

Report of the
Connectional Ministries Team
Memphis Conference
June 3, 2015

Bishop McAlilly, delegates and guests of the Memphis Annual Conference, it is an honor to give the report of your Connectional Ministries Team. I want to express thanks to God for a call to ministry that is as strong, clear and directional today as it was when I started this journey. Next, thank you Bishop McAlilly for your support in appointing me to this exciting new ministry challenge. Moreover, I am thankful for being given the opportunity to serve in the interim capacity since October of last year until April, without additional compensation, in order to serve this conference that I deeply love.

The Connectional Ministries Team exists in part to steward the mission, values and four areas of focus of the conference. We have already started the process of aligning our budget, staff, directional and task teams, priorities and resources with these compass points. Your Connectional Ministries Team seeks to serve the local churches of this conference by equipping and when possible, resourcing congregations that offer Jesus Christ to a hurting world.

Helping equip clergy and laity to share their faith in Jesus and make disciples of our Lord will be our priority. Disciples are made when we share our faith through Word and Deed. When we embrace the Great Commission (Go, teach, baptize) and the Great Commandment (Love God and Neighbor) and bring both to bear through authentic relationships in our neighborhoods, we will see people coming to have faith in our Lord. The communities surrounding our local churches and beyond are the mission fields of the 21st century church. It is in the community that we find brothers and sisters seeking purpose and meaning. In the neighborhood we find the hungry, thirsty, ill clothed, sick and uninsured, imprisoned or the one who is not known.

Disciples are not typically made in the arena of the Conference or the District. However, lay and clergy leaders may be discovered, equipped, connected and sent through training provided by your Connectional Ministries Team, the judicatories aforementioned and other partners.

Examples would be the Generative Leadership Academy in its third year and the Local Pastor Academy having just completed its first. The Generative Leadership Academy is sponsored by this office, the General Board of Discipleship, the Purchase District and the Tennessee River District. Laity and Clergy come from local churches and spend four 24 hour intensive Friday-Saturday sessions throughout the year. Pastors and Lay members form teams that go back to the local church and engage the community in ministry. Now we are witnessing the fruit of investing in these leaders. Laity are living out their baptismal vows as they serve. People are entering licensed and ordained ministry. Churches are growing in vitality and community impact. They have learned that team works makes the dream work. Your Connectional Ministries Team will give leadership in the coming year to offer the Generative Leadership Academy in other districts.

The inaugural cohort of the Local Pastor Academy has just completed training. The academy is sponsored by your Connectional Ministries Team, the Clergy Coaching Network and the Turner Center for Church Leadership at Martin Methodist College. Licensed Local Pastors are trained in best practices by those on the leading effective edge of ministry. Topics include vision casting, strategic planning, preaching, connecting church with community and more. These pastors also benefit from personal and group coaching to increase ministry effectiveness. The Local Pastor Academy is one example of how investing in pastoral leaders can benefit the local church with informed and inspired leadership. We will begin registering for the next class in mid-July.

Together, we celebrate today and give God the glory for: 1) A conference communications ministry, headed by Lane Gardner Camp, that connects us with one another and the larger world. Our communications ministry is often recognized by United Methodist Communications for excellence in providing stories of mission and ministry.

2) Conference youth ministry led by Kristofer Roof. For the first time in many years we had a Youth Annual Conference precede this one and lead us in opening worship. We now have a Conference Youth Council that is trained, involved and sharing faith and community.

3) New Church Development has been ably led by Steve Stone. Three new church starts begin this summer in addition to the Korean start created earlier in the year. We give God thanks for these new faith communities forming to love God and serve neighbor.

4) I want to encourage you to acknowledge and express heartfelt appreciation for all of the compensated and volunteer staff of your Connectional Ministries Team. They are Lane Gardner Camp, Bill Lawson, Susan Clark, Kristofer Roof, Steve Stone, Ann Robbins Phillips and Robert Craig. Your team also includes the Lay Resource Leaders, Elyse Bell, Denise Russell, Susan Davidson, Kim Morrison and Delores Smith. This ministry is further bolstered by many persons serving as liaisons, Action Team Chairpersons and members of committees, representatives and coordinators. I would like to ask these folks to stand and would you join me in expressing appreciation for their leadership and service?

Because our values include being innovative and having unrelenting love for all people, this year we are offering for the first time language assistance ministry utilizing interpreters and technology to translate English to Spanish in all services at both locations of the Annual Conference. We are grateful for The General Board of Global Ministries loaning us the technical equipment and Mrs. Elyse Bell who is coordinating this ministry. This ministry will help us discover new leaders and help include and involve our Spanish speaking pastors and delegates. We are also grateful for Reverend Jin Kim, pastor of the Memphis Korean United Methodist Church who has agreed to translate for our Korean guests and delegates.

Friends, how can the Connectional Ministries Team be of service to you? How can we work together so this team is of greater value to the churches of this conference? We want to hear your ideas, know of your needs, share in your dreams and understand the challenges and blessings of doing ministry in your

context. Your Connectional Ministries Team desires lead in such a way that the mind of Christ will dwell richly in the heart of every action team and ministry so that lay and clergy leaders are alive in Christ. Imagine with me a preferred future that receives the best ideas and team work from the churches and communities up and allows us to work and resource together in such a way that higher value is created for the local church.

An example of what that preferred future of ministry ideas emerging from the ground up has to do with the fact we have lost four of our United Methodist Churches to fire within the last six months, two to arson. Joining me here on the dais this day are the pastors and lay delegates of Trinity-Nutbush, Trinity-Paris, Mason's Chapel, Calloway County and Mt. Pleasant in Weakley County.

While we have to a limited degree come alongside these brothers and sisters with our prayers and financial gifts, rebuilding sacred buildings and ministering to the hurt and grief of these losses requires more. Fire certainly qualifies as a disaster. Therefore, I am asking our Connectional Ministries Team Disaster Relief Committee to create/design a team that can be deployed in the early stages of a church fire and walk alongside a faith community throughout the process of recovery. Such a team could minister directly with helpful information, grief counseling, insurance, navigating the rebuilding process, obtaining resources and more. The team will include laity and clergy who have experienced loss by fire as well as persons with other areas of expertise.

We will adapt our leadership the Connectional Ministries Team ministry to be relevant to the needs of our congregations and communities. I want to encourage each of you to begin discerning now how you might be practically supportive of these congregations that have lost so much recently. Plan to reach out to them after this report.

Being a connectional church means more than sharing a common theology, polity or agreed upon budget. In the best sense, it means what Paul stated in I Corinthians 12: 26, "If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it." By bringing these brothers and sisters on the dais today we are saying we know you are suffering and we willingly

engage in your suffering as members of the body of Christ. Bishop McAlilly will come forward at this time to offer his words of encouragement and lead us in prayer.

Bishop McAlilly, this concludes my report.

Respectfully submitted,

Joseph A. Geary, Director of Connectional Ministries

Memphis Conference