was almost \$518,000. This included direct support of 18 missionaries, and general support of
38 over 200 missionaries serving in 60 countries, plus the continued generous support of
39 denominational disaster relief and recovery through UMCOR. 2025 also saw a major support
40 initiative from GBGM with Feeding Our Neighbors food grants to support new or existing food
41 banks and pantries affiliated with UMC churches. The wide range of mission opportunities may
42 be found at <https://umcmmission.org/work>.

43 We currently have exceptional mission opportunities in the North Georgia Conference
44 including:

1 -to serve at the Disaster Ministries warehouse at Impact or at the MissionHub at the
2 Conference Center. Find more details and registration for individuals and groups at
3 <https://www.ngumc.org/warehouse> to work with Grace Lee-Zimmerman.

4 -to send your church mission team to Augusta to help in the ongoing Hurricane Helene
5 recovery as we assist vulnerable, elderly neighbors to rebuild their homes.
6 <https://www.ngumc.org/longtermrecovery>

7 Churches are reminded that anyone serving in mission should be have Safe Sanctuaries
8 training including a current background check, should have sufficient insurance coverage (note
9 that international travel is typically not covered, so it's important to add supplemental coverage),
10 and can find resources and forms at <https://umvim.org/> for local, national, and global mission.

11
12 AnnaKate Rawles

13 Scott Parrish

14 Conference Secretaries of Global Ministries

Section 4: Conference Related Agencies

*400. Aldersgate Homes and Collinswood

Aldersgate/Collinswood is an organization in North Georgia dedicated to serving the disabilities community through advocacy, education, and recreation. We work with churches and individuals to help support those with disabilities and to create a community where people of all abilities are welcome.

Our beautiful Collinswood on Lake Oconee offers a wonderful place to enjoy God's world. The retreat center, which is open to all, offers comfortable cottages, a fully equipped dining/meeting hall, a spacious pavilion, a lake front boathouse, a gazebo and dock. All of these facilities are fully accessible. In 2025, the facility was used by multiple churches for confirmation, youth, and adult retreats. We hope you will consider this beautiful and serene facility for your next church retreat or event.

The Marian Wilder Award recognizes churches who create programs and make modifications to their facilities that will welcome people with disabilities. The ministry focus of Aldersgate Homes is to connect and resource churches to create accessible and welcoming spaces within their worshipping community.

This year, Aldersgate Homes is hosting the Annual Conference We Are Able 5k. The race will be held on Saturday, June 20 at 7am. Proceeds from the race will go towards the ministry of Aldersgate Homes and Collinswood. Aldersgate Homes is grateful for our sponsoring churches and organizations for making the We Are Able 5k possible. You may register for the 5k at classicroaceservices.com.

Aldersgate Homes believes that the greatest impact we might have on the disabilities community and on our North Georgia congregations will be to help to build understanding of the needs of those with different abilities through building relationships. We continue to walk alongside churches to help them find the strengths that they can bring to this process. Aldersgate is asking for this support of the ministry to individuals with disabilities. Our conference-wide offering will be held in October. Thank you for 35 years of support for Aldersgate Homes and Collinswood.

Lindsey Solomon
Aldersgate.Collinswood@gmail.com
aldersgatehomes.org

*401. Methodist Foundation for Retired Ministers

The Purpose of the Foundation for Retired Ministers is to maintain "a permanent endowment to provide a living for retired ministers, widows, and dependent children of deceased ministers." Historically, this was accomplished by acquiring houses that were available to retirees as needed and available. By the 1970s, the need for housing was declining to the point that the annual conference directed the Foundation to liquidate these homes. To fulfill its mission, the Foundation used some of its assets to help the Conference liquidate the unfunded liability for pre-1982 service that directly benefited retired clergy. In recent years, the Foundation has provided significant funding for the Wesley Woods Chaplaincy and assisted individual retirees with disability and health issues that were not covered by other resources.

1 As the primary source of revenue the Foundation has been through the sale of acquired
2 homes (the last home was sold in 2025), investment income is our only remaining income. This
3 demands us to be judicious, discerning and good stewards of the funds entrusted to us. We are
4 committed to evaluate how best to meet new, emerging, and future needs of retired Clergy and
5 their families that is faithful to our stated purpose.

6
7 Respectfully Submitted,
8 David S. Naglee, President
9 david.naglee@georgiaumc.net
10 Ed Tomlinson, Executive Director
11
12

13 ***402. Murphy-Harpst Children's Centers**

14

15 The call to serve vulnerable and suffering children has been central to the mission of
16 Murphy-Harpst Children's Centers for more than a century. Since its founding, this ministry has
17 demonstrated what is possible when members of The United Methodist Church respond to "the
18 least of these" with compassion, courage, and a shared commitment to community.

19 That partnership remains vital, supported by congregations across Georgia, including
20 Sunday School classes, United Women in Faith circles, United Methodist Men's groups, youth
21 fellowships, and others. Their generosity sustains at-risk youth, many of whom have no safe
22 alternatives, through services provided on our Cedartown residential campus, in Evolve homes in
23 Augusta and Conyers, and in foster care placements throughout the region. Contributions such as
24 the conference's annual Murphy-Harpst Special Offering, launching July 19, help fund
25 innovative therapies not covered by state funding. Overall, approximately 20 percent of our
26 operating budget is supported through private donations. In addition, churches and volunteers
27 provide meaningful engagement through birthday celebrations, summer "Fun Fridays," mission
28 projects, and in-kind gifts that help make Christmas and Easter healing and hopeful experiences.

29 The need for these services remains urgent. Georgia's foster care system currently serves
30 nearly twice as many children as there are licensed foster homes, creating a gap of several
31 thousand placements. Safe, stable options are especially limited for adolescents with higher
32 clinical needs, and the state continues to rely on Murphy-Harpst to help meet this demand.

33 Over the past year, our community-based Evolve Initiative expanded serving 28 youth,
34 with additional homes planned. Each home accommodates four youth and is supported by trained
35 caretakers, an in-home therapist, and behavioral aides. Nearly 90 percent of youth in the program
36 demonstrated measurable improvement in behavioral health outcomes. Two participants
37 graduated from high school in May, with one accepted to the University of West Georgia.

38 We have expanded services in Cedartown, serving approximately 80 youth on campus,
39 opening a second Qualified Residential Treatment Program designed to serve youth transitioning
40 from psychiatric care or temporary hotel placements. This model has gained national recognition,
41 achieving an 81 percent success rate in transitioning youth to family settings, foster care, group
42 care, or independent living.

43 Our clinical services continue to evolve as well. MindVox™, an innovative therapeutic
44 model developed by our clinical team, integrates music, songwriting, and composition with
45 Cognitive Behavior Therapy. Through guided sessions, youth create lyrics, beats, and recordings,
46 using music to process trauma and build resilience.

1 The healing experienced by the children and youth we serve is made possible through the
2 grace of God and the steadfast support of our church partners. We are deeply grateful for the
3 generosity of the North Georgia Conference and remain committed to nurturing the God-given
4 potential of every child entrusted to our care. We invite you to learn more by visiting
5 murphyharpst.org or by arranging a visit to our campus.

6 Michael S. Merritt, LPC
7 President & CEO
8 contact@murphyharpst.org
9

10 ***403. North Georgia Camp and Retreat Ministries, Inc.**

11
12
13 “The two most important days of your life are the day you are born
14 and the day you find out why.” - Mark Twain
15

16 Assuming Twain is right, and since most every person attending summer camp programs
17 and retreats has already been born, NGCRM is laser focused on helping them find out why.

18 Camp and Retreat Ministries begins the work of “why” well upstream of commitments of
19 faith, discernment of calling and vocation, though those are all steps toward understanding our
20 purpose as Christians. Our most fundamental goal is that participants in our summer camp
21 programs, starting as early as rising second graders, are affirmed in their awareness, or they
22 discover for the first time that they are loved and gifted children of God.

23 We believe that commitments of faith and pursuits of calling made from the fullness of
24 love and giftedness (rather than out of guilt or obligation) have the power to transform the world.
25 That's why beyond just playing in the woods, we focus on creating space and relationships that
26 help participants in our programs discover their "why". Once campers learn to see themselves as
27 God sees them, young people open the door to practice loving others and pursue their calling as a
28 response to God's love for them (instead of a sense of duty or obligation). The result? A new
29 generation of Christ followers better equipped to do "Unto the Least of These".

30 Glisson's retreat ministries continued to grow slightly in 2025, with 8,430 guests hosted.
31 Attendance in NGA Conference events hosted at Glisson was down slightly from 2024, but the
32 number of attendees at local UM church retreats increased slightly, making overall UM retreat
33 usage flat from year to year. Just under 25% of the retreat groups served by Glisson in 2025 were
34 from United Methodist churches and other UM ministries, flat from 2024 after two years of
35 decline. Overall retreat attendance increased slightly from a record year in 2024 as its growth
36 continued to cover for post-pandemic/disaffiliation decline in summer camp enrollment.

37 Attendance in North Georgia's family of camp ministries declined by 2% in 2025, with
38 Glisson enrollment down by 78 campers across programs. Grow Day Camps served 655 campers
39 at 19 day camp partner sites, and the number of ELI participants grew to 57 high school juniors
40 and seniors. 38% of our 2025 summer campers were members of United Methodist
41 congregations, down from 41% in 2024 and 49% in 2023.

42 Over the next 2 to 3 years, NGCRM will expand and deepen the ways its ministries
43 intentionally partner with camper parents and families in an effort to ensure all discern “why” we
44 were born. May the church continue the work of ensuring that each one builds the capacity to
45 fully live into our “why”, God's calling.
46

Respectfully submitted,

1 Bill Martin, Chairperson
2 C. Russell Davis, Executive Director - russell@ngcrm.org
3

4 ***404. Wellroot Family Services**
5

6 When faced with a community in crisis, the best thing to do is the most basic thing:
7 care. For 155 years, Wellroot Family Services, your United Methodist Children's Home in North
8 Georgia, has led with care. At the heart of Wellroot's mission is how we start every conversation:
9 not with "what did you do," but with "what happened to you?" and "how can we help?" That
10 simple shift changes everything. The responses stay with us.

11 "This is the first time anyone has asked me that." "I love my children. I just don't know
12 what to do." "I finally feel like somebody cares what happens next."
13 When we approach families with genuine care and without judgment, they let down their guard,
14 share their struggles honestly, and allow us to walk alongside them toward healing. As Jesus
15 said, "Whenever you have done this to the least of these, you have done it to me."

16 Because of your compassion, more families found someone willing to ask that question.
17 3843 lives were impacted in Fiscal Year 2025. 620 children, teens, parents, and siblings worked
18 together to strengthen communication, repair relationships, and address behavioral and mental
19 health challenges as a united family through Functional Family Therapy. 670 new mothers and
20 their babies were surrounded with encouragement, guidance, and early support that builds a
21 strong foundation for life. 120 parents and caregivers gained the confidence and skills to create
22 calmer homes and stronger bonds with their children.

23 121 young adults and families found a safe place to land, along with the stability and
24 support needed to begin building a brighter future. 156 children found safety, connection, and
25 caring homes through trusted community partners who walked alongside them on their
26 journey. 105 children and teens experienced the love and stability of nurturing foster families
27 during some of the most uncertain moments of their lives. 1931 teachers, social workers, and
28 community leaders were equipped to better understand trauma and help children and families
29 thrive.

30 Rooted in love and faith, your gifts and time become the very foundation of a caring
31 community. 186 churches showed up with compassion to help create the steady, nurturing
32 environment that allows children, youth, and families to grow and heal. Your care enables
33 families to let down their guard and move toward hope-filled futures. Your generosity
34 strengthens the deep roots that support their stability and resilience, ensuring that each family
35 feels seen, supported, and surrounded by a community that believes in their potential.

36 We especially thank our top five giving churches of fiscal year 2025: Dunwoody United
37 Methodist Church, Peachtree Road United Methodist Church, Northside United Methodist
38 Church, St. James United Methodist Church Atlanta, and Johns Creek United Methodist Church.

39 When the Church answers the call to do "Unto the Least of These," you cultivate the care
40 that transforms crisis into connection and helps futures flourish. Well-rooted families grow hope-
41 filled futures for parents and children alike. Thank you for being the hands and feet of Christ in
42 this world.

43
44 F. Allison Ashe
45 President & CEO
46 Wellroot Family Services

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3 ***405. Wesley Woods**
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5 The very mission of Wesley Woods, *to create communities of connection, well-being and*
6 *promise* for older adults, seeks to provide for our cherished residents. The generosity of
7 supporters of the Mother's Day Offering and support from church budgets and endowments
8 throughout North Georgia have enabled us to do so for 72 years.

9 Older adults represent the fastest growing age segment of the homeless population, *with*
10 *nearly half of all older homeless people becoming homeless for the first time after age 50.*

11 Wesley Woods' commitment to provide financial assistance for housing and meals remains the
12 cornerstone of delivering on our mission. This past year, more than \$1,400,000 was provided in
13 rent or meal assistance to residents who have outlived their resources or needed support paying
14 for higher levels of care. Your gifts enabled them to remain living securely and safely in their
15 Wesley Woods home.

16 Chaplains in each Wesley Woods community offer pastoral care that supports the
17 spiritual growth of our residents from all backgrounds. Weekly community offerings include
18 worship, Bible study, prayer groups, choirs, and opportunities for spiritual growth through
19 individual and group conversation and reflection. We are grateful for the many volunteers who
20 share their gifts and leadership in these ministries. Last year chaplains provided more than
21 12,000 connections with residents, families, and care partners (staff) through a ministry of
22 compassionate presence that helps people trust in the strength and hope of their faith through
23 life's challenges.

24 Wellness programming is a vital part of meeting our mission. Through guidance and
25 interventions of nurses and physical therapists, residents remain in an independent living setting
26 longer, delaying, or eliminating the need for them to move to higher levels of care.

27 In the United States someone develops dementia every 65 seconds. At Wesley Woods,
28 we recognize that while dementia may express itself differently, it touches every person we
29 serve. Through Masterful Moments, an education program designed to build empathy,
30 understanding, and confidence, we are committed to preparing our care partners across all levels
31 of service to understand dementia more deeply and to respond with compassion, patience, and
32 dignity in every interaction.

33 The Boards and staff of Wesley Woods are making great strides with our strategic
34 objectives to grow our mission, innovate our service models, invest in our workforce, and
35 connect with our local communities.

36 Thank you for your invaluable support as we envision a world where older adults are
37 celebrated for the lives they have lived, the wisdom they share and all they have to teach us. For
38 more information about Wesley Woods, please visit our website, www.wesleywoods.org.
39

40 Terry Barcroft
41 President & CEO

42 Terry.Barcroft@wesleywoods.org

43
44 Diane Vaughan
45 President, Foundation of Wesley Woods

46 Diane.Vaughan@wesleywoods.org

1 **Section 5: Ministries of the Board of Laity**

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3 ***500. Conference Board of Laity**
4

5 Dear North Georgia Conference,

6 It has been my joy and honor to serve these last two years as your Conference Lay
7 Leader. The United Methodist Church has been and will remain the constant reminder of love
8 and the pathway to Jesus Christ. Our annual conference Theme “Unto the least of these” speaks
9 loudly about the importance of serving everyone. We should love everyone and serve everyone.

10 Your Conference Board of Laity has been busy this year serving alongside each other
11 through training events in each district. The United Women of Faith, United Methodist Men, UM
12 Council on Scouting, Lay Servant Ministries, the District Lay Leaders, Associate Conference
13 Lay Leaders, and I have worshiped and met at Peachtree Road United Methodist Church and at
14 Ben Hill United Methodist Church. We believe and adopted Philippians 2:1-5 for our service
15 together and for our One Georgia Task Force Laity Sub-committee:

16 Is there any encouragement from belonging to Christ? Any comfort from his love? Any
17 fellowship together in the Spirit? Are your hearts tender and sympathetic? Then make me
18 truly happy by agreeing wholeheartedly with each other, loving one another, and working
19 together with one heart and purpose. Don’t be selfish; don’t live to make a good
20 impression on others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourself. Don’t think
21 only about your own affairs, but be interested in others, too, and what they are doing.

22 Your attitude should be the same that Christ Jesus had.

23 As I have served as your Conference Lay Leader this year, I have also served with my
24 South Georgia counterpart on the One Georgia Task Force, Scott Cleaveland. He and I have
25 traveled the state, hearing and bringing the Good News of Jesus Christ and our prayers of Unity
26 in establishing the Georgia Conference of the United Methodist Church! We have worked
27 together on many projects including 2025’s One Georgia Advent Devotional, Sacred Spaces
28 Devotional, The One Georgia Unification Report and Town Hall Meetings in South and North
29 Georgia to educate and answer questions about becoming the Georgia Conference.

30 In my travels and visits with many of you, I feel extremely welcomed and blessed to be
31 your Conference Lay Leader. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity and the joy of serving
32 along with you to follow Jesus in service and with love.

33
34 Hallelujah in all things,
35 Kim Powell, North Georgia Conference Lay Leader
36 kwpowell5@gmail.com
37

38
39 ***501. Lay Servant Ministries**
40

41 Paragraphs 266 through 269 in Section XI of the 2020/2024 Book of Discipline provide
42 the framework for Lay Servant Ministries’ Leading, Communicating, and Caring ministries. All
43 laity are invited to participate in our courses whether their desire is to be a better leader in their
44 home church and community or to serve beyond their church in filling pulpits for those times
45 when a clergy person is not available. During 2025, there were 74 Certified Lay Speakers and
46 over 400 Certified Lay Servants in the North Georgia Annual Conference.

1 All Lay Servants and Lay Speakers start with our basic course and then take at least one
2 advanced course every three years to remain active in the ministry. Each Lay Servant fills out an
3 annual report on the conference Data Services webpage and receives approval from their church
4 to be part of the ministry. During 2025, 74 individuals began their journey in Lay Servant
5 Ministries by registering to take one of 16 Basic courses that were offered throughout the
6 conference. There were 397 total registrations for classes. During the year, 71 classes, including
7 basic and advanced courses, were offered. Sixty-two classes were in person or on Zoom, and 9
8 were delivered in a self-paced format using Google Classroom. The latter format was developed
9 as an option for those wishing to fulfill their class requirements in a self-paced format spread
10 over 5 weeks. In addition to Spiritual Gifts, UM Heritage, UM Polity, Lead Worship, Lead
11 Prayer, and Preach, which are the 6 required advanced courses for Lay Speaker certification, we
12 offered the following advanced courses: Conflict Resolution, Lay Servants Tell Stories, Ministry
13 of the Forgotten (dementia), See All the People, Fresh Expressions, Lay Servants as Christian
14 Transformational Leaders, Discipleship, God's Mission – Our Journey, Soul Reset, Aging &
15 Ministry in the 21st Century, Caring Congregations, and Evangelism

16 Certified Lay Speakers provided over 458 pulpit fills for Sundays where the clergy for
17 those churches needed a Sunday away. Certified Lay Speakers and Certified Lay Servants
18 participated in many ministries throughout the conference and beyond. Many devote their time in
19 Caring ministries, like Stephen ministers and visiting and providing social activities for those in
20 hospitals, nursing homes and assisted living facilities. Outreach ministries include feeding
21 programs, mentoring young people, disaster relief, jail ministry, scouting, Walk to Emmaus
22 teams, providing backpacks and school supplies for area children, and working in ministry-
23 related thrift stores. Within their home churches, Lay Servants teach Sunday School to all ages,
24 lead Bible studies, sing in choirs, play all kinds of musical instruments for worship services,
25 serve as liturgists, provide hospitality, serve on intercessory prayer teams, send cards to church
26 members going through illnesses and other challenges, and serve in youth ministry. Lay
27 Servants provide leadership on church, district, conference and denominational committees as
28 well as in community organizations. They share the love of Christ everywhere in the life of their
29 churches and communities.

30 It is an honor to participate in this ministry and to lead this team of dedicated laity
31 leaders.

32
33 Mary Williams
34 Conference Director of Lay Servant Ministries
35 mrslswjr@gmail.com
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3 ***502. Order of Deaconess/Home Missioner**
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5 The key biblical text for the deaconess movement as it emerged in the nineteenth century
6 was Romans 16:1–2: “I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deacon (diakonos) of the church at
7 Cenchreae, so that you may welcome her in the Lord as is fitting for the saints, and help her in
8 whatever she may require from you, for she has been a benefactor of many and of myself as
9 well.”

10 The Methodist deaconess movement in the United States began when Lucy Rider Meyer
11 and her husband started the first deaconess training school in Chicago in 1885. In 1888, the
12 Office of Deaconess was officially recognized by the General Conference of the Methodist
13 Episcopal Church, and the office has remained active ever since. Methodist deaconesses in the
14 late 19th and early 20th centuries are credited with starting schools and hospitals in communities
15 where they did not previously exist, and the need for such ministries was great. Deaconesses
16 often worked under harsh conditions and in cutting-edge ministries of social service on behalf of
17 women, children and youth. Deaconesses and Home Missioners continue this legacy of serving
18 in cutting edge ministries of love, justice and service today.

19 The North Georgia Conference has eleven active Deaconess/Home Missioners serving
20 under appointment and three Deaconess/Home Missioners in retired relationship. Additionally,
21 we have one active Deaconess and one retired Deaconess from other conferences living in the
22 bounds of North Georgia. This year we have provided counseling for those facing economic or
23 immigration hardships, home health services for seniors, information technology, helped create
24 Abundant Health Networks, been challenged to create a budget-less senior ministry, led efforts
25 to support individuals facing food insecurity, and served in a variety of other ministry settings
26 along with putting our feet to the pavement to speak out against injustice. Our ministries vary but
27 our call to love, justice and service binds us as a covenant community.

28 Even in retirement, we continue to serve. One of our retired North Georgia DHM
29 represents the Order of Deaconess/Home Missioners in the DIAKONIA. DIAKONIA is an
30 international and ecumenical community of diaconal friendship, connecting us in diversity and
31 commonality. DIAKONIA broadens our worldview and deepens our sense of diaconal vocation.
32 In July 2025, DIAKONIA World Federation gathered for a world-wide assembly in Tanzania. At
33 this event, we celebrated the consecration of 15 Africa Region deaconess/home missioners at the
34 first-ever United Methodist Consecration Service in Africa.

35
36 Respectfully Submitted,
37 L. Susan Stroup, Deaconess
38 lsusanstroup@gmail.com
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3 ***503. North Georgia United Methodist Committee on Scouting**
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5 The mission of Scouting in The United Methodist Church is to sprinkle seeds of Christ
6 onto the paths of boys, girls and their families through Scouting programs in our churches. This
7 includes Boy Scout, Girl Scout and Big Brother Big Sister programs at churches in the
8 conference. As a ministry of the North Georgia Conference, the UMCOS (United Methodist
9 Committee on Scouting) supports this mission by focusing on two primary objectives: (1)
10 starting and maintaining new Scouts BSA Packs, Troops and Crews; Girl Scout Troops, and Big
11 Brother Big Sister programs at our churches, and (2) encouraging churches and Scout leaders to
12 include faith-based programs in their Scout programs, such as the P.R.A.Y. Christian education
13 program. We help clergy, lay leaders and scout leaders understand that Scouting can be a vibrant
14 ministry in their congregations with advisory and training services.

15 One of the major events we hosted in 2025 was the Bishop's Scout Lunch held
16 September 25th, 2025. With 50 plus churches from all districts attending and representatives from
17 Scouting's partners (including NGA Conference UMM and 6 councils from the GSUSA and
18 Scouting America), we had an incredible celebration of Scouting as a ministry. Jai Ferrell, CEO
19 of the Girl Scouts of Greater Atlanta Council, addressed the gathering as well.

20 Know that the UMCOS is available to support all churches and Scouting programs in the
21 Conference. Please contact us with any Scouting related opportunities and questions.
22

23 Yours in Christ,

24 Chris Karabinos

25 North Georgia Conference Scout Coordinator

26 770-490-4940 / chriskarabinos1@gmail.com
27
28

29 ***504. North Georgia United Methodist Men**
30

31 The United Methodist Men shall be a creative supportive fellowship of men who seek to
32 know Jesus Christ, to grow spiritually and to seek his daily will. Our primary purpose is to
33 declare the centrality of Christ in the lives of men and in all their relationships.

34 We will abide by the United Methodist Men Purpose & Covenant:

- 35 ● To encourage knowledge of and support for the total mission of The UMC.
36 ● To engage in evangelism by sharing the fullness of the gospel in its personal and social
37 dimensions.
38 ● To clarify and speak to the identity and role of the man in contemporary society.
39 ● To seek a stronger commitment to discipleship.
40 ● To become familiar with The UMC; its organization, doctrines, and beliefs.
41 ● To cooperate with all units of United Methodist Men in obtaining these objectives
42 through district, conference, jurisdiction, and church-wide goals.
43 ● To Engage daily in Bible study and prayer.
44 ● To Bear witness to Christ's way in daily work and in all personal contacts through words
45 and actions.
46 ● To Engage in some form of Christian service.

1 As I conclude my fourth and final term as North Georgia's Conference President of this
2 great ministry, I want to publicly express my deep gratitude for this opportunity. God has
3 truly blessed me with so many ways to serve Him and work alongside an outstanding group of
4 men who have so willingly given of their time and talents to support this organization.

5 The year 2026-2027 will bring significant changes to various aspects of our men's
6 ministry. The United Methodist Men's leadership in North Georgia and South Georgia are
7 working collaboratively, with support from Bishop Dease, our conference lay leaders, district
8 superintendents, and the General Commission of the United Methodist Men to consolidate
9 two conferences into One Georgia. A formal vote to ratify this merger will take place at the
10 annual conferences of both North and South Georgia, but the decision is imminent. "Two
11 shall become One."

12 In the meantime, we will continue to work from our spiritually focused approach
13 designed to support individual discipleship while also attracting and equipping men for an
14 expanded role in ministry and leadership. You will see exciting developments over the next
15 twelve months. The National Association of Conference Presidents (NACP) is working with
16 the General Commission on United Methodist Men (GCUMM) and the United Methodist
17 Men Foundation (UMMF) to improve our outreach efforts, and training efforts. These
18 initiatives will focus on equipping leaders, developing resources, and creating networks of
19 accountability. Helping men to re-discover their identity in Christ and live out their faith
20 through service, mentorship, and community transformation rooted in personal relationships
21 and spiritual growth. Learn more by visiting the General Commission website:

22 <https://ummen.org/mens-ministry/>

23 We will be placing a greater emphasis on connectivity among our conference presidents
24 to share strategies that will address common challenges. We will embrace the TEAM
25 approach: *Together Everyone Achieves More*.

26 Our local men's ministry must become a vital part of a larger connection spanning our
27 district, conference, and global reach. This connection is not about titles or positions but
28 mutual encouragement, shared learning, and a unified mission. The United Methodist Men
29 will also support global ministries to change lives and provide basic needs for local churches,
30 communities, and families in need.

31 Currently, only about 20% of our approximately 440 churches contribute annual dues to
32 the General Commission of United Methodist Men, the national office that supports and
33 resources our ministry. Similarly, only about 20% of local men's charters contribute
34 conference dues. In practical terms, approximately 82 churches support the national ministry,
35 while only 18 charters provide financial support at the conference level. From a human
36 perspective, these numbers may seem discouraging; However, we serve a God who is able to
37 do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh
38 in us. That is why I am confident that God will not allow our efforts to fail.

39 Our four (5) goals for 2026-2027 are the following:

- 40 1. Increase our active charters from 82 to 100 at the General Commission level.
- 41 2. Increase conference charters from 18 to 60.
- 42 3. Host a in person UMM retreat for North Georgia in August.
- 43 4. Raise \$2,000 in donations to support the men's ministries in North Georgia.
- 44 5. Identify five (5) district presidents within the conference.

So please men, we need your help more than ever! I am personally asking every United Methodist Man throughout North Georgia to support this evolving ministry. There is room at the table for everyone. Every man has a voice, both young and old.

This is a clarion call to help us create an intergenerational movement as we consolidate Georgia into One United Methodist army of men equipped with “God’s whole armor” ready to “Stand in the Gap” and make a difference in the lives, families, and churches we serve through our ministries, initiatives, and programs. Join us and be a part of something special as we face the challenges and the opportunities that lie ahead, striving to become more impactful than ever before.

I invite you to attend our upcoming in-person Men's Retreat. More information will be coming very soon! This meeting will serve as an opportunity to make new friends, pray together, build relationships, and strengthen men's ministry as we move forward, continuing in our mission: *"To be Doers of the Word and Not Just Hearers Only."* We cannot do it without each of you! Your voice, and your participation matters. We who are many, must become one body in Christ," (Romans 12:5)

Respectfully submitted,

Ernest Perry

President North Georgia Conference UMM

Email: ernest.perry@ncgumm.org

***505. North Georgia United Women in Faith**

North Georgia United Women in Faith (UWFaith) experienced a year of growth, discipleship, and impact as we continued our theme, “*Acting Boldly, Practicing Hope, Showing Up, Making a Difference,*” grounded in Ephesians 2:10. We focused on three quadrennial goals: inspiring women into a welcoming sisterhood that nurtures faith; influencing increased pledges toward “making mission possible”; and creating impact through community partnerships and advocacy.

Each district hosted a Lenten Day Apart, continuing a tradition of worship, hope, reflection, and social action during the forty days from Ash Wednesday through Easter. These gatherings deepened our faith and called women to “do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God” in our daily life. Our Spiritual Growth / Social Action Retreat, “*Shaped by Faith, Driven by Purpose*,” held May 2–3, 2025, at Pinnacle Retreat Center in Clayton, GA, offered a weekend of prayer, music, soul care, justice teaching, and sisterhood. Heather Jallad proclaimed powerful messages about God’s handiwork in each person, while Cassandra Henderson of the Interfaith Children’s Movement and young women from the Multi-Agency Alliance for Children (MAAC) shared testimonies highlighting the impact of advocacy and presence. Soul Care and spiritual renewal remain a priority. *Soul Care 2026* at Bethany UMC in Smyrna gathered nearly 150 women (and a few men) for teaching, worship, and rest. Speakers Amy Morgan, Lahronda Welch Little, and Taressa Thompson invited participants to prioritize, pray, pause, listen deeply for God’s voice, and practice authentic soul care across the various seasons of life.

Mission U 2025, “*Practicing Hope Together*,” held at the North Georgia Conference Center, invited intergenerational participants to explore resurrection hope and early Christian community, with in-person and virtual options for English and Korean classes. The event began with an *Ubuntu* service project at the UMCOR Mission Hub, where children, youth, and adults worked together to assemble more than 250 Care Kits and 150 Menstrual Kits—extending North

1 Georgia’s compassion into disaster-affected communities.

2 Through mission giving, we continued to support our four National Mission
3 Institutions—New Bethlehem Community Center, Paine College, Murphy-Harpst Children’s
4 Center, and Clark Atlanta University—while also building a lasting future through the UWFaith
5 Legacy Endowment Giving Fund.

6 During the 2025 Annual Conference, UWFaith members were highly visible and deeply
7 engaged over the three days of conferencing. Members staffed the UWFaith display table, hosted
8 the Annual Breakfast featuring Lester McCorn of Paine College, and served faithfully as tellers
9 throughout plenary sessions. Serena Trueh was commissioned a Deaconess by Bishop Dease to
10 serve at Premiere Healthcare and Concierge Services, giving witness to lay servant ministries in
11 healthcare settings.

12 We celebrated signs of growth and renewal in local units, including the formation of the
13 new Tri-Cities United Women in Faith and the reactivation of McKendree United Women in
14 Faith, expanding opportunities for women to connect and serve.

15 Our longstanding commitment to racial justice remained central to our work. We
16 continued to promote study and action grounded in the *Charter for Racial Justice*, seeking right
17 relationship with one another and working toward the transformation of the church and world. A
18 book study of Jemar Tisby’s *The Color of Compromise*, facilitated by Carol Allums, invited
19 participants to grapple with the history of the American church’s complicity in racism and to
20 discern faithful responses today.

21 In collaboration with Clark Atlanta University and Tonya Miles, Dean of Spiritual Life
22 and Engagement, we co-hosted a screening and discussion of the film, *Pushout: The*
23 *Criminalization of Black Girls in Schools*. More than sixty students, educators, advocates, and
24 UWFaith members gathered on CAU’s campus to participate with five students taking the lead in
25 organizing the event. This effort led to new mentoring invitations from M. Agnes Jones
26 Elementary School.

27 Our Annual Meeting at Cascade UMC (Southwest Atlanta campus) welcomed Emily
28 Jones, United Women in Faith National Executive for Racial Justice, as keynote speaker. Her
29 message underscored the alignment between conference and national priorities and encouraged
30 continued engagement in racial justice issues.

31 More than ninety North Georgia UWFaith members registered to attend Assembly
32 2026, “*Dream it! Believe it! Do it!*” in Indianapolis, IN from May 15–17, 2026, a quadrenial
33 gathering for renewal, empowerment, and justice-focused action. Assembly 2026 featured Stacey
34 Abrams and Carolyn Abrams as inspirational speakers, reflecting the movement’s commitment
35 to faith, justice, and women’s leadership.

36 Looking toward the future, a team of twenty-one UWFaith leaders, eleven from North
37 Georgia and ten from South Georgia, with guidance from the UWFaith National Office, is
38 planning for a potential One Georgia Unification, should the unification process move forward.
39 Our work follows established merger guidelines and seeks to prepare for a smooth, mission-
40 focused transition that honors the histories of both conferences while strengthening our ministry.

41 Guided by God, United Women in Faith of North Georgia continue to move forward,
42 living out faith, hope, and love in action.

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45
46
Jessica Godfrey
President, United Women in Faith
starksj@bellsouth.net

Section 6: Additional Reports

***600. Black Methodists for Church Renewal - North Georgia Caucus**

Black Methodists for Church Renewal (BMCR) is the organized Black caucus of The United Methodist Church. BMCR is one of the five United Methodist denomination's official U.S.-based ethnic caucuses and represents more than 2,400 Black United Methodist congregations and approximately 500,000 African American members across the denomination.

In 2025, NGBMCR, in fulfilling its mission to support Black churches in the North Georgia Annual Conference, held both a pre-and post-NGA Annual Conference town hall meetings to assess the impact of structural and legislative changes upon the Black churches in the North Georgia Conference. NGBMCR continued to promote its "Getting to Know NGBMCR" church visitation initiative, as well as the availability of a training video on the nominations process on the NGBMCR website.

The NGBMCR Hush Arbor, under the direction of DuWanna Thomas, NGBMCR's Immediate Past Chair, was open for a seventh year at the 2025 NGUMC Annual Conference. The Hush Arbor serves as a space for deep introspection, prayer, meditation, fellowship, and enlightenment.

NGBMCR continued to engage children, youth and families across the conference through a Camp Glisson scholarship program to increase camping opportunities and participation of African American children and youth. (We strongly encourage and invite our Black churches to take advantage of this offering on behalf of their congregations by registering children and youth for the 2026 NGBMCR special offering at Camp Glisson at <https://glisson.org/bmcr/>.)

Other actions:

- Attended the 2025 General BMCR 58th Annual Meeting in Los Angeles, CA
- Attended the 2025 SEJ BMCR 56th Annual Meeting in Nashville, TN
- Participated on the NGUMC Conference Commission on Religion and Race (CCORR)
- Participated in the work of the NGUMC Reparations Task Force
- Held quarterly NGBMCR general membership meetings on topics pertinent and relevant to the work of strengthening and empowering the Black Church.
- Provided a monthly newsletter to the general membership highlighting topics of interest and concern.
- Sent a letter to Interim President Leah Ward Sears in objection to Emory University's elimination of all diversity, equity and inclusion programming.
- Upon request from NGA Communications, submitted a presentation on NGBMCR in observance of Black History Month

Pamela Perkins Carn, Chair
North Georgia Caucus of Black Methodists for Church Renewal
perkinspl@bellsouth.net

[illegible]

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

Edwin David Aponte
Dean and Professor of Religion & Culture

*602. Duke Divinity School

“Perhaps this is the season for untangling the Nicene Creed from state theology and church theology. Perhaps this is a task for a divinity school whose mission claims to

1 'engage in spiritually disciplined and academically rigorous education, in service and
2 witness to the Triune God in the midst of the church, the academy, and the world.' ...
3 Christ did not preach peace looking for recognition or awards. His life is a single
4 extended sermon on peace. Peace is believing that our lowest point does not limit our
5 highest hope, because we acknowledge the power of baptism, the possibility of
6 repentance, and the forgiveness of sin. *We believe. We believe.* This is a Pentecost
7 profession, a peace proclamation, and also a praise pronouncement.”
8

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

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

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

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

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

38
39 Respectfully submitted by Edgardo Colón-Emeric
40 Dean of Duke Divinity School
41

42 43 ***603. Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary** 44

45 Garrett Seminary continues to embody a trajectory of growth, innovation, and deepening
46 partnership across the connection. Rooted in its Wesleyan heritage and animated by its mission

1 to form courageous leaders in the way of Jesus, the seminary looks toward the future with
2 confidence and hope.

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

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

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

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

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

partnership with annual conferences, congregations, and ministries across the connection.

Submitted by:
Javier A. Viera, President

***604. Georgia United Methodist Colleges, Universities, and Wesley Foundations**

Andrew College

Andrew College religious life focused on being a steady, prayerful presence through the establishment of consistent worship and active chaplaincy for students and staff alike.

- **Established Rhythms of Worship:** With the strategic support of Dean Cannon (Student Life) and President Kennedy, we successfully launched a consistent weekly worship service on Monday evenings at 7:00 PM, providing a dedicated spiritual anchor for the student community.
- **Active Campus Presence:** We have maintained a visible and consistent chaplaincy through the work of first-year Chaplain, Allen Carmichael, ensuring a pastoral presence at major campus events, from athletics to drama, to support students, faculty, and staff in their daily lives.
- **Connectional Retreats:** Our student leaders took advantage of two significant spiritual life retreats hosted by the UM Commission, fostering deeper connections with the broader UM student outreach across Georgia.

Clark Atlanta University

CAU spiritual life has leveraged a historic surge in enrollment to champion the intersection of faith and social change on campus through advocacy, service-learning, and community dialogue.

- **Academic Excellence & Growth:** In August 2025, CAU welcomed its largest freshman class in history, boasting a 3.71 average GPA. This growth has allowed our ministry to expand its reach and influence within a highly motivated student body.
- **Advocacy through Media:** In partnership with the North Georgia Conference's United Women in Faith, we hosted a screening and community dialogue centered on the film *Pushout*, exploring the criminalization of Black girls in schools alongside local educators.
- **A Culture of Service:** Student involvement in the annual MLK Jr. Day of Service continues to break records, with over 220 student scholars participating this year. Additionally, the launch of the "Service Learning for Social Change" course honors the university motto, "Culture for Service," by training students to lead impactful societal change.

Columbus State University (CSU) Wesley

Focused on the power of "homegrown" leadership, celebrating our first intern from within our own ranks and a flourishing network of student-led Bible studies.

- **Developing Leaders from Within:** We celebrated a milestone this year by hiring our first "homegrown" intern, a former student who has transitioned into a leadership role to mentor the next generation of disciples.
- **Focused First-Year Ministry:** We have seen remarkable growth in freshman attendance at Monday night worship. In response, we launched "Freshley," a dedicated discipleship group where first-year students find intentional community and mentorship during their

1 transition to college.

- 2 ● **Organic Spiritual Multiplication:** Our student-led initiatives are expanding beyond
3 campus; notably, one of our local students was so inspired by our weekly Bible study that
4 she has begun leading a weekly study for her own family in their home.

6 **Emory University Chaplains**

7 Centered on the "Beloved Community," this year blended inclusive worship with intensive
8 interfaith exploration and strong participation from across the university system.

- 9 ● **Inclusive & Thriving Worship:** The "Beloved Community" Christian Worship
10 continues to grow, celebrating diversity through services for Pride, Black History, and
11 Hispanic Heritage. We recently celebrated the graduation of our largest cohort of leaders
12 since 2021.
- 13 ● **Interfaith Immersion:** The Chaplaincy team led a delegation to the U.S. Holocaust
14 Museum in Washington, D.C. This experience will culminate in a student-planned
15 Holocaust education event on campus to foster deep interfaith understanding.
- 16 ● **WISE Pre-Orientation:** Our 5th annual WISE program guided 32 students through a
17 transformative week, visiting seven diverse religious sites across Atlanta—including the
18 King Center, Glenn Memorial UMC, and local Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Jewish, and
19 Buddhist centers.
- 20 ● **Emory Oxford Engagement:** Students at Emory Oxford had great participation at the
21 annual Fall Spiritual Life Retreat weekend organized by the campus chaplain.

23 **Emory Wesley**

24 Celebrated a milestone year of rebirth as we officially re-established the Wesley Fellowship and
25 began building a new foundation for student-led ministry.

- 26 ● **A New Beginning:** The Wesley Fellowship was officially re-established at Emory
27 University in January 2026, a milestone made possible through a vital collaboration
28 between Glenn Memorial UMC and the UM Commission on Higher Education.
- 29 ● **Strong Leadership:** The ministry is led by Sutton Smith, a graduate of Yale Divinity
30 School and Birmingham-Southern College. She will be commissioned as Deacon in the
31 Alabama West-Florida conference this summer.
- 32 ● **Sustainable Infrastructure:** This semester is dedicated to building a lasting foundation,
33 including the establishment of an advisory board and the creation of formal student
34 leadership positions to ensure long-term growth.

36 **Georgia Gwinnett College (GGC) Wesley**

37 Prioritized campus-wide intercessory prayer and local outreach, highlighted by building seventy
38 beds for children in our community.

- 39 ● **Intercessory Foundations:** On the last Thursday of every month, 20 students from
40 various campus ministries gather to pray specifically for a spiritual awakening at GGC,
41 fostering unity and a shared vision for their peers.
- 42 ● **Vocational Inspiration:** We hosted a diverse array of pastors and community leaders at
43 our worship services, providing students with a broad perspective on how God is working
44 in the community and offering various avenues for local service.
- 45 ● **Tangible Community Care:** Our students partnered with Lawrenceville First UMC for a
46 "Bed Build" with Sleep in Heavenly Peace, constructing 70 beds in a single morning to

1 provide local children with a safe place to sleep.

3 **Georgia Southern University Wesley**

4 Curated a year of high-impact retreats and a significant spring break pilgrimage into the heart of
5 the Civil Rights movement.

- 6 • **Retreat and Renewal:** Our students participated in several high-level worship
7 experiences, including the Passion Conference and joint retreats with the Sunbelt Wesley
8 Foundations, building a strong sense of community across the region.
- 9 • **Justice-Focused Missions:** Our spring break programming has expanded to include a
10 Civil Rights Pilgrimage to Selma and Montgomery, allowing students to discover the
11 profound impact of the Gospel on the movement for equality.
- 12 • **Local Youth Connection:** Through our "Flock Together" events, we host dozens of local
13 youth from partner churches like Pittman Park and Wesley Monumental for a "Night at
14 Wesley," building bridges for future students.

16 **Georgia Tech Wesley**

17 Experienced a year of physical and spiritual renewal, marked by significant facility upgrades and
18 a surge in student leadership and congregational support.

- 19 • **Deepening Discipleship:** We saw significant growth this year, with over 20 students
20 attending our Fall Discipleship Retreat and many others participating in the UM
21 Commission's spring retreat at Camp Glisson.
- 22 • **Stewardship and Renovations:** We successfully completed the installation of a brand-
23 new roof for the Wesley building in the summer of 2025, and we are currently preparing
24 for a full kitchen remodel to better serve our growing community.
- 25 • **Leadership and Pastoral Support:** Our leadership team has grown in both number and
26 commitment. We are particularly grateful for the support of local United Methodist
27 pastors who visited each week during the fall semester to preach and invest in our
28 students.

30 **Kennesaw State Wesley**

31 Navigated a season of steady community building and strategic growth, deepening partnerships
32 with local churches to provide tangible service to those in need.

- 33 • **Spiritual and Community Growth:** Weekly attendance has grown steadily, with
34 students engaging in the Go and Grow curriculum to foster leadership skills and spiritual
35 formation during their Wednesday night gatherings.
- 36 • **Impactful Local Partnerships:** We have deepened our relationship with St. Paul UMC,
37 participating in blood drives and outreach for MUST Ministries. We also look forward to
38 continuing our partnership with Murphy Harpst by DJing their annual prom for local
39 youth.
- 40 • **Resilient Stewardship:** Despite the loss of some traditional financial support, the
41 ministry remains stable. We are proactively launching a new outreach plan involving
42 promotional videos and district-wide appeals to sustain our growth.

44 **LaGrange College**

45 Defined by a commitment to hands-on relief, our year saw students rebuilding homes in
46 Savannah and preparing for cross-cultural ministry in Costa Rica.

- **UMCOR Disaster Response:** Twenty students traveled to Savannah to assist in hurricane recovery. Working with the South Georgia Conference, they completely rebuilt kitchens and living spaces for underserved families who had received little other assistance.
- **Vocational Training:** We have successfully integrated nine students into internships and work-study positions at LaGrange UMC and Warren Temple UMC, allowing them to gain practical ministry experience within local congregations.
- **Global Learning:** Plans are underway for a mission and "study-away" trip to Costa Rica in partnership with the ELCA. This cross-cultural experience will focus on expanding global awareness and deepening student faith.

Paine College

A year of remarkable growth, the Wesley Fellowship at Paine College has seen students emerge as spiritual and civic leaders across the entire campus.

- **Record Retreat Participation:** Paine students demonstrated a strong hunger for connection, with double-digit attendance at both the fall retreat at Epworth by the Sea and the spring retreat at Camp Glisson.
- **Campus-Wide Leadership:** Students actively involved in the spiritual life of our Wesley Fellowship continue to serve as leaders in various capacities across the entire Paine College campus, carrying their faith into every facet of student life.
- **Dynamic Growth:** The ministry at the Wesley Fellowship has experienced excellent growth this year, fostering a vibrant and supportive environment for spiritual formation.

Reinhardt University

Expanded its horizons by launching its first international mission trip while fostering peer-to-peer mentorship through a new Wesleyan accountability initiative.

- **Mission Expansion:** This year marked the completion of both our first regional mission trip (Appalachian Service Project) and our first international trip to Lima, Peru, where students repaired a church facility and a K-12 school.
- **Ensuring Continuity:** We expanded our worship band and successfully transitioned leadership from a graduating senior to a sophomore, ensuring that the musical and spiritual momentum of our Tuesday night services continues uninterrupted.
- **The 22 Initiative:** Inspired by John Wesley's Holy Club, we launched "The 22," a mentorship program where upperclassmen lead small groups of freshmen and sophomores through intentional spiritual accountability and growth.

University of Georgia (UGA) Wesley

Experienced a year of significant spiritual milestones and massive global impact, sending nearly 200 students to Jamaica and celebrating new life through baptism.

- **A Season of Transformation:** In a display of spiritual renewal, 16 students were either baptized or participated in a remembrance of their baptism this October, sharing powerful testimonies of the life changes they have experienced through Christ.
- **Massive Mission Mobilization:** Our reach extended across the Caribbean this year as 198 students and staff traveled to three different locations in Jamaica to perform essential mission work and community outreach.
- **International Church Planting:** In December, a team of 40 students and staff traveled

1 to Cuba to provide ministry and support to 500 Methodist church-planting missionaries,
2 strengthening the global connectional church.

3 4 **University of West Georgia Wesley**

5 Centering its ministry on hospitable outreach and community service, the University of West
6 Georgia Wesley Foundation has seen substantial growth in worship and discipleship.

- 7 • **Innovative Outreach:** We established "Sweet Tea Tuesdays" as a weekly outreach on
8 campus, creating a welcoming space for students to connect and fostering significant
9 growth in our regular worship and discipleship attendance.
- 10 • **Retreat and Connection:** The UWG Wesley community sent a strong delegation of
11 students to the UM Commission spring retreat at Camp Glisson, deepening their spiritual
12 roots and connection to the broader conference.
- 13 • **Servant Leadership:** Our students are actively engaged in local ministry, specifically
14 supporting Community First UMC's youth outreach weekend this spring as volunteer
15 leaders.

16 17 **Valdosta State University Wesley**

18 Focused on fostering intentional community through shared meals and residential life, this year
19 has seen a surge in both student engagement and interest in our living-learning environment.

- 20 • **Growing Hospitality:** Our weekly "Tasty Tuesday" meals have become a primary
21 gateway for outreach, welcoming a significant influx of new students and fostering a
22 strong sense of belonging on campus.
- 23 • **Retreat and Connection:** Six student leaders participated in our spring retreat,
24 dedicating time to collective spiritual renewal and strengthening their bonds with the
25 broader regional Wesley community.
- 26 • **Intentional Residential Living:** We are on track to achieve full occupancy in our
27 residential building for the upcoming academic year, ensuring a vibrant on-campus
28 community focused on shared faith and stewardship.

29 30 **Wesley Foundation of Macon (Mercer, Middle Georgia, Wesleyan)**

31 Deepened student engagement through consistent Tuesday night worship and a new, passionate
32 commitment to addressing local food insecurity.

- 33 • **Deep Community Integration:** This spring has seen a surge of new students who have
34 quickly moved beyond just attending Tuesday night worship to becoming deeply
35 ingrained in the life and leadership of our foundation.
- 36 • **Backpack Buddies Partnership:** Our students have developed a profound passion for
37 local service through Forest Hills Church's Backpack Buddies ministry, packaging
38 weekend food supplies for local children facing food insecurity.
- 39 • **Theological Depth:** We are seeing a high level of spiritual commitment, with 75% of our
40 regular worship attendees also participating in our intensive weekly Bible studies.

41 42 **Wesleyan College**

43 Strengthened its connectional ties by hosting the South Georgia Annual Conference and
44 welcoming a record-breaking number of prospective students to campus.

- 45 • **Discipleship Through Scholarship:** The Wesleyan Disciples program welcomed four
46 new scholarship recipients who are learning to lead by rotating teaching responsibilities

each week, fostering a collaborative learning environment.

- **A Hub for the Conference:** Wesleyan College had the distinct honor of hosting the Opening Worship Service for the South Georgia Annual Conference in June 2025, emphasizing our vital role within the United Methodist connection.
- **Record-Breaking Interest:** During our February "Experience Wesleyan Day," we saw a record 100+ prospective students participate, signaling a bright and growing future for our campus community.

Young Harris College

Successfully bridged the gap between local hunger relief and deep academic reflection, from launching a campus food pantry to studying the history of the Holocaust abroad.

- **The Campus Cupboard:** Partnering with the Allstate Foundation and Sharp Memorial UMC, we launched a food pantry that has served over 900 people. The program also empowers "Service Scholars" to study the systemic roots of food insecurity.
- **Civil Rights Education:** Our annual MLK Jr. Prayer Lunch hosted 150 attendees and featured former NFL player Ovie Mughelli. The funds raised allow students to participate in a "Civil Rights Educational Experience" in Montgomery and Atlanta at little to no cost.
- **Faith and Resistance:** Rev. Adam Daniels is leading a study-abroad course titled "From Hitler to Bonhoeffer," taking 11 students to Germany and Poland to explore how religion was misused by the Nazi regime and how figures like Bonhoeffer resisted.

*605. United Theological Seminary

Since 1871, United Theological Seminary has prepared faithful and fruitful Christian leaders who make disciples of Jesus Christ. In the 2024-25 fiscal year, the seminary served 642 graduate students, 275 doctoral and 375 masters,* reflecting approximately 30 percent enrollment growth since 2021 and placing United among the largest United Methodist seminaries in the United States.

A diverse community of many denominations, races and nationalities, United welcomed students from 38 states, 24 nations, and 54 denominations, with United Methodists representing the largest denominational group within the student body.

Academics. United's academic programs remain grounded in the historic Christian faith, scriptural holiness, and a commitment to the renewal of the church, preparing graduates to serve with wisdom, integrity, and hope. United introduced a Doctor of Theology in 2024 to support pastor-scholars called to ministry at the intersection of the church and academy. The new degree program welcomed 13 students in its first year. The seminary's Doctor of Ministry program continues to attract experienced ministry leaders seeking advanced professional education focused on faithful leadership. In the 2024-25 school year, 262 students participated in the mentor-led program. Master's programs include eight houses of study, serving nearly 200 students in the United States and around the world, with programs offered in English, Spanish and Korean. In July 2025, 11 students attended the first Contextual Ministry Retreat for the African House of Study, held at the Kenya Methodist Conference Center in Nairobi. The Hispanic House of Study will celebrate its first class of graduates in May 2026, with candidates from across the United States, Mexico, Colombia, and Peru. Through rigorous scholarship,

1 intentional mentoring, worship, and community life, as well as practical engagement with the
2 church's needs, academic life at United advances the seminary's vision of *Spirit-led leaders, a*
3 *Christ-like Church, and a transformed world.*

4 Finances. United continues to focus on reducing the educational debt of its students. The
5 Fresh Wind Campaign to raise \$10 million for the endowment is expanding scholarship
6 opportunities for current and future students. The campaign has raised more than \$9 million
7 toward this goal, by the grace of God and through the generosity of alumni/ae, churches, and
8 friends of the seminary.

9 Looking Ahead. United enters the coming years with gratitude for God's faithfulness and
10 confidence in God's future. Several senior leaders have answered new calls, and President Kent
11 Millard has announced his retirement effective June 30, 2026, concluding ten years of service
12 marked by encouragement, vision, and stability. A Presidential Search Committee is at work to
13 identify United's next president, who will begin service on July 1, 2026.

14 Trusting God's promise spoken through the prophet Isaiah, "I am about to do a new
15 thing" (Isaiah 43:19), United remains committed to preparing Christian leaders who boldly
16 proclaim the gospel and make disciples of Jesus Christ. Thanks be to God!

17 **12-month unduplicated headcount enrollment for the 2024-25 fiscal year from July 1, 2024, to*
18 *June 30, 2025.*

19
20 Kent Millard, President
21
22
23

1 **700. Boards, Committees, and Commissions of the Annual Conference**
2 **2026 Conference Nomination Report**
3

4

Standing Committees of the Annual Conference

5

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Yolanda Jones-Colton (18)

Thomas Martin (18)

Laura Rappold (18)

Blair Setnor (18)

Hee Chul Park (18)

Joya Abrams (19)

Dana Ezell (19)

Jeremy Lawson (19)

Emily Whiten (19)

Steven Usry (19)

Joe Palmer (20)

Cassie Rapko (20)

Dalton Rushing (20)

Valerie Loner (20)

Brian Smith (20)

Adam Hildebrandt (20)

Robert King (21)

Kevin Muriel (21)

Keya Hillman (22) – Vice Chair

David Naglee (21)

1 Elaine Wilder (21)
2 Jeff Rogers (22)
3 Josh Roberts (22) – Chair
4 Jason Mincey (23)
5 Ryan Miller (23)
6 Tasha Wiggins (23)
7 Jessica Chicken (23)
8 Chaloea Hale (23)
9 Montana Hamby (23)
10 LK Pendleton (24)
11 Matt Stewart (24)
12 Kathy Brockman (24)
13 Susan Allen Grady (24)
14 Dorcas Rodriguez (24)
15 Karen Webster Parks (24)
16 Lori Osborn (25)

17
18 Laity

19 Johnnie Follins (19)
20 Elnetta Mitchell (20)
21 Shelly Hart (20)
22 Tracy Wheelis (22)
23 Jill Lee Barber (24)
24 Alice Wesley (24)
25 Vanessa Warner (24)
26 Michelle Collier (24)
27 Lindsey Brown (24)
28 Serena Trueh (24)
29 Mike Watkins (24)
30 Wendell Love (24)

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32 Ex-Officio

33 *Registrar – Max Vincent*
34 *Order of Elders Rep – Lavell Sanders*
35 *Order of Deacons Rep – Montana Hamby*
36 *FLP RepAM – Yolanda Jones-Colton*
37 *Cabinet Rep – Carolyn Stephens*

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37	<i>Cabinet Rep – Eric Lee</i>	<i>eric.lee@georgiaumc.net</i>

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21	<i>Jurisdictional Episcopal Committee –</i>	
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23	<u>Episcopal Residence Committee</u>	
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14 (clergy)

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17 (Hawkinsville UMC)

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Ex-Officio: Jeff Cook (clergy); Kim Stanley Heim (Director); Adam Roberts (UM clergy);

EMORY WESLEY FELLOWSHIP LAUNCH TEAM (A ministry of Glenn Memorial UMC)

Mary Lou Boice; Brantley Damon; Dean Damon; Meredith Gadberry; Cheryl Griffin; The Rev. Dr. Soren Hessler; Dr. Steve Knight; Anna Lawson; Deborah Marlowe; Sara McKlin; Dr. Andra Opalinski; Mathew Pinson; The Rev. Elaine Puckett; The Rev. Dr. Jennifer Quigley; Shelley Rogers

GEORGIA GWINNETT COLLEGE

Caleb Clark; Adam Hilderbrandt (Lawrenceville First UMC); Woo Kang (UMC pastor) Liz Nauert (Norcross First UMC); Jen Strickland (McKendree UMC); Robert Viera (Norcross UMC); **Jeff Rogers** (Dacula UMC); **Trenton Dockery** (Grayson UMC);
Faculty Advisor: Kathy Garrison (McKendree UMC)
Student Intern: Caden Hilliard
Ex-Officio: Hyeok Won Kwon (clergy); Adam Roberts (clergy)
Director:

GEORGIA SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY

Class of 2026: Randy Herth (Pittman Park UMC); Andrea Howard (Statesboro First UMC); Elizabeth Lippincott (Statesboro First UMC)
Class of 2027: Scott Cleaveland (Wesley Monumental UMC); Regina Days-Bryan (Pittman Park UMC); Johanna Parr (Isle of Hope UMC)
Class of 2028: Scott Marchbanks (Statesboro First UMC); Michelle Reeves (Mt. Zion UMC); Chance Ward (UMC clergy)
Ex-Officio: John Banter (Brooklet UMC); Kirk Hagan (UMC clergy); Scott Hagan (UMC clergy); John Ray (Statesboro UMC); Adam Roberts (UMC clergy); Jonathan Smith (UMC clergy); Lauren West (UMC clergy)
Staff: Catherine McCooey
Director: Albert Williams, III (UMC clergy)

GEORGIA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

Class of 2024: Andy Thomas (Peachtree Road UMC)
Class of 2025: Glenn Cartledge (Peachtree Road UMC); Jim Rembert; Bob Stubbs (North Decatur UMC);
Margie Schnelle (Zionsville UMC); Ben Thornbloom
Class of 2027: Charles Pursley (North Decatur UMC)
Class of 2028: Steven Hardy; Will Hardy (Grace Snellville); Jen Hasler (Dunwoody UMC); Michael Smith (Oak Grove UMC); Alex Roush (Northside UMC)
Class of 2029: Bill Berg (Oak Grove UMC); Rachel Fullerton (Embry Hills UMC); Nigel Kelly (Cascade UMC)
Student Rep:
Ex-officio: Julie Boone (clergy); Adam Roberts (clergy)
Director: Sam Hopson (clergy)

KENNESAW STATE UNIVERSITY

Alan Blake, faculty advisor; Kathryn Davis (Clergy); Chris Dervan, Chair (Smyrna UMC); Mayra Richards (Smyrna UMC); Brooke Skelton (McEachern UMC); Allison Sligh (McEachern UMC)
Ex-Officio: Adam Roberts (clergy); Carolyn Stephens (UMC Clergy)
Director: Brian Hammond (clergy)

MACON WESLEY FOUNDATION

Class of 2026: Sarah Hazelrig (Vineville UMC); Pamela Johnston (Griffin First UMC); Linda Miller (Martha Bowman UMC); Kemberlie Sanderson (Forest Hills GMC)
Class of 2027: Richard Davies (Centenary UMC); Maddie Jackson (Martha Bowman UMC)
Class of 2028: Spencer Smith (Mulberry UMC); **Joan Anderson** (Vineville UMC); **Janne Freeman** (Trinity UMC); **Larry Montgomery** (Centenary UMC)
Ex-Officio: Jeff Cook (clergy); Adam Roberts (clergy)

UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

Class of 2025: Frank Bernat (UMC Clergy); Doug Butts (St. James GMC); Brett Jackson (Athens First UMC); Alex Smith (UMC Clergy); Jimmy Williamson (Athens First UMC)
Class of 2026: Jimmy Allgood (Dublin GMC); Emma Boulware (Madison GMC); Megan Gomez (UMC Clergy); Grady Mosley (Madison GMC); Dale Nesbit (Athens First UMC)
Class of 2027: Pat Allen (Church of the Apostles, Atlanta); Ryan Nesbit (Athens First UMC); Carl Newton (St. James UMC); Jim Timberlake (Athens First UMC); **Skylar Barth (Roswell UMC)**; Bill Curington (St James GMC); Haynes Martin (GMC); Lindsay Atkinson (Athens First UMC)
Ex-Officio: Adam Roberts (Clergy, voting); Beth Sanders (Clergy, non-voting)
Director: Bob Beckwith (UMC Clergy)

UNIVERSITY OF WEST GEORGIA

Robert Brown (Clergy); **Matthew Clay** (Community First UMC); Michelle Garner; Edward Landrum (clergy); Steven Powers (Community First UMC); John Upson (Community First UMC); Alice Wesley (Moore's Chapel UMC); **Michael Hopper (faculty, Community First UMC)**
Ex-Officio: Adam Roberts (clergy); Carolyn Stephens (UMC clergy)
Director: Britt Martin (Community First UMC)

VALDOSTA STATE UNIVERSITY

Class of 2026: Millie Adams - Mosaic UMC; Thompson Gooding; Jenny Bankston- Hope UMC Columbus; Margaret McCranie - Mosaic UMC
Class of 2027: A.J. Ramirez - Mosaic UMC; Rev. Josh McLemore - Blackshear First; Dr. Craig Rikard - Retired UMC
Class of 2028: Gayle Ramirez (Secretary & Faculty Advisor) - Mosaic UMC; Tara Jones - Salem UMC; Mary Gooding - Bemiss UMC/Salem UMC
Wesley Student Officers: Isabeau Davis (Wesley President); Adde Wright (Wesley Events Coordinator)
Ex-Officio: Scott Hagan (UMC clergy); Adam Roberts (UMC clergy); Henry Bass, Retired
Director: Matt Stout

BOLD NAMES DENOTES NEW MEMBERS

2026 Standing Rules

A. Introduction

“The annual conference, for its own government, may adopt rules and regulations not in conflict with the Discipline of The United Methodist Church” (§ 604.1.) The standing rules of the conference expand and clarify these structures and their modes of operation. (All references to the 2020/2024 *The Book of Discipline* hereafter shall be designated by the paragraph number.)

A. 1. Rules - *Robert's Rules of Order* shall govern parliamentary procedures of the annual conference, subject to the rules of the preceding general conference and the 2020/2024 *The Book of Discipline*.

A. 2. Amendments - These standing rules may be amended by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the conference no fewer than twenty-four (24) hours following their presentation to the conference; provided, a written copy of the proposed amendment(s) shall be submitted to the conference secretary before being read to the Conference. Amendments shall take effect upon passage.

A.3. Ex-Officio Members –

- Ex-Officio Members of all boards, teams, councils, commissions, and committees of the Conference shall have “voice without vote” unless explicitly stated by *The Book of Discipline* or the Standing Rules of the North Georgia Conference.
- Additionally, no employee of any conference agency and no employee, trustee, or director of any agency or institution participating in the funds of any conference budget shall be eligible for voting membership on any board, team, council, commission, or committee. They may serve as ex-officio members who have “voice without vote.”
- All ex-officio members, regardless of whether they have vote, shall be included in all invitations to meetings where the business of the board, teams, councils, commissions, and committees will be discussed or decided.

A.4. Conflict of Interest Policy- All those serving on Conference boards, councils, teams, commissions, committees, delegations, foundations, and ad hoc task forces of the Conference shall sign The North Georgia Conference of The United Methodist Church Conflict of Interest Policy before the beginning of the term of service or the beginning of their employment and must do so annually. The Conflict of Interest Policy shall be approved by the Conference Board of Trustees.

B. Standing Committees of the Annual Conference

The primary function of standing committees is to provide support that enables the session of the North Georgia Annual Conference to operate efficiently. These on-going committees do not have programmatic responsibilities throughout the year other than preparing for the annual conference session.

B. 1. There shall be a committee on standing rules composed of up to ten (10) with no less than five (5) persons, nominated by the annual conference committee on nominations, plus

the conference chancellor and conference secretary. The committee on standing rules is charged with the annual task of addressing the submission of new rules and maintaining the standing rules of the annual conference in the following ways: to receive requests for amendments, assure rules maintain internal consistency, make editorial changes as needed, present changes to the conference and review revised standing rules for publication in the conference journal. The committee is also charged with the quadrennial task of examining the rules of the annual conference for consistency with the latest *The Book of Discipline* and to recommend any editorial changes to bring about that consistency.

B. 2. There shall be a committee on registration and assistance composed of up to ten (10) with no less than five (5) persons, nominated by the annual conference committee on nominations. The primary functions of the committee on registration & assistance are to conduct registration, along with the host committee; certify delegates; and to issue badges accordingly. Using guidelines to verify eligibility, the committee helps retired pastors receive financial assistance, and during the week of annual conference, the committee maintains a table to assist visitors with badges and other needs. The registration and assistance committee is responsible for working with the host committee to organize and recruit volunteers.

B. 3. There shall be a committee on daily proceedings composed of up to ten (10) with no less than five (5) persons, nominated by the annual conference committee on nominations. The daily proceedings committee is responsible for certifying the written record of the annual conference and reporting to the annual conference on the committee's review of the material.

The committee on daily proceedings works with the editor of the conference journal/conference secretary as needed to ensure compliance with Disciplinary standards in ¶ 606.3 and for clarification of the written record of the annual conference session.

B. 4. There shall be a committee on resolutions composed of up to ten (10) with no less than five (5) persons, nominated by the annual conference committee on nominations. The charge of the resolution committee is to process all resolutions presented to the annual conference that are not submitted to the programmatic committees through dialogue with the submitter and all agencies of the annual conference affected by the resolution. This committee makes sure that, with occasional exceptions, resolutions submitted by the deadline of February 1 of the Annual Conference year are included in the handbook.

The resolutions committee is responsible for reviewing each resolution to determine if it can properly come before the annual conference, making revisions as needed in consultation with the submitter of the resolution, ensuring consistency with *The Book of Discipline* and North Georgia Standing Rules/Guidelines, submitting to the conference secretary by the deadline for the conference handbook, and presenting resolutions to the conference.

C. Annual Conference Session and Related Committees

C. 1. Annual Conference Committee on Nominations - There shall be an annual conference committee on nominations whose duty shall be to nominate all lay and clergy members of the boards, councils, teams, commissions, committees, and other agencies of the North Georgia Annual Conference. The committee shall be composed of the bishop, who shall be the chairperson; the district superintendents and extended cabinet; the conference lay leader and associate conference lay leaders; the district lay leaders; the commission on

religion and race representative; the conference presidents of United Methodist Men and of United Women in Faith; the chairpersons of the conference young adult organization and the council on youth ministry; and not more than five (5) members-at-large who shall be named by the bishop for inclusiveness. The committee shall make its nominations not later than the second morning of the annual conference.

The executive committee of the annual conference committee on nominations, composed of the bishop, the conference lay leader, the director of connectional ministries or designated person, three (3) other members of the annual conference committee on nominations named by the bishop, will coordinate the comprehensive nominations process of identification, recruitment, training, selection and evaluation for the annual conference. Where vacancies in essential elected positions occur between annual conference sessions, the executive committee may fill the positions until the next annual conference elects. Task forces may be used in keeping with the directions stated in standing rule H.1.

C. 2. District Committee on Nominations - There shall be a district committee on nominations, composed of five (5) clergy and six (6) lay members. One (1) clergy member shall be the district superintendent, who shall serve as the chairperson. One (1) of the six (6) lay members shall be the district lay leader. The district committee on nominations shall assist in identifying, recruiting and recommending potential leaders to the conference committee on nominations.

C. 3. Quadrennial Boards, Teams, Councils, Commissions, Committees - The membership of quadrennial boards, councils, teams, commissions, committees, and other agencies shall be limited to twenty-seven (27) persons plus ex-officio members. This rule shall not apply to standing committees or to any board, council, team, commission, committee, or other agency whose membership is otherwise determined by the conference or by *The Book of Discipline*.

All committees, boards, teams, councils, commissions and agencies of the annual conference shall be composed of equal numbers of clergy and laity voting members unless *The Book of Discipline* or standing rules provides otherwise.

No person shall be eligible for election to membership on the same board, council, team, commission or committee or agency for more than eight (8) consecutive years and after serving eight (8) years may not be later elected to the same board, commission, team, council, committee or agency for more than eight (8) years except as allowed by *The Book of Discipline*, for a lifetime total of sixteen (16) years maximum on the same board, council, team, commission, committee or agency. The Board of Pensions and Health Benefits and Board of Ordained Ministry shall be among those exempted from this standing rule. ¶ 634.1.a. of *The Book of Discipline* states that the membership of the Board of Ordained Ministry shall be as follows: “An elected board member may serve a maximum of three (3) consecutive four (4) year terms.” No person shall be nominated to serve concurrently on more than one (1) quadrennial board, council, team, commission or committee, except as an ex-officio member. However, one (1) exemption may be allowed for those serving on the board of laity, episcopal committee, nominations, the standing committees of the annual conference session (registration and assistance, daily proceedings, resolutions, and standing rules) and the Board of Ordained Ministry. No district superintendent may be nominated as an elective member of any program agency or team of the conference. Persons nominated shall have agreed in advance to serve if elected.

When quadrennial boards, councils, teams, commissions and committees are elected, they shall receive training, information and support for their responsibilities within sixty (60) days following the annual conference session, except in a year of episcopal transition when the window will be one hundred twenty (120) days. Chairpersons shall be nominated by the annual conference committee on nominations and elected by the annual conference. Under the direction of their respective chairpersons, each board, council, commission and committee shall elect a vice-chairperson and secretary. All team officers shall be nominated by the committee on nominations.

All district committees and conference boards, councils, teams, commissions and committees shall include members which ensure balance, continuity, expertise and inclusiveness in keeping with the spirit and guidelines of *The Book of Discipline*, ¶ 140.

C. 3. a. For Persons Holding Chairs:

C. 3. a. 1) Chairpersons are expected to maintain a yearly calendar of scheduled and announced meetings for planning, budgeting, and evaluation.

C. 3. a. 2) Chairpersons are expected to plan meetings at such times and locations that encourage and allow for maximum attendance of the elected membership, giving particular mind to the academic schedules of youth and young adults.

C. 3. a. 3) Chairpersons are to submit proper budgets with supporting rationale and any other requested reports in a proper and timely manner.

C. 3. a. 4) Chairpersons are expected to provide consistent communication with members of their committee or board regarding agendas, time/date/locations, and related information that impact a member's ability to serve well.

C. 3. a. 5) Chairpersons are expected to attend all called meetings of the committee or board for which he or she is responsible. Missing (2) two consecutive called meetings of his or her committee or board with no excuse, or missing (3) three consecutive called meetings of his or her committee or board with good excuse, will result in automatic release from the chair position and from membership on the committee or board.

C. 3. a. 6) Inability to meet the minimum guidelines of attendance will prompt a letter from the conference nominations executive committee, releasing the individual from his or her position (this will not negatively impact subsequent nominations or committee service) so the conference nominations executive committee can immediately fill the vacated position.

C. 3. a. 7) Chairpersons are permitted to nominate a member of the committee or board to serve in her or his place as a representative of the primary committee on the secondary committee on which the chairperson is a member by virtue of position.

C. 3. b. For Committee and Board Members:

C. 3. b. 1) Elected members are expected to attend all called meetings of the committee or board on which they are serving. Missing (3) three consecutive properly called meetings of his or her committee or board with no excuse, or missing (4) four consecutive properly called meetings of his or her committee or board with good excuse, will result in automatic release from the chair position and from membership on the committee or board.

C. 3. b. 2) Inability to meet the minimum guidelines of attendance will prompt a letter of notification from the conference nominations executive committee, releasing the individual from his or her position (this will not negatively impact subsequent nominations or committee service) so the conference nominations executive committee can immediately fill the vacated position.

C. 3. c. Training for all members of conference and district boards, teams, councils, commissions, and committees

C. 3. c. 1) All members of conference and ~~district boards~~, teams, councils, commissions, and committees including chairs, co-chairs, vice-chairs, and ex-officio members shall complete intercultural training within 60 days of beginning a term of service. The training shall be determined by the Conference Commission on Religion and Race and be funded through the budget of the **director of connectional ministry**.

~~**C. 3. c. 2)** Members who have begun terms prior 2023 shall complete intercultural training within 60 days of the conclusion of the 2023 Annual Conference Session.~~

C. 3. c. 3) Inability to meet the minimum guideline for intercultural training will prompt a letter of notification from the conference nominations executive committee, releasing the individual from his or her position so the conference nominations executive committee can immediately fill the vacated position.

C. 3. d. Maintaining Good Standing for Service

C. 3. d. 1) All members of conference and ~~district~~ boards, teams, councils, commissions, and committers shall maintain faithful membership of a United Methodist Church and refrain from engaging in activities or behaviors that are detrimental to their witness as United Methodist disciples of Jesus Christ. This is a minimum requirement to be in good standing to serve.

C. 3. d. 2) Inability to meet the minimum requirements will prompt a letter of notification from the conference nominations executive committee, releasing the individual from his or her position so the conference nominations executive committee can immediately fill the vacated position.

C. 4. Annual Conference Planning Committee - There shall be an annual conference planning committee responsible for setting the agenda for sessions of the annual conference, recommending the site of the conference annually, and overall coordination of annual conference. Applications to host the conference shall be for a period of four consecutive years in one site. The application shall be submitted to the bishop not less than two and one-half years before the proposed invitation date and must include adequate data to satisfy the planning committee of the suitability of the proposed site, with special attention to housing, food service, seating, congregating areas, parking and all standard public services necessary to accommodate large numbers of people. All facilities must meet ADA Accessibility Guidelines. All applications to host the conference must include an itemized account of anticipated expenses. The site must provide seating for all members of the conference, both clergy and lay, and for visitors and guests.

The annual conference planning committee shall select one site for four years and must reconfirm the site selected for each of the four years of the approved application. When for unforeseen circumstances related to finances, logistics or other compelling reasons the annual conference is not able to hold annual conference at the agreed upon site, the annual conference planning committee is authorized to work with the conference council on finance and administration to secure an appropriate alternate site.

The annual conference planning committee shall consist of the following persons: the bishop; the annual conference lay leader; the associate conference lay leader(s); the conference secretary; the dean of the cabinet; the conference presidents of United Women in

Faith, United Methodist Men, conference youth organization, conference young adult organization and the conference young adult committee representative; the chairpersons of the conference committee on registration and assistance the board of ordained ministry, conference commission on religion and race; the director of connectional ministries; the director of center for clergy excellence, executive assistant to the bishop, the chairperson of the conference council on finance and administration; the conference treasurer; and other persons selected by the bishop to assure proper representation of persons related to the work of the committee, such as the host district superintendent and the host pastor. The bishop or his/her designee shall be the chairperson of the annual conference planning committee.

C. 5. Conference Handbook & Information Packets - Material for publication in the conference handbook shall be submitted annually to the conference secretary not less than ninety (90) days prior to the opening date of the annual conference. Other material may be distributed to the members of the conference, at the discretion of the conference secretary, in a packet of supplementary materials. All printed materials requiring action by the annual conference shall be available in large print. The default format of the handbook shall be PDF posted on the conference website for members to download or print.

C. 6. Pre-Conference Briefings - Not more than twenty-five (25) days prior to the opening session of the annual conference, each district superintendent, in consultation with the district lay leader, shall convene, at such time and place as the two (2) of them together shall determine, the conference members residing in the district, both clergy and lay, for the purpose of examining the published reports and recommendations of the boards, councils, teams, commissions, committees and other agencies of the conference.

C. 7. Consent Agenda - In order to expedite the business of the conference, the consent agenda committee, composed of the conference secretary, the chairperson of the committee on standing rules, the director of connectional ministries or designated person, and the conference lay leader or his/her designee, in consultation with agencies or individuals presenting reports, recommendations or resolutions, may present in the conference handbook a written list of items which shall be known as the consent agenda. Items on the consent agenda shall be considered as adopted by consent of the annual conference unless they are removed from this list at a time set aside for this purpose on the second day of conference. Individual items may be removed from the consent agenda to be placed on the regular agenda by a motion to remove supported by a second from two (2) voting members of the annual conference. When an item has been removed from the consent agenda, it shall be placed on the regular agenda at an appropriate time as determined by the conference secretary.

C. 8. Reports - Reports shall be in writing, and an original, signed copy of the same shall be in the hands of the conference secretary before being read on the floor of the conference. When twenty-five (25) percent or more of the membership of a board, council, team, commission, committee or other agency shall request the privilege of presenting a minority report to the annual conference, the chairperson of said board or other agency shall appoint a committee to draft a minority report and shall submit the said minority report along with the majority report to the conference.

C. 9. Committee on Resolutions - There shall be a committee on resolutions, nominated and elected under the provisions of the standing rules (B.4). Any resolution coming to the floor of the annual conference which has not been before an official board, commission or agency of the annual conference, or a resolution not previously printed in the conference handbook,

shall be referred to the committee on resolutions for study before the resolution is considered by the annual conference.

C.10. Virtual Conference - In the event that the annual conference planning committee determines that circumstances require that any annual or special session of the North Georgia Conference should be held by virtual or electronic meeting in lieu of physical meeting, such determination shall be communicated to all delegates to the annual conference with a notice of the date and time for such virtual or electronic meeting. The notice shall be delivered in writing or by electronic communication at least ten days prior to the date specified for the virtual or electronic meeting. The notice shall provide the methodology necessary for each delegate to participate in the virtual or electronic meeting.

For any action to be taken by the delegates at the virtual or electronic meeting, a ballot shall be provided to the delegates by electronic transmission that shall set forth each proposed action and provide an opportunity for each delegate to vote for or against each proposed action.

Approval by electronic ballot shall be valid only when the number of votes cast by such ballot equals or exceeds the quorum required to be present at a meeting authorizing the action, and the number of approvals equals or exceeds the number of votes that would be required to approve the matter at a meeting at which the total number of votes cast was the same as the number of votes cast by ballot. Prior to or simultaneously with the delivery of any electronic ballot, the Conference Secretary shall notify by electronic communication (1) the number of responses needed to meet the quorum requirements, (2) the percentage of approvals necessary to approve each matter, and the time by which a ballot must be received by the Conference Secretary or any designated teller(s) in order to be counted. Once submitted by any delegate, an electronic ballot may not be modified or revoked.

D. Administrative Procedures of the Annual Conference

D. 1. Publication of Names and Addresses of Lay Members - The names and email addresses of lay members of the annual conference, arranged by districts and by charges, shall be published in the conference journal, and they shall be compiled and made available to members of the conference, both lay and clergy, as early as feasible following their election.

D. 2. Lay Member Equalization Plan - The lay membership of the annual conference shall be equal in number to its clergy membership. Lay members shall be elected by each charge conference as directed by *The Book of Discipline*, ¶ 33. The following are designated by *The Book of Discipline* (loc. cit.) to be members of the annual conference: the diaconal ministers, the active deaconesses, and home missionaries under episcopal appointment within the bounds of the annual conference, the conference president of the United Methodist Women, the conference president of United Methodist Men, the conference lay leader, district lay leaders, the conference director of Lay Servant Ministries, conference secretary of Global Ministries (if lay), the president or equivalent officer of the conference young adult organization, the president of the conference youth organization, the chair of the annual conference college student organization, and one young person between the ages of twelve (12) and seventeen (17) and one young person between the ages of eighteen (18) and thirty (30) from each district to be selected in such a manner as may be determined by the annual conference.

If the lay membership shall number less than the clergy membership, the following lay persons shall also be members of the annual conference: the associate conference lay leaders, the district directors of lay servant ministries, the district presidents of United Women in Faith and United Methodist Men, and the district presidents or equivalent officers of the district young adult organization and the district youth organization, ten (10) young persons 18 years and under and eight (13) young adult persons eighteen (18) years of age to thirty five (35) years of age.

Additional members shall be elected from each district by the district board of laity to achieve equalization of the number of lay and clergy members of the annual conference.

The conference secretary shall advise the district superintendents annually, not later than November 1, of the number of additional lay members required to achieve equalization. The district superintendents shall assist the district board of laity to elect the necessary persons, to notify them of their election, and to forward their names and addresses to the conference secretary by January 1 of each year.

D. 3. Pastoral Transition and Expenses - The last Sunday for pastors leaving a church will be the last Sunday of June. Move Day will be on the Tuesday following the last Sunday in June, and pastors shall vacate parsonages no later than 1:00 p.m. on this date. The first Sunday in July will be transitional leave for moving pastors. The incoming pastor's first day in the office will be the first business day after July 4. The incoming pastor's first day in the pulpit will be the second Sunday of July. If unusual circumstances prevail, the cabinet may change these dates to more suitable ones; provided, further, the secretary of the cabinet shall have notice of the change published on the North Georgia Conference website not fewer than ninety (90) days prior to the convening of annual conference. Churches receiving new pastors shall pay the moving expenses of the clergy, not to exceed \$6,000. The amount paid shall be reported in accordance with IRS code.

D. 4. Care of Parsonages - Clergy shall use care to maintain cleanliness and good housekeeping of the parsonages in which they reside. In addition to the annual inspection of the parsonage (§ 2533.4), at a time of change in pastoral appointment, there shall be an inspection of the parsonage by the pastor and the pastor/parish relations committee to determine the condition of the parsonage.

Responsibilities and additional information regarding parsonages can be found in the report from the Commission on Equitable Compensation in the Guidelines and Reports sections.

D. 5. Number of Districts - There shall be five (5) districts in the North Georgia Conference.

D. 6. Service Year - The conference service year shall be July 1 through June 30.

D. 7. Local Church Reports - Pastors shall submit their annual reports as directed by the conference statistician. The conference statistician shall reconcile the financial reports with the records of the conference treasurer.

D. 8. Archives - The depository for archival records of the North Georgia Conference shall be the Candler School of Theology of Emory University through its Pitts Theology Library.

E. Finance and Property

E. 1. Budget Development - All requests for appropriations shall be submitted to the conference council on finance and administration, in writing, not less than ninety (90) days prior to the opening session of the annual conference. Requests shall include a detailed financial statement. Any persons or group presenting a proposal to the annual conference for a program or activity which is not included in the conference budget shall at the same time, present a financial analysis including estimated cost and plans for funding. Before final action by the annual conference, the conference council on finance and administration shall review the financial aspects of the proposal and make its recommendation to the conference regarding the proposal. Budgets submitted to the conference for approval shall include itemized comparative figures for the previous year, except in the case of new programs.

E. 2. Fiscal Regulations - The conference fiscal year shall be January 1 through December 31. All monies for conference and district items shall be remitted by December 31. The books of the conference treasurer and the district treasurers shall be closed at the end of business on the fifth (5th) working day following January 1. The conference treasurer shall make final settlement and disburse all funds to the annual conference boards, councils, commissions or other agencies within fifteen (15) days following the end of the fiscal year. The conference treasurer shall report by districts and by charges all payments for equitable compensation, mission appropriations and the temporary general aid fund. The conference treasurer shall report monthly to the district superintendents all conference askings paid by each local church in the district.

E. 3. District Superintendents and District Office Financial Support - The conference apportionments will fund the following expenses: (1) district superintendent salaries, pensions, insurance (subject to the same insurance rules for other clergy); (2) district superintendent business expenses, including all travel and all business expenses; (3) salaries, pensions and insurance for the conference-employed administrative assistants assigned to the district offices (subject to the same rules for other conference lay staff); (4) district superintendent housing allowance (~~\$32,749 per annum in 2020-2021~~) or parsonage and utilities (~~\$5,000 in 2020-2021~~); (5) District Office overhead/support expenses such as rent/mortgage, utilities, property and liability insurance, supplies, equipment rental, etc.

E. 4. Church Property - Each district superintendent shall furnish the conference secretary annually, no later than February 1 of each year, for publication in the Conference Journal, a list of the real property situated within the district, belonging to but not currently in use by The United Methodist Church. Each district superintendent shall supplement said list in the event the district superintendent shall determine that the action of a charge conference in its district prior to the end of Annual Conference will result in the closing of a local church and the need to dispose of that local church's property. In the event of an ad interim procedure, as set out in ¶ 2549.4, the Conference Board of Trustees shall supplement the list with that information. The compilation of those lists shall be transmitted by the Conference Secretary to the Annual Conference Board of Trustees no later than February 15 of each year and supplemented as herein set out. The Conference Board of Trustees shall review said list and add or subtract properties based on its knowledge of the current status of properties not in use. The Conference Board of Trustees shall report the most current information regarding unused property, including properties to be discontinued, along with recommendations to the Annual Conference with recommendations for disposition. To assist it in managing and disposing of unused properties, the Conference Board of Trustees may employ professional

management personnel or entities. Funding for such assistance shall be retained from the sale or rental of any properties within the authority of the Conference Board of Trustees.

E. 5. Salary Supplements - All supplementation of pastoral salaries from whatever source shall be administered by the council on finance and administration or the commission on equitable compensation in accordance with guidelines developed by the commission and approved by the annual conference, except that the conference board of congregational development shall be authorized to administer salary supplementation for pastors of new and redeveloping congregations, in keeping with guidelines developed by the committee and approved by the annual conference.

E. 6. Charters - Charters authorized by the North Georgia Conference shall be reviewed by the conference chancellor before being filed with the Georgia Secretary of State.

E. 7. Annual Conference Registration Fee – A registration fee of ~~\$30.00~~ shall be assessed for each lay and active clergy delegate to the North Georgia Annual Conference. Retired clergy and youth members are exempt from the assessment.

F. Conference Common Table (CCT)

F. 1. There shall be a Conference Common Table with responsibility to focus and guide the mission and ministry of The United Methodist Church within the boundaries of the North Georgia Annual Conference. It shall give leadership and guidance in setting the vision and priorities of the annual conference and in conducting an on-going process of refining and revising that vision.

F. 2. The director of connectional ministries or designated person, in consultation with the resident bishop, shall chair the Common Table, which shall be composed of the following persons: resident bishop, director of connectional ministries or designated person, district superintendents, director of center for clergy excellence, executive assistant to the bishop, director of congregational excellence, chairperson of the board of congregational development, conference treasurer, chairperson of the council on finance and administration, chairperson of the board of ordained ministry, secretary of the annual conference, conference chancellor, conference lay leader, the four associate conference lay leaders, conference president of United Women in Faith, conference president of United Methodist Men, president of the conference youth organization, the co-presidents of the conference young adult organization, chairs of the connectional ministries team, chair of the conference commission on religion and race, conference staff person assigned to missions, chairperson of the order of deacons, chairperson of the order of elders, chairperson of the fellowship of local pastors and associate members, the heads of the most recently elected lay and clergy delegations to general conference, and such at-large members as the bishop shall nominate to provide for diversity and inclusiveness as regards race/ethnicity/national origin, age, and gender. The Common Table's membership shall be limited to fifty persons. The eligibility limitations of standing rule C.3. shall not apply to the Common Table.

F. 3. There shall be an executive committee of the Common Table composed of the bishop, the director of connectional ministries or designated person, the conference lay leader, the dean of the cabinet, co-chairs of the connectional ministries team, the chair of the conference

commission on religion and race, and the chairperson of the council on finance and administration.

F. 4. The Common Table could be called into session at such time as the chair, in consultation with the bishop, deems it necessary for the benefit of the conference's work, and may report each year to the annual conference regarding stewardship of the conference's vision and its commitment to the mission and ministry of The United Methodist Church.

G. Connectional Ministries

G. 1. There shall be a director of connectional ministries or designated person who, in partnership with the bishop and cabinet, shall have the following primary responsibilities: to serve as steward of the vision of the annual conference, including the development, clarification, interpretation, and embodiment of the conference's vision; to serve as leader of the continuous process of transformation and renewal necessary for the annual conference to be faithful to our Christian identity in a changing world; to ensure alignment of the total resources of the conference to its vision; and to ensure the connections among the local, district, annual conference, and general church ministries for the purpose of networking, resourcing, and communicating their shared ministry.

G. 2. The director of connectional ministries or designated person shall serve as an officer of the annual conference and shall sit with the cabinet when the cabinet considers matters relating to coordination, implementation, or administration of the conference program, and other matters as the cabinet and director may determine.

G. 3. The director of connectional ministries or designated person shall coordinate the recruitment and training of conference program leaders, provide oversight and leadership in the conference's program and ministry, and serve as chair of the Common Table and as executive officer of the connectional ministry team.

H. Connectional Ministry Team

H.1. There shall be connectional ministry team. The work and ministry of this board is aimed at strengthening the local church and the annual conference through discipleship and support of the North Georgia Conference churches, laity and clergy, and through the prophetic voice of advocacy that calls us all to be better; to lead and assist congregations, districts and the conference in efforts to communicate and celebrate the redeeming and reconciling love of God as revealed in Jesus Christ to persons of every age, ethnic background, and social condition; to invite persons to commit their lives to Christ and to Christ's church; and to enable persons to live as Christian disciples in the world. In carrying out this work and ministry, the board shall be responsible for leading the North Georgia Conference ministries stipulated in *The Book of Discipline*, including as central to its role and ministries:

- Shall have authority to form committees as the *The Book of Discipline* may require or for carrying out its responsibilities
- working in collaboration with the Barnes Evaluation and Administration Team and the ~~five~~ (5) District Strategic Growth Teams to ensure ongoing congregational development through promoting, nurturing, supporting, and guiding existing and new

faith communities as they implement innovative ministries with and in the communities they serve

- working in collaboration with the North Georgia Conference staff to ensure focused, strategic, and effective training, consultation, leadership development, and other, human resources-driven support are provided to the North Georgia Conference churches, laity, and clergy for both new and existing ministries
- working in collaboration with all the North Georgia Conference churches, laity, clergy, and other groups to ensure our call to Christian advocacy is heard and responded to in effective and meaningful ways across our North Georgia Conference, and as stipulated in *The Book of Discipline*
- working collaboratively, as one board, to ensure the board's ministries of church development, human resources-driven support, and conference-wide advocacy are carried out in a transparent, clear, and coordinated way that advances our mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world

H.2. Members of the connectional ministries team shall be nominated by the committee on nominations, elected by the annual conference, and serve per guidelines stipulated in Standing Rule C.3. Membership shall include:

- co-chairs, one who shall be a lay-person designated by the conference lay leader and one who shall be a clergyperson nominated by the director of connectional ministries
- secretary
- four at-large lay-persons
- four at-large clergy persons
- chairpersons of the committees on
 - Latino congregational development
 - Pan Asian congregational development
 - Black congregational development
- North Georgia Conference lead persons for the areas of:
 - Children's Ministries / Safe Sanctuaries
 - Small Membership Church
 - Older Adult Ministries
 - Young Adult Ministries
 - Youth Ministries
 - Spiritual Formation
 - Higher Education & Campus Ministries
 - Adult & Family Ministries
 - Camp & Retreat Ministries
 - Evangelism
 - Christian Unity & Inter-religious Relationships
 - Church and Society
 - Status and Role of Women
 - Religion and Race
 - Creation and Care
 - Criminal Justice and Mercy
 - Disability Concerns
 - Disaster Response

- Ethnic Local Church Concerns
- Global Ministries
- Health, Welfare & Wellness
- Missions
- Native American Ministries
- Peace with Justice
- Persons in Poverty
- Refugee Resettlement
- Multi-Cultural Advocate
- LGBTQ Advocate

Ex-Officio members of the board shall include:

- Cabinet representative appointed by the bishop without vote
- Conference Lay Leader
- Associate Conference Lay Leaders
- Conference United Women in Faith President
- Conference United Methodist Men President
- Conference Youth President
- Conference Youth Secretary
- General Commission on Religion and Race Representative
- Council of Finance and Administration Representative without vote
- Conference Board of Trustee Representative without vote

H.3. Staffing and supporting the team shall be the responsibility of:

- Director of Connectional Ministries
- other Conference staff as needed/assigned

H.4. The connectional ministries team shall have authority to form committees as *The Book of Discipline* may require or as deemed necessary by the board in carrying out its responsibilities. The connectional ministries team may enlist additional persons to assist in its work and may also form time-limited task forces to address particular issues or emphases.

Standing committees of the board shall include committees on:

- Latino congregational development
- Pan Asian congregational development
- Black congregational development

Working in collaboration with the Commission on Religion and Race, the 5 District Strategic Growth teams, and other North Georgia Conference boards and committees as needed, these standing committees shall make recommendations to the board and other appropriate North Georgia Conference groups with regard to supporting the development of new Latino, Pan Asian and Black congregations and strengthening existing Latino, Pan Asian and Black congregations. They shall also be responsible for the development and deployment of training they deem important from a cultural perspective in planting new, and supporting existing, Latino, Pan Asian, and Black churches. Each committee shall request funds necessary for this training be included in the connectional ministry team budget. These committees shall meet at least quarterly and may meet more often at the request of the director of connectional ministries, or the co-chairs of the connectional ministry team. Each committee shall elect a vice-chair and secretary.

Ex-officio members of each committee shall include a Cabinet Representative assigned by the Cabinet, and a Conference staff representative, assigned by the director of connectional ministries, and the chair of the conference commission on religion and race or designee.

H.5. The co-chairs of the connectional ministries team shall on an annual basis, no later than January 31st of each year, and in consultation with board members:

- determine the standing committee's personnel/membership needs for the coming conference year
- submit their request for personnel/membership nominations to the director of connectional ministries. The request shall include:
 - the number of persons needed
 - number of lay persons
 - number of clergypersons
 - specific role for each person needed
 - the board's perspective on the gifts and graces needed for each opening
 - an estimate of the time-commitment associated with each opening

H.6. The budget for the connectional ministries team and all of its associated committees, shall be included in the budget for the director of connectional ministries.

H.7. There shall be an executive committee of the team, composed of the co-chairs, secretary, conference lay leader, director of connectional ministries, cabinet representative, and other members as determined and elected by the full board.

H.8. The full board shall meet at least semi-annually; but may meet more often as needed or determined by the board's executive committee.

I. Ministry of the Laity

I. 1. Conference Board of Laity - There shall be a conference board of laity which shall provide for the ministry of the laity related to the objectives of the General Board of Discipleship as set forth in ¶¶ 1101-1126. The purpose of the conference board of laity shall be as outlined in ¶ 630.2. Funding for the board shall be provided through the conference budget.

I. 2. Membership of Conference Board of Laity - The following shall comprise the membership of the board: the conference lay leader, associate conference lay leaders, the district lay leaders, the conference director of lay servant ministries, the presidents and two representatives elected by each of the conference organizations of United Methodist Men and United Women in Faith, the presidents of the conference young adult organization and the conference youth organization; and in addition, the conference scouting coordinator, the lay chair or lay vice-chair of the general conference delegation and up to four at-large members elected by the board, in consultation with the annual conference committee on nominations as needed from time to time for inclusiveness and/or operations; and as ex-officio, a district superintendent designated by the cabinet, the director of connectional ministries or designated person and the presiding bishop. Task forces may be utilized in keeping with the directives stated in Standing Rule H.1.

I. 3. Election of Conference Lay Leader and Associate Conference Lay Leaders – The conference lay leader and no more than four (4) associate conference lay leaders shall be elected quadrennially by the annual conference on nomination of the conference committee on nominations after consultation with the board of laity. The conference lay leader shall serve as chair of the conference board of laity. No person may serve as the conference lay leader for more than eight (8) consecutive years. No person may serve as the associate conference lay leader for more than eight (8) consecutive years. The conference lay leader and the associate conference lay leaders shall be members of the board of laity by virtue of their election to the offices they hold. Years of service as an associate conference lay leader shall not be considered in determining the eligibility of a person to serve as conference lay leader.

I. 4. Conference Committee on Lay Servant Ministries – There shall be a conference committee on lay servant ministries, which shall relate to the conference board of laity as specifically provided for in ¶ 630.6. The committee shall be structured by the conference board of laity and shall include as a minimum the conference director of lay servant ministries, the district directors of lay servant ministries, the conference lay leader, and one or more associate conference lay leaders. Up to four (4) at-large members may be elected by the conference board of laity as needed for inclusiveness and/or operations from time to time. The conference director of lay servant ministries shall be elected for a four-year term by the conference board of laity after consultation with the conference committee on nominations. No person may serve as the conference director of lay servant ministries for more than eight (8) consecutive years.

J. Administrative Agencies of the Annual Conference

J. 1. There shall be a board of ordained ministry composed of up to seventy-five (75) persons nominated by the bishop as outlined in ¶ 634.1, including those who serve by virtue of their offices.

J.1.a. Purpose. There shall be a committee on clergy effectiveness which shall be a resource to the bishop and cabinet to assist clergy who are having significant difficulty with effectiveness in ministry. To assist the bishop in carrying out the responsibilities of ¶ 334.3 and ¶ 360.1b, the committee will meet with the referred clergy person to identify concerns and design collaboratively a corrective plan of action for a return to more effective ministry.

J.1.b. Membership. There shall be eight (8) members who shall be appointed by the executive committee of the board of ordained ministry. The members of the committee shall not be members of the conference board of ordained ministry. The majority of the committee shall be clergy, and at least one member shall be a layperson. In addition, the director of the center for clergy excellence and a district superintendent appointed by the bishop shall be ex-officio members without vote. In the event the district superintendent of the referred clergy person is an ex-officio member of the committee, that district superintendent shall recuse himself or herself, and the bishop shall appoint another district superintendent to sit on the committee for that case only. In the event any member of the committee is appointed to or attends the same local church as the referred clergy person, that member of the committee shall recuse himself or herself, and the bishop shall appoint another clergy person or layperson to sit on the committee for that case only.

J.1.c. Terms of Service. The committee membership shall be divided into two classes of four years each. To promote continuity, four of the initial members shall be elected for two year terms and four of the initial members shall be elected to four year terms. Notwithstanding conference rules of longevity regarding total length of service in an elected position, members may not be appointed to serve two consecutive terms on the committee.

J.1.d. Officers. The committee shall elect a chair and a secretary from its members every two years.

J.1.e. Referrals. The bishop and the cabinet shall refer to the committee those clergy who are experiencing a pattern of diminished effectiveness in their ministry. The committee shall meet with the referred clergy person and his/her district superintendent and shall develop a plan to enable and support the restoration of effectiveness. The committee shall continue to meet with the referred clergy person until such time as he or she has established a pattern of effectiveness or, in the opinion of the majority of the members of the committee, until the committee determines that the referred clergy person is not making sufficient progress. The committee shall report its conclusions to the bishop and cabinet.

J.1.f. Method. The committee, the referred clergy person, and his/her district superintendent together shall develop a plan for the attainment of agreed upon goals that will demonstrate renewed effectiveness for ministry. The work of the committee may include psychological testing, health screening, random or directed drug testing, retreats, counseling, mentoring, educational opportunities, or other programs as needed to assist the clergy person in attaining effectiveness in ministry. A letter detailing the agreed upon goals and plan of work shall be sent to the referred clergy person from the Center for Clergy Excellence immediately following the meeting in which the plan is developed. Progress shall be demonstrated and documented at each meeting.

J.1.g. Meetings. The committee shall meet at least two times per year and the chair shall give reasonable notice of the meeting dates to all members as well as to the bishop and cabinet.

J.1.h. Financial Support. The committee shall determine its financial needs in order to be effective and shall submit any request for funding to the center for clergy excellence to be included in its budget.

J. 2. There shall be a commission on equitable compensation as provided by ¶ 624.1, composed of up to twenty (20) persons with at least one (1) representative from each district. Members shall be nominated by the annual conference committee on nominations and subject to the requirements of C.3. that requires equal number of laity and clergy.

J. 3. There shall be a board of pensions ~~and health benefits~~ as provided by ¶ 638.1 composed not less than twelve (12) and up to twenty-four (24) persons arranged in classes and serving a term of eight (8) years to include representatives of both lay and clergy, nominated by the annual conference committee on nominations. Members may serve two (2) consecutive terms not to exceed sixteen (16) years.

J. 4. There shall be a board of trustees of the annual conference, elected as indicated in ¶¶ 640 and 2512.1, composed of twelve (12) persons, nominated by the annual conference committee on nominations, serving in four (4) year terms, except for the first board. It is recommended that it be composed of one-third (1/3) clergy, one-third (1/3) lay women, and one-third (1/3) lay men.

Ex-officio members with voice but without vote shall include:

- Conference Chancellor
- Conference Treasurer
- Executive Assistant to the Bishop
- Cabinet Representative

J. 5. There shall be a council on finance and administration as provided by ¶¶ 611-618, composed of five to twenty-one (5-21) persons, with one (1) lay person more than clergy included on the council. The council shall designate an audit committee comprised of one lay council on finance and administration member, one clergy council on finance and administration member and a Certified Public Accountant who is not a member of the council on finance and administration. The council shall designate a personnel committee, whose responsibilities will include those defined in ¶ 613.13. The personnel committee shall be comprised of two (2) clergy council on finance and administration members, one lay council on finance and administration member, two lay human resources professionals who are not members of the council on finance and administration, and the conference lay leader. Personnel committee members with voice and no vote are the conference treasurer and the cabinet representative. The council will, on those extremely rare occasions when the Conference may be asked to guarantee a local church loan, function as the committee to evaluate said request. This function will eliminate the need for a seating of the “Loan Guarantee Committee.”

The council on finance and administration members shall be nominated by the annual conference committee on nominations.

J. 6. There shall be a committee on episcopacy as provided by ¶ 637.1, composed of up to fifteen (15) persons with sensitivity to representation from districts. It is recommended that it be composed of one-third (1/3) clergy, one-third (1/3) lay women, and one-third (1/3) lay men, provided that one (1) lay person be the conference lay leader. One-fifth (1/5) of the membership shall be appointed by the bishop (up to three persons). The lay and clergy members of the jurisdictional committee on episcopacy shall be ex-officio members.

J. 7. There shall be an episcopal residency committee as provided by ¶ 638.2.

J. 8. There shall be a committee on investigation consisting of four (4) clergy in full connection, three (3) professing members, and six (6) alternate members, three of whom shall be clergy in full connection and three of whom shall be professing members. The committee shall be nominated by the presiding bishop in consultation with the board of ordained ministry (for clergy members) and the conference board of laity (for lay persons) and elected quadrennially by the annual conference. If additional members or alternates are needed, the annual conference may elect members to serve for the remainder of the quadrennium. Committee members shall be in good standing and should be deemed of good character. The committee should reflect racial, ethnic, and gender diversity ¶ 2703.

J. 9. Deleted

J. 10. There shall be a diaconal committee on investigation as provided by ¶ 2703.2.

J. 11. There shall be an administrative review committee as provided by ¶ 635.

J. 12. There shall be a North Georgia United Methodist housing and homeless council which shall be composed of no more than 36 persons nominated by the conference committee on nominations and elected by the annual conference. Each district shall be represented by no fewer than two members, one of whom shall be a clergy member in that district and one of whom shall be a lay person who shall be a member of one of the churches in the district that

they represent. In addition, the following other persons shall be members: a district superintendent designated by the cabinet; director of connectional ministries or designated person; the director of the council, who shall be a non-voting member; and representatives of Persons Living in Poverty and Refugee Resettlement.

J.13. There shall be a Barnes Evaluation and Administrative Team (BEAT) that oversees and administers ministry grants made from the The Barnes Fund for Church Development (“Barnes Fund”). The Barnes Evaluation and Administrative Team shall establish a spending plan to protect the corpus of the The Barnes Fund and endeavor to increase the The Barnes Fund potential for ministry grants in perpetuity. The Barnes Evaluation and Administrative Team shall partner with District Superintendents and District Strategic Growth Teams to ensure that all districts are given equitable opportunities to apply for and employ grant funding for their district-specific, missional needs. The Barnes Evaluation and Administrative Team shall partner with Annual Conference Standing Boards and Agencies to ensure that conference priorities for ministry are given equitable opportunity to apply for and employ grant funding for the greater good of the conference.

J.13.a Members of the Barnes Evaluation and Administrative Team (BEAT) shall be nominated by the committee on nominations, elected by the Annual Conference, and serve per guidelines stipulated in Standing Rule C.3. The Barnes Evaluation and Administrative Team members shall be nominated by the committee on nominations for four (4) year terms with a maximum of two (2) consecutive terms. It shall consist of no more than 26 members with equal representation of clergy and laity and shall include, but not be limited to:

- two (2) co-chairs, one who shall be laity and one who shall be a clergy-person
- four to eight (4-8) at-large lay-persons
- four to eight (4-8) at-large clergy-persons

Ex-Officio Members with vote shall include:

One (1) of the co-chair(s) of the Connectional Ministries Team or designee
 One (1) Representative from each District Strategic Growth Team (DSGT)
 Chair of Black Congregational Development or designee
 Chair of Latino Congregational Development or designee
 Chair of Pan Asian Congregational Development or designee
 Chair of the Commission on Religion and Race or designee
 Chair of the Council on Finance and Administration or designee
 President of the Board of Trustees representative or designee

Ex-Officio members with vote must recuse themselves on all matters, discussions, and votes which have come from the committees they represent. (For example, an application that was previously before the Central North DSGT would require the DSGT rep from the Central North DSGT to be recused from the discussion and vote on BEAT.)

Ex-Officio Members without vote shall include:

- Executive Assistant to the Bishop
- Two (2) Cabinet representatives selected by the bishop
- Director of Connectional Ministries

K. Districts

K. 1. District Conference Membership – The membership of the district conference shall consist of (a) all active and retired clergy and diaconal ministers serving appointments or holding charge conference membership within the district and (b) all local church elected, at-large, and ex-officio lay members of the annual conference from the district.

K. 2. District Board of Laity – There shall be in each district of the annual conference a district board of laity composed of the district lay leader who shall serve as chair, the associate district lay leaders, the district superintendent, the chair of district connectional ministries or designated person, the district presidents of United Women in Faith and United Methodist Men, one (1) youth and one (1) young adult named by the youth and young adult groups respectively, the district director of lay speaking, and such other persons as the district lay leader and the district superintendent together may select. The district board of laity shall elect annual conference at-large delegates from the districts.

K. 3. Election of District Lay Leader and Lay Leadership – The district lay leader, the district associate lay leaders and the district director of lay servant ministries shall be elected annually, on nomination of the district nominating committee, after consultation with the district board of laity, by the membership of the district conference at the district orientation meeting before the annual conference session. It is recommended these officers will serve quadrennially and will be elected for their first term at the district orientation meeting immediately preceding the start of the new quadrennium. Replacements for these positions shall be elected at the annual district orientation meeting as needed.

L. Conference Related Agencies

L. 1. There shall be a Georgia United Methodist Foundation, Inc., board of trustees, nominated by the Foundation to be confirmed or denied confirmation by the annual conference.

L. 2. There shall be a Methodist Foundation for Retired Ministers Board of Trustees, nominated in accordance with its Constitution and By-Laws, to be confirmed or denied confirmation by the annual conference.

L. 3. There shall be an Aldersgate Homes board of directors, nominated in accordance with its Constitution and By-Laws, to be confirmed or denied confirmation by the annual conference.

L. 4. There shall be a United Methodist Children's Home now doing business as Wellroot Family Services board of directors, nominated in accordance with its Constitution and By-Laws, to be confirmed or denied confirmation by the annual conference.

L. 5. There shall be a Wesley Woods, Senior Living, Inc., board of trustees, nominated in accordance with its Constitution and By-Laws, to be confirmed or denied confirmation by the annual conference.

L. 6. There shall be a board of North Georgia Camp and Retreat Ministries, nominated in accordance with its Constitution and By-Laws, to be confirmed or denied confirmation by the annual conference. North Georgia Camp and Retreat Ministries, Inc. is the entity through which camping ministry for children and youth shall be carried out.

M. Joint Ministries of North and South Georgia Conferences

M. 1. There shall be a Georgia United Methodist Commission on Higher Education and Collegiate Ministry. The commission shall have twenty-three (23) voting members, ten (10) elected by the North Georgia Conference and eight (8) elected by the South Georgia Conference. Proposed members shall be nominated by the Committees on Nominations from the two annual conferences after receiving input from the commission regarding possible nominees. At least half of the elected members from each annual conference shall be laypersons. The presiding bishop of each annual conference shall designate one district superintendent from that annual conference to be a voting member of the commission. The director of connectional ministries or designated person of each annual conference shall designate one staff member from each annual conference to be a voting member of the commission. The executive director of the commission shall be a voting member of the commission.

Leadership positions of the commission shall be held by members from both annual conferences.

M. 2. There shall be a Georgia United Methodist Pastors' School board of managers, composed of persons by virtue of office and at-large members named by the annual conference committee on nominations. The purpose of the Georgia United Methodist Pastors' School shall be to provide an annual school for continuing education for United Methodist clergy of the North and South Georgia annual conferences, while modeling and promoting a spirit of cooperation and goodwill between the two annual conferences and members thereof. The Georgia Pastors' School shall be governed by a board of managers composed of up to thirty (30) clergy combined from both annual conferences. The members shall be named to the board of managers according to nominating guidelines established by each annual conference. The officers are nominated and elected from the board of managers. The chairperson and dean of the pastors' school shall rotate between the two annual conferences from quadrennium to quadrennium.

N. United Methodist Related Institutions of Higher Education

N. 1. There shall be boards of trustees of United Methodist related schools, nominated in accordance with their Constitution and By-Laws, to be confirmed or denied confirmation by the annual conference.

N. 2. There shall be boards of directors of Wesley Foundations, nominated in accordance with their Constitution and By-Laws, to be confirmed or denied confirmation by the annual conference.

Lay Self-Nominations

Candidate #1001

Name: Bennett Abrams
City: Atlanta
Church: Ben Hill UMC
District: South West
Age Group: Young Adult
Race/Ethnicity: Black
Occupation: College Student
Current Appointment: Ben Hill UMC



Statement:

I have served as a youth delegate to the NGUMC Annual Conference every year since eighth grade, with the sole exception of 2024, where I was participating in a debate tournament at Harvard University. I've served everywhere in the local church from packing lunches to working the sound board in worship to preaching. I am also the child of a pastor and an incoming seminary student. I have been immersed in church my entire life, and seeing the myriad ways in which our beliefs are practiced and manifested has led to my particular view on what it means to be a servant in the Christian sense. I believe that the obligation and mandate of a Christian are not about simply avoiding sin and praying a lot. While these actions are of course part of our religious practice, we have a higher imperative, that being one of service. Jesus was a member of a marginalized group, preaching, leading, and serving other marginalized people. Thus, the current Christian hegemony is one that is at best ironic and at worst antithetical to Christ's and our mission. Consequently, I believe that as Christians it is our duty to help to bring about positive change in our community and world. I took this mindset of Christian service with me to college, where I serve as a Chapel Assistant in the Martin Luther King Jr. International Chapel at Morehouse College. As a student at an institution that centers on faith based advocacy and the responsibility of individuals to the collective good, I believe that I have a unique perspective that would be invaluable to carrying out the above interpretation of our mission as Christians.

Lay Self-Nominations

Candidate #1002

Name:	Allison Berg
City:	Decatur
Church:	Oak Grove UMC Decatur
District:	South Central
Age Group:	Older Adult
Race/Ethnicity:	White
Occupation:	Treasurer / CFO
Current Appointment:	Oak Grove UMC Decatur



Statement:

As a lifelong United Methodist, I am passionate about the work of our church in making disciples of Jesus Christ. I am fortunate to serve professionally as Treasurer/CFO of the North Georgia and South Georgia Conferences and daily witness the strength of our United Methodist Connection. I understand both ministry needs and fiscal challenges facing our denomination and local churches. As secretary of our national Annual Conference Treasurers Association and member on the jurisdictional CFA committee, I have unique perspective and expertise concerning the resourcing of UMC ministries. I can offer potential creative solutions within our denominational framework as your delegation member to navigate the significant and complex challenges before the 2028 General Conference. My husband and I are active at Oak Grove UMC where I teach an adult Sunday School class, mentor eleventh-grade girls, have served as Board of Stewards chair and taught Disciple Bible Study. Our three children were active in youth group and were counselors at Camp Glisson. As a young adult at Northside UMC, I led the Oxford Sunday School class, served on Finance, Outreach and as Trinity Table mission liaison in downtown Atlanta. My childhood spiritual home was Mulberry Street UMC where I was Youth Council president, District treasurer, and Administrative Board youth representative. My faith journey was greatly impacted through study of Scripture, informed by reason and prayerful wrestling with tough interpretation topics, confirmed by experience and our traditions. I believe every person, without exception, is a deeply loved child of God, and should be full participants in the body of Christ's church. I feel called in this season of divisiveness to share His love and grace with ALL His children. My hope as delegate is to join with our God who is doing a 'new thing' in our denomination and in our hearts.

Lay Self-Nominations

Candidate #1003

Name:	Beth Blakely
City:	Lawrenceville
Church:	Cannon UMC
District:	North East
Age Group:	Adult
Race/Ethnicity:	White
Occupation:	Administrative Assistant to the Bishop
Current Appointment:	Cannon UMC



Statement:

My United Methodist story is not a straight line. Confirmed as a teenager at Preston UMC in Preston, Minnesota, I spent the next 25 years wandering through Baptist and non-denominational churches. Years of searching that, in hindsight, look a lot like a Methodist sermon illustration. When my family joined Cannon United Methodist Church about 14 years ago, I came home to something I hadn't known I was missing: a theology of grace that meets people where they are, a focus on how our church can show love to our immediate community, and a connectional structure with accountability that provides order for my sometimes anxious heart. At Cannon I've tried to show up wherever needed: choir member, VBS Director for six years (I have the emotional scars and the craft glitter to prove it), SPRC, Finance, Nominations, youth volunteer, lay delegate to Annual Conference, and more. I currently serve as Administrative Assistant to the Bishop for the North and South Georgia Conferences, a role that has given me a front-row seat to the beauty, the challenges, and holy potential of The United Methodist Church. The 2028 General Conference will be one of the most consequential gatherings in modern United Methodist history. The denomination has been through an earthquake. The rebuilding - of identity, of mission, of trust - is work that matters. My pastor puts it this way: Jesus did not die to get us into heaven. He lived, died, and was raised to get heaven into us and on the earth. That is the United Methodism I want to represent. That is the mission worth showing up for. I would be honored to carry that mission to Minneapolis as your delegate. And I promise to bring snacks to delegation.

Lay Self-Nominations

Candidate #1004

Name:	Randy Brown
City:	Griffin
Church:	Wesley Chapel UMC McDonough
District:	South Central
Age Group:	Older Adult
Race/Ethnicity:	Black
Occupation:	Retired
Current Appointment:	Wesley Chapel UMC McDonough



Statement:

My name is Randy Brown, and I submit myself for consideration as a Lay Delegate to the 2028 General Conference representing the North Georgia Conference. The United Methodist Church is the foundation of my faith. Methodism runs deep in my family. My grandparents were Methodist, my parents raised me Methodist, and I have continued in that tradition. My story also reflects the broader witness of Black Methodists who journeyed through the Central Jurisdiction into The United Methodist Church and toward its “new expression.” Ours is a story of faithfulness, resilience, and a continued call toward inclusion and equity within the life of the Church. In my professional life, I had the honor of advising, counseling, and assisting veterans and their family members. I remain committed to that important work through volunteer service. Within the Conference community, I have also expressed my passion for missions by participating in Bridges mission trips to Uganda and mission work in Venezuela. These experiences helped me live into John Wesley’s teaching that “the world is our parish.” As we continue shaping the future of The United Methodist Church by loving boldly, serving joyfully, and leading courageously, I offer myself as a voice for the North Georgia Conference in these important conversations. If elected, I pledge to faithfully offer my time, talents, gifts, service and witness to the work of the General and Jurisdictional Conferences while representing the interests of the North Georgia Conference.

Conference: One Georgia Committee, Previous Leadership – Board Ordained Ministry, Board Member / Leadership UMC, 2016 & 2020 Delegate - General and Jurisdictional Conferences. District: Director - Lay Servant Ministries, Certified Lay Speaker, At Large Member Annual Conference Local Church: Facilitator Disciple / Special Studies, Member – Christian Education, United Methodist Men, Missions, Veterans Ministry, Previous Leadership – Lay Leader, Chairperson Administrative

Lay Self-Nominations

Candidate #1005

Name: ELIZABETH CORRIE
City: ATLANTA
Church: Neighborhood Church, A United Methodist Community
District: South Central
Age Group: Adult
Race/Ethnicity: White
Occupation: Teacher
Current Appointment: Neighborhood Church, A United Methodist Community



Statement:

Elizabeth Corrie is professor in the practice of youth education and peacebuilding and director of the Youth Theological Initiative at Candler School of Theology, Emory University. She works directly with students who become clergy in the UMC and other denominations. She speaks regularly in churches and schools on topics related to youth, contemporary culture, and the role people of faith can play in building peace. She received her B.A. from The College of William & Mary in 1993, M.Div. from Candler School of Theology in 1996, and Ph.D. from Emory University in 2002. Corrie served as General Editor of the CEB Student Bible, and contributed devotionals to the CEB Women’s Bible and to the Upper Room’s Disciplines. Growing up in The United Methodist Church, Corrie has been a lay member to the North Georgia Annual Conference since 2009, representing Druid Hills UMC and Neighborhood Church UMC. Corrie has served as reserve delegate with the North Georgia Delegation to the 2012, 2016 and 2019 General Conferences, and as a delegate to the 2020/2024 General Conference. She was a delegate to the 2012, 2016, and 2020/2024 Southeastern Jurisdictional Conferences. She has served as a director on the General Board of Global Ministries since 2016. She was the 2014 North Georgia Annual Conference Laity Luncheon keynote speaker. As a member of Neighborhood Church, Corrie has witnessed the healing power of the Holy Spirit when the image of God in every human is fully seen and affirmed. She is committed to making the church relevant to the lives of young adults and youth, working for racial, gender, and climate justice inside and outside the church, and sharing with the world a Gospel message that heals and empowers. Corrie is married and enjoys running, reading fiction, and travelling abroad.

Lay Self-Nominations

Candidate #1006

Name: Stephanie Dressler
City: Alpharetta
Church: Johns Creek UMC
District: North East
Age Group: Adult
Race/Ethnicity: White
Occupation: Volunteer
Current Appointment: Johns Creek UMC



Statement:
I am a lifelong United Methodist and have been an active supportive member of Northbrook UMC, Alpharetta 1st UMC and Johns Creek UMC for over 25 years. In the past 35 years, I have also served United Women in Faith and United Methodist Women in a multitude of ways at the Local, District and Conference levels. Most recently, I previously served as Conference Vice President and Conference President. She is currently serving as a National Director and Program Advisory Committee member for the national organization of United Women in Faith. In October 2023, I received the Doris Paul PURPOSE award in October which is awarded to a woman in our Conference who exemplifies the PURPOSE of United Women in Faith. As a National Director, I serve as a board member at Murphy-Harpst Children’s Center, one of our National Mission Institutions in North Georgia. I also serve on the Administrative Matter Committee and board member for the General Board of Global Ministries. I am a certified lay servant and a certified United Methodist Volunteer in Mission (UMVIM) leader. At my local church, I serve as a lay delegate to Annual Conference and am a member of the leadership team for United Women in Faith. I also serve on the Northeast District Board of Laity. I have been married to my husband Bill for 37 years. We have two adult sons, Evan, and Kyle.

Lay Self-Nominations

Candidate #1007

Name:	Jan Dwyer
City:	MONROE
Church:	Cannon UMC
District:	North East
Age Group:	Older Adult
Race/Ethnicity:	White
Occupation:	Director of Discipleship - Cannon UMC
Current Appointment:	Cannon UMC



Statement:

My name is Jan Dwyer, and I'd like to share a little bit about myself. I have been a follower of Jesus my whole life. I do not remember a time when I was not in a relationship with God, or at least a time when I was not wrestling with this relationship. My journey began in a different denomination, and I was properly nurtured according to the theology of this vein of the Christian Church. I found, in my mid-thirties that some of my spiritual belief systems were causing significant personal disruption of my soul. I was beginning to feel that if God was the way I had deeply internalized, I was not going to be able to continue as a Christian. Through a series of what I now see as God nudges (or maybe downright "shoves"), I found myself at Cannon United Methodist Church and God began to help me "see" in a whole new way. I have been at Cannon now for 31 years. My husband, two sons, a daughter-in-law, and five grandsons worship there as well. Because of the UMC I have had incredible experiences - volunteering for anything Cannon does - teaching Sunday School, Leading Disciple Bible Study, serving as a youth small group leader, reception area volunteer, SPRC, Walk to Emmaus, Kairos Prison Ministry, Mission trips to Honduras, Katrina's Kitchen, lay leader, lay delegate to Annual Conference, a Cannon UMC staff member. God has changed my life through the UMC and my love for Jesus and all that Jesus loves has expanded in ways I would never have imagined. It would be a blessing beyond measure to serve at General/Jurisdictional Conference and help to promote and continue the life changing message of the United Methodist Church.

Lay Self-Nominations

Candidate #1008

Name:	Katie Farmer
City:	Chamblee
Church:	Eastside UMC
District:	South Central
Age Group:	Adult
Race/Ethnicity:	White
Occupation:	Fundraising and Development Nonprofit Leader
Current Appointment:	Eastside UMC



Statement:

I am Katie Farmer, a lifelong United Methodist currently serving as Stewardship Committee Chair on the NGUMC Connectional Ministries Team. I was raised in a church plant where my parents were founding members, learning early that the church is built together through participation, leadership, and faithful service. I attended Candler School of Theology as part of the founding cohort of the Master of Religion and Public Life program. Professionally, I work in nonprofit fundraising and development, connecting people and resources to organizations that strengthen our communities. I first ran for General and Jurisdictional Conference in 2019 as a young adult delegate (a category I no longer qualify for!), motivated by the fact that fewer than 7% of General Conference delegates were under 35. In 2024 I was honored to be elected as a lay delegate to the Southeastern Jurisdictional Conference. At Eastside Church, I have served as lay delegate, staff member, Church Council member, and in 2024–2025 as council chair, helping lead through three pastor transitions and the adoption of the Simplified Accountability Structure board model. My husband also serves as a lay delegate, and we are both actively engaged in the life of our church and conference. Fittingly, I sought out a thriving church plant as my congregation. This year Eastside Church celebrates our 15th anniversary, and I am grateful to be intentionally raising my children in a community grounded in both radical hospitality and deep Wesleyan theology. I am deeply invested in the future of the United Methodist Church. I want my children to grow up in a denomination that values faith, connectionalism, and the dignity of every person. I would be honored to continue serving the North Georgia Conference as a lay delegate as we discern and build the future of the United Methodist Church together.

Lay Self-Nominations

Candidate #1009

Name: Rachel Fullerton
City: Lilburn
Church: Embry Hills UMC
District: South Central
Age Group: Adult
Race/Ethnicity: White
Occupation: Executive Director of Oak Grove UMC
Current Appointment: Embry Hills UMC



Statement:
My name is Rachel Fullerton, and I am a committed lay leader in the United Methodist Church who has devoted my ministry to strengthening the connection between local congregations and the broader work of the denomination. I currently serve as Lay Leader of Embry Hills UMC, where I am actively involved as a youth counselor and ministry leader. Through these roles, I help nurture spiritual growth among young people and support discipleship and programming within the local church. I bring extensive leadership experience across the North Georgia Conference. I am the Executive Director of Oak Grove UMC in Decatur, where I contribute to the operational and ministry leadership of the congregation. I serve as one of the Associate District Lay Leaders for the South Central District and as an Associate Secretary of the Annual Conference, positions that support the organization and connectional work of the church at a regional level. My conference leadership includes service on the North Georgia Conference Council on Finance and Administration (CF&A) and Commission on Higher Education, where I help guide stewardship, financial accountability, and partnerships that support United Methodist educational institutions. I also co-chair the Wesley Foundation at Georgia Tech. These responsibilities reflect my commitment to faithful leadership and the long-term vitality of our church. I bring valuable legislative and denominational experience. I have served as a delegate to the General and Jurisdictional Conferences in 2016, 2019, and 2020/2024. Most recently, I served as Lay Head Delegate for the Conference, helping coordinate the work of the lay delegation and represent the voice of the conference in global decision-making. With experience spanning local ministry, conference leadership, and denominational governance, I offer a collaborative spirit, organizational insight, and a deep commitment to the mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

Lay Self-Nominations

Candidate #1010

Name: Florence (Becky) Gaar
City: Pine Mountain
Church: Pine Mountain UMC
District: South West
Age Group: Older Adult
Race/Ethnicity: White
Occupation: Minister of Missions and Senior Adults
Current Appointment: Pine Mountain UMC



Statement:
I am a Lay Servant, a Lay Speaker, and a Deaconess. I also am on staff with Pine Mountain First UMC and I am in charge of missions and senior adult activities/well-being. I have been a member of Pine Mountain First UMC for 10 years. I just completed a course called Train the Trainer and I can now teach the Lay Servant courses. I’m very passionate about my ministry. I am also one of the directors and founders for our Pastor’s Pantry since 2019. In 2025 I began working with the NGUMC Homeless and Housing Council and the SW District Strategic Growth Council.

Lay Self-Nominations

Candidate #1011

Name: Lee Drinkard Highsmith
City: Gainesville
Church: Gainesville First UMC
District: North East
Age Group: Older Adult
Race/Ethnicity: White
Occupation: Former Educator and Non-Profit Director
Current Appointment: Gainesville First UMC



Statement:
My father was a UMC minister, so I was raised in a variety of churches (Northside, Glenn Memorial, St. James, & Athens First), each different and each welcoming. Camp Glisson nurtured my faith - as a camper, as a counselor and as board chair. There I witnessed the radical hospitality of God’s love. I dream of churches with “Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors.” When I was a child, women were welcomed to serve in the kitchen, but not in the pulpit. Today my life is blessed by amazing female clergy. When I was a child, my father welcomed the first Black person into membership at Glenn Memorial. At the 2016 SEJ Conference I voted for the first Black woman from Georgia to be elected a bishop. I have witnessed the UMC change. And still, I connect with its vision “to form disciples of Jesus Christ who Love Boldly, Serve Joyfully, and Lead Courageously.” We are called to serve now and serve the future. We are “to plant trees whose shade we will never sit under.” Our youth and young adults are not the church of the future, they’re the church today. Let’s open leadership opportunities for them. Rev. Jamey Prickett says, “What the world is starving for is a group of people who have been transformed by the cross of Jesus and are spending their lives not looking for enemies, but instead are discovering how to love their neighbors.” That’s the church for me! Experience: • Conference Board of Laity, District Lay Leader, Connectional Ministry Co-Chair 2024 - present • SEJ Conference Delegate 1976, 2016, 2020/24 • General Conference Delegate 1976, 2020/24 • General Board of Discipleship 1976-80 • GFUMC Church Council, 2015-25 • Upper Room Academy for Spiritual Formation, 2018-present • Gainesville City School Board 1997-2009, chair 2009

Lay Self-Nominations

Candidate #1012

Name: Odell Horne, Jr.
City: Atlantga
Church: Impact UMC
District: South West
Age Group: Adult
Race/Ethnicity: Black
Occupation: Library Assistant
Current Appointment: Impact UMC



Statement:
I am a career government employee, who has worked for the Georgia Department of Human Services determining the eligibility of Food Stamps, Medicaid, and Social Security Disability applicants. I am currently working for the Fulton County Library System. My church leadership roles include: a Men’s Ministry Specialist for the United Methodist Men (UMM), North Georgia Conference President of UMM, North Georgia Conference UMM YoungER Men’s Ministry Coordinator, and Lay Servant at Impact Church (East Point, GA). I am a doctoral student in Contextual Theology at Evangelical Seminary in Pennsylvania. I have a master’s degree in African and African American Studies from Clark Atlanta University, and a graduate certificate in Biblical Studies from Bethel Seminary. I am a member of the Association for the Study of African American Life and History, and the American Academy of Religion. And a past member of the Society of Biblical Literature, and African Studies Association. COMMITMENTS: • Teachings of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit as recorded in the Gospels and Acts; • Theology rooted in grace and truth; • Making disciples of YoungER Men based on the principles in the scripture, Christian theology of Holiness, and Best Practices established by the UMM; • Representing the traditional values of the global diversity of the United Methodist Church (UMC), and not the liberal values of American Methodists (which do not translate in the black church); • Making sure that African United Methodists are leaders of the Boards and Agencies of the UMC, and have access to money and power in the UMC, not just ministry aid recipients. Thank you for the opportunity to represent you at the General or Jurisdictional Conference.

Lay Self-Nominations

Candidate #1013

Name: Tom Jackson
City: Watkinsville
Church: Athens First UMC
District: South East
Age Group: Older Adult
Race/Ethnicity: White
Occupation: Retired UGA Vice President
Current Appointment: Athens First UMC



Statement:
Tom Jackson desires to help our church focus on the main thing -- Jesus' commandments that we love God and love others. We have seen the extremes of right and left tear our beloved UMC asunder like the Pharisees of old whose rule-making and enforcement completely missed the Messiah who stood in their midst. It is beyond time for the moderate middle of the UMC to stand up and lead, and Tom humbly offers to join in that effort. Elected from North Georgia to General Conference in 1988, 1992, 2000 and 2008 and additionally to Jurisdictional Conference in 2024, Tom has been Annual Conference delegate 40+ years. He serves or has served on the Board of Wesley Woods Senior Living, the Georgia Commission on Higher Education, and the Commission on Finance and Administration, among others. He was Conference Communicator of the Year in 1999, delivered the Annual Conference Laity Address in 2019, and was honored with the Lillian Budd Darden Laity Award in 2025. He is Lay Co-Leader of the South East District among leadership positions throughout the local church and district, was a 20+-year Sunday School teacher and sings in the Athens First UMC choir. Raised in LaGrange First UMC, Tom earned an AA degree from Emory's Oxford College, and three UGA degrees - bachelor's, master's and Ph.D. A student of church history, his doctoral dissertation covered Emory University and the Methodist Church from the 1880s to the 1930s, and he authored an extensive bicentennial history of Athens First UMC. As student and witness to much UMC history, Tom hopes he can help today's new generations of leadership learn from the past that is prologue to what this great church can be when we put love of God and others above all else.

Lay Self-Nominations

Candidate #1014

Name: Cole Jones
City: Atlanta
Church: Oak Grove UMC Decatur
District: South Central
Age Group: Young Adult
Race/Ethnicity: White
Occupation: College Student (Freshman)
Current Appointment: Oak Grove UMC Decatur



Statement:

Hey y'all, my name is Cole Jones. I'm a member of Oak Grove UMC in Decatur, though I'm currently attending services at Athens First UMC while I'm pursuing three Bachelor's of Arts degrees in Religion, International Affairs, and Political Science at the University of Georgia. Throughout my time in the UMC, I've sung in the Children's, Youth, and Adult choirs at Oak Grove UMC, and I'm currently a member of Athens First UMC's Sanctuary Choir. I was a part of the Student Leadership Team at Oak Grove, and I am currently on their Board of Stewards and Staff Parish Relations Committee as I finish my third year as one of Oak Grove's delegates to Annual Conference. I joined our North Georgia Conference Board of Laity this past summer for my four-year term, and I have the distinct honor of being both the youngest person chosen for the Georgia Episcopal Area's delegation to the 2026 Council of Bishops and also the only laity chosen for our state's delegation. In all of these appointments, teams, and activities, both past and ongoing, I have worked to embody the loving and compassionate nature central to the United Methodist Church. If chosen for the 2028 General and Jurisdictional Conferences delegation, I would work to continue the great work of both our North Georgia Conference and our entire United Methodist Church in advocating for increased inclusion of laity throughout the church's processes, especially regarding Youth and Young Adult voices within our denomination. I would be honored to work alongside clergy and laity from across our state, country, and world at these conferences to build connections and craft relationships that will enable us to continue to help those least among us and make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

Lay Self-Nominations

Candidate #1015

Name:	Chris Karabinos
City:	Brookhaven
Church:	Peachtree Road UMC
District:	South West
Age Group:	Older Adult
Race/Ethnicity:	White
Occupation:	Business Owner - BlackFire Signs
Current Appointment:	Peachtree Road UMC



Statement:

Chris Karabinos' passion is to build people and organizations wherever possible. Although that includes building signs and brands through his business, BlackFire Signs, it importantly includes growing boys into men and men spiritually in their faith-walk. He does this by building boys into young men through Scouting and helping men grow spiritually through the UMM. Chris was married at Dalton First UMC to Karen Kirkpatrick and now lives in Brookhaven, GA where they have been members of Peachtree Road UMC 10 years. Chris has been on its Men's Ministry board for 10 years, been a member of the Admin Board (6 years) and served as Finance Chair. While at Johns Creek UMC before PRUMC, Chris served on its UMM Board for 10 years and led their Scouting ministry for 8 years leading the largest United Methodist Scouting program in the country with 500 scouts. At the conference level, Chris has been the Conference's Scouting Coordinator for 11 years serving on the Conference Board of Laity and Conference UMM board for that period. Chris' ministry is to introduce Christ to Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts and their parents at UM churches by helping Scout leaders and clergy understand how Scouting can be a ministry. He leads a team of 20+ Methodist Scout leaders helping start new units around the conference and training leaders in building their Scout programs as faith-based youth programs. Chris has also served as a Boy Scout leader at the unit, church, district & council levels for 30 years. He has organized and led week-long national training programs working with the General Commission on United Methodist Men at Philmont in New Mexico teaching other Methodist Scout leaders how to build Scouting as a ministry. He also mentors Conference Scouting Coordinators in Conferences around the country.

Lay Self-Nominations

Candidate #1016

Name:	Glenn Martin
City:	Lawrenceville
Church:	Lawrenceville First UMC
District:	North East
Age Group:	Older Adult
Race/Ethnicity:	White
Occupation:	Photographer
Current Appointment:	Lawrenceville First UMC



Statement:

Growing up in Albany, Georgia, in a church my parents helped start, gave me deep roots as well as vision for serving in God’s kingdom. As a lifelong Methodist, it has been my calling to serve. The United Methodist Church has always been my home for ministry, and I remain committed to seeing it grow and thrive as it offers grace and peace to a 21st century world. As the UMC moves forward, we are in a season of rebuilding and refocusing. We need a clear vision for this work in an ever-changing world. We must be intentional in our life together as a United Church while also charting new paths toward financial sustainability and social responsibility. I have been a professional photographer in Lawrenceville, Georgia, for 38 years. Earlier, I served for four years as a Local Pastor in the South Georgia Conference and served on staff at two churches in the North Georgia Conference. My wife and I have been members of Lawrenceville First United Methodist Church since 1987. There I have served as Chair of the Administrative Council, Council on Ministries, and of Evangelism. I have also served on the District Board of Church Location and Building, the Conference Board of Ordained Ministry (2005–2012), and the Board of Church Development. In the community, I am a past president of the Lawrenceville Kiwanis Club and served on the board of the Central Gwinnett Cluster Foundation. I was photographer for the Atlanta/Georgia 2-Day Walk for Breast Cancer and served as board chair. A former member of the Lawrenceville City Council, I now serve on the Lawrenceville Development Authority and on the board of Impact 46, a nonprofit working to enhance community livability. I enjoy cooking barbecue and am a certified judge.

Lay Self-Nominations

Candidate #1017

Name: Ariel Murphy
City: Atlanta
Church: Shepherd Of The Hills UMC
District: North West
Age Group: Young Adult
Race/Ethnicity: Multiracial
Occupation: Student
Current Appointment: Shepherd Of The Hills UMC



Statement:
My life and leadership have been shaped through lifelong involvement in The United Methodist Church. I am a member of Shepherd of the Hills UMC in Douglasville, Georgia, and the daughter of Rev. Matt and Tonya Murphy, whose ministry and faith have deeply influenced my journey. From an early age, I have been engaged in the life of the church through worship, service, and leadership. My commitment to ministry has been expressed through mission work with Bahamas Methodist Habitat, Thistle Farms, and Workers Dignity. These experiences strengthened my passion for service, justice, and community engagement. I have also developed leadership skills through Camp Glisson and the North Georgia Experiential Leadership Institute (ELI). I have been actively involved in the work of United Methodist Women/United Women in Faith for more than two decades, serving alongside strong and faithful women within our denomination. I currently serve on the Program Advisory Group to the National Board of Directors and have participated in Assembly as an attendee, speaker, and program participant. At the connectional level, I was elected to serve as a delegate to the 2024 Jurisdictional Conference and have attended multiple General Conferences, where I served as an observer in the Church and Society legislative committee and supported ministry efforts in the General Conference exhibition hall. I am currently pursuing a Master of Divinity at Candler School of Theology at Emory University. I believe the future of the church depends on cultivating new leaders, strengthening connections between church and community, and remaining rooted in our Wesleyan commitment to grace, justice, and faithful service. It would be an honor to serve the Annual Conference.

Lay Self-Nominations

Candidate #1018

Name:	Tonya Murphy
City:	Atlanta
Church:	Shepherd Of The Hills UMC
District:	North West
Age Group:	Adult
Race/Ethnicity:	Black
Occupation:	Physical Therapist
Current Appointment:	Shepherd Of The Hills UMC



Statement:

My service to the UMC began as a youth at my local church in Atlanta, and continued as a college student providing leadership in the Wesley Foundation, Gospel choir and mission trips. Married to Rev.Matt Murphy, I have continued to serve in local churches and districts over the past 36 years. I have shared my gifts in Sunday schools, worship, hospitality , music, and outreach thru Mission institutions/camping&retreats in Georgia and beyond. I have also provided leadership as a clergy spouse through the Conference and District organizations:Executive committees,Retreats and personal relations allow me strive to bond new and seasoned spouses to one another in a spirit of love and mutual respect. United Methodist Women/Women United in Faith has fulfilled a need to be in mission with women children and youth on local, District, Conference,Jurisdictional and National levels. I have lead with energy, creativity, and diversity on all levels.Challenging membership to make space for all women, youth and children has been a focus as well as any opportunity for intergenerational work. Working on Jurisdictional and National levels allowed me to participate in the church on a global scale and see the love of God extended to through it all. Election to General and Jurisdictional Conferences has given me 5 opportunities to speak on behalf of those I represent and hear different prospectives from around the world. God has allowed me to work in the community as a Home Health Physical Therapist. Committee service in NGUMC has allowed me to meet fellow disciples. I thrive serving various cancer support groups, and supporting food disparity relief efforts. Daily Bibles studies, Mission education and reading programs provide the scriptural basis under which I serve. I would appreciate your vote of support to again represent North GA as a Delegate in 2028.

Lay Self-Nominations

Candidate #1019

Name: Angela Odegard
City: Stone Mountain
Church: Trinity UMC Atlanta
District: South West
Age Group: Adult
Race/Ethnicity: White
Occupation: Director of Conference Benefits
Current Appointment: Trinity UMC Atlanta



Statement:
My name is Angela Odegard. I am the Director of Conference Benefits for North and South Georgia Conferences but more importantly, I am a member of Trinity UMC in downtown Atlanta, where I serve on the leadership team. I have been a United Methodist for over 30 years. 30 years during which I wasn't sure if I wanted this denomination because this denomination didn't want me. I have watched this denomination get it wrong and I have watched it get it right. I have been pleasantly surprised to see it get it right lately. However there is still work to do. We have made the table bigger but have we invited and made space for all the voices and all the people? Have we made this a hospitable place where those who haven't been at the table want to be? There is still work to do and as someone who was told she couldn't be at the table, I would like the opportunity to be a part of rebuilding that table. My church, Trinity UMC is about to go through a major redevelopment. Our church building which has stood at the corner of Washington and Trinity since 1912 is about to become low income housing for seniors. This was not an easy decision. We have a beautiful sanctuary, a rich history, and a magnificent organ. And yet, what our congregation has discovered over and over the last few years is that the church is not a building. The church is not just one or two types of people. The church is not what it always has been. I believe tomorrow's church will be found at the margins and much like God, be found in the unknown. The church is what we dream it to be, together.

Lay Self-Nominations

Candidate #1020

Name:	Katie Paden
City:	Decatur
Church:	Neighborhood Church, A United Methodist Community
District:	South Central
Age Group:	Adult
Race/Ethnicity:	White
Occupation:	Higher ed
Current Appointment:	Neighborhood Church, A United Methodist Community



Statement:

If we haven't met, I'm Katie Paden: a member of Neighborhood Church, a Decatur resident, and parent of three elementary/middle grades children. I'd be honored to serve as a delegate, building on the experience, perspective, gifts and skills that I've developed in North Georgia. Local church As board chair for six years, I gained practical insight into launching a "new church" while re-examining the rhythms and resources of our UMC framework. I led the SPR work as we grew a staff, and was trustee point-person through a property sale and \$4M renovation. Later I served as church treasurer. I've led countless admin meetings as a collaborator and consensus builder, as well as many small-group spiritual formation series and gatherings. New life During Druid Hills UMC's final season, I experienced the death-and-resurrection cycle that is the core narrative of our faith. I'm convinced that (1) we can find our way through hard things– closure, merger, grief, relaunch, reimagining, reorganization– and (2) we then find freedom to be co-creators with God– of beloved community, justice, and joy. This continues to be our broader connectional work in 2026 and beyond, and I'm prepared and excited for what's next. Conference level I'm currently a lay delegate to Jurisdictional Conference, elected in 2024. I'm part of the Connectional Ministries Team, as well as the One Georgia CM workgroup. During the Lighthouse Congregations movement, I served as a design team leader and training facilitator. In 2020 I joined the first cohort of BELONG (Bishop's Emerging Leaders of North Georgia), then helped plan the next iteration. Work and community My professional work in higher ed has included admissions at Oglethorpe University and, currently, Georgia Tech. I'm also the program manager for Georgia Beloved Naturalist, a diverse environmental education program focused on nature learning, community building, and justice seeking. I'm a committed, curious, experienced, and thoughtful administrator.

Lay Self-Nominations

Candidate #1021

Name:	Heather Sanders
City:	Brookhaven
Church:	Dunwoody UMC
District:	South Central
Age Group:	Young Adult
Race/Ethnicity:	White
Occupation:	Office Administrator
Current Appointment:	Dunwoody UMC



Statement:
For the past decade, I have grown to love & care for the Methodist church in so many ways. I was baptized at Dunwoody UMC as an infant, but did not grow up within its community. When I was 18, I found my way back to that red-brick, white-steepled building, & from there I discovered my Methodist heritage & began to explore what the UMC has to offer. I joined the Wesley Foundation in college, where I learned the importance of having an open & loving college ministry. During my summers, I explored the Methodist church outside Georgia, interning with Kailua UMC in Hawaii & Bahamas Methodist Habitat on Eleuthera. These opportunities were possible because of the United Methodist Church's connectedness & dedication to the Next Generation, which remains incredibly important & needs attention. My call to ministry is not what I expected, much due to Covid. When I would have gone to seminary, the world shut down. I found myself working in church administration & fell in love with it. As an administrative professional, previously with Peachtree Road UMC & now with Georgia United Methodist Foundation, I have learned that a church staff must be healthy for a church or ministry to grow. As more church staff members retire, we must welcome the new generation into this important work. As a Conference, we need to encourage and ready churches to recruit, equip, retain, and nurture employees, both clergy and lay staff. Outside of my professional work for the church, I serve on Dunwoody UMC's Missions Council and A/V Team. I got married in the same sanctuary where I was baptized and where my now-husband confirms his students as a Youth Pastor. Everywhere in the UMC I've gone, I've felt God's hands at work. NGUMC, let's get to work.

Lay Self-Nominations

Candidate #1022

Name: Allison Sligh
City: Kennesaw
Church: McEachern Memorial UMC
District: North West
Age Group: Adult
Race/Ethnicity: White
Occupation: Next Gen Program Director
Current Appointment: McEachern Memorial UMC



Statement:
Hello friends! My name is Allison Sligh, and my family and I are members of McEachern Memorial UMC. I have been United Methodist my entire life, and the UMC has shaped my faith and ministry at every stage. I grew up in the North Alabama Conference at Altoona First UMC, where my love for the church and camp ministry began. Summers at Camp Sumatanga as a camper and staff clarified my call to ministry. While at the University of Alabama, I served as student president of the Wesley Foundation and now serve as Chair of its Board of Directors. My husband, Chip, and I lived in Alabama, Tennessee, and Texas before settling in Georgia more than twenty years ago. In every new place, we first found a United Methodist church and connected with youth ministry, which strengthened my appreciation for our church’s connectional nature. At McEachern, I serve as communications chair and lay representative to Annual Conference, volunteer in children’s and youth ministries, and serve in finance, nominations, SPRC, missions, and admin board. I have served as an Annual Conference delegate for more than a decade. Professionally, I serve on the North Georgia Conference staff as Next Gen Program Director, leading programming and retreats for children, youth, and college students. Coordinating the Annual Conference youth delegation is the most meaningful part of my work. Sharing Christ’s love with young people brings me the greatest joy. As a former professor, I hold a Ph.D. in Cognitive Psychology and enjoy applying what I know about learning to support discipleship and leadership development. I believe ministry with children, youth, and young adults is essential to the life and future of the church. It would be a privilege to represent our conference and help strengthen the ongoing work of the United Methodist Church.

Lay Self-Nominations

Candidate #1023

Name:	Mary Stamper-Murray
City:	Fairburn
Church:	Hoosier Memorial UMC
District:	South West
Age Group:	Older Adult
Race/Ethnicity:	Black
Occupation:	Retired Banker
Current Appointment:	Hoosier Memorial UMC



Statement:

I am Mary Stamper-Murray and have been a member of the United Methodist Church for close to 50 years. I have served as a lay delegate at the North Georgia Annual conference for the past ten years. I am a certified Lay Servant and was recently certified to facilitate Lay Servant training. I am a graduate of LUMC and a pending graduate of Advance Leadership UMC. I have served and will serve as a Mission Study Leader. I have served as both vice president and district president for conference. Currently, I am serving positions in the local, district and conference United Women in Faith. I have served in several positions in my local church: *Finance Committee secretary *Safe Sanctuary Coordinator *Church Council Member *Usher Board Member *Communion Stewards Co-Chair *Laity Day Speaker *Pulpit participant *Committee on Nominations and Leadership *Women's Day Co-Chair I was a charter member of a new United Methodist Church in North Georgia 20 years ago and served many roles in that church before it disbanded. I have presided over Lenten Day Apart Services and annual meetings and participated in Spiritual Growth and Social Action retreats. I am a Legacy Builder and have received certificates from the UWF Reading Program - having read as many as 20 books per year. I am honored to have been asked and to participate in the selection of delegate to the General Conference for North Georgia Conference. Serving the Lord with Gladness! Mary Stamper-Murray

Lay Self-Nominations

Candidate #1024

Name: Andrea Youngstrom
City: Roswell
Church: Northbrook UMC
District: North East
Age Group: Adult
Race/Ethnicity: White
Occupation: Retired (former Medical Consultant)
Current Appointment: Northbrook UMC



Statement:
I grew up in a Christian home and chose to follow Jesus at a young age. My husband and I have been members of Northbrook UMC for nearly 25 years, raising our children there and actively engaging in worship, and service including: Attending/facilitating adult Sunday School and bible study, participating music ministry, serving/chairing various administrative and steering committees, serving as Executive Director for a capital campaign. Currently, I am serving my fourth term as Church Council Chair. I have presented to the DS as part of our annual charge conference. Additionally, I worked as part of a visioning team commissioned by the DS to successfully merge the Christ UMC and Northbrook UMC congregation. I participate in various local mission efforts in our local community and have participated in mission trips to Guatemala. I recently retired and feel called to participate more actively in a lay leadership capacity. Too often churches rely entirely on clergy for development of discipleship programs. I believe laity play a critical role in developing disciples but often we need programs to allow lay members to confidently engage. I am proud that the United Methodist Church has taken a clear and loving stand regarding inclusion and on issues of social justice. It is not enough to take a stand. There is still work to be done and laity engagement is critical. As United Methodists, we come to understand that any given pastor will be with us for a season. The members are the church and our impact is greatest when we as laity are committed to actively being the hands and feet of Christ. I believe my gifts of administration and hospitality equip me to contribute to the leadership discussion at the conference level on these, and other, important issues.