VISION: The Advance exists to share the love of Jesus Christ by offering hope and alleviating human suffering. With integrity, transparency, and a commitment to The United Methodist Church’s connectional vision of the world, the Advance provides a conduit enabling persons and churches to support mission and ministry projects within the bounds of the Alabama-West Florida Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church.

MISSION: The Advance is an accountable, designated arm of The Alabama-West Florida Conference of the United Methodist Church ensuring 100% of each gift is used for its intended mission project(s). These gifts fulfill both physical and spiritual needs to make a life-changing and long-lasting impact.

CORE VALUES:
- Operated with accountability, integrity and transparency
- Promote compassion and service conference-wide
- Make a positive, lasting impact

OBJECTIVES:
- To provide an avenue by which ministries related to the Alabama-West Florida Annual Conference may seek contributions from local churches of the Conference, for the support of specific mission projects they are undertaking.
- To provide local churches, organizations and individuals of the Alabama-West Florida Annual Conference an opportunity to “go the second mile” in their Missional giving.
- To develop and maintain a list of Alabama-West Florida Annual Conference related mission projects that have been screened and approved by the Conference Board of Global Ministries (CBGM) for Conference Advance Special Status (CASS).
- To provide local churches paying 100% of their World Service Conference Benevolences a method of supplying additional support to the CASS mission project(s) of their choice. (Book of Discipline (BOD) ¶822-823)
- To assure local churches, organizations and individuals that 100% of their Conference Advance Special gift is applied to the CASS mission project(s) of their choice.
CRITERIA TO RECEIVE CONFERENCE ADVANCE SPECIAL STATUS (CASS):

1. The mission project must be located within the bounds of the Alabama-West Florida Annual Conference or Episcopal area authorized by the Annual Conference. (BOD ¶656)

2. The work must be a specific mission project or a specific mission project of a broader mission agency. It may be self-contained in nature such as a short-term UMVIM work team or new church development project. (BOD ¶822.2a) or be a special program of an existing parent or sponsor ministry, e.g., a literacy program, older adult program, etc. (BOD ¶822.2b, ¶822.2c)

3. The project must be one that requires a base of support beyond the capabilities of the parent ministry.

4. The specific mission project must have written and measurable short- and/or long-term objectives that align with conference missional goals and priorities.

5. The project must have a separate, written budget clearly designed to outline the anticipated annual cost of operating the project. Please note:
   a. The budget may not include line items for administration or promotional costs. (BOD ¶822.3c)
   b. There must be an accounting system in place that reflects all monies paid into and out of the specific mission project budget.
   c. The project receiving Advance Special gifts must develop and maintain a method of communication with the group(s) and/or individual(s) giving Advance Special gifts (BOD ¶822.3e)

CASS APPROVAL PROCESS:

1. Agencies may submit a completed application form to the Conference Board of Global Ministries (CBGM) no later than January 1. The CASS cycle will run for a four-year period beginning with the Annual Conference during a General Conference year. (e.g., 2012, 2016). Applications may be received at any time during the four-year period

2. The CBGM will consider all applications for CASS during its Winter/Spring meeting.

3. All projects applying for CASS will be evaluated and rated as to purpose, importance, potential Missional impact, past performance, compliance with Alabama-West Florida Conference goals and objectives for mission outreach
within the conference, etc.

4. A list of the top 30 projects will be compiled for recommendation to the Alabama-West Florida Annual Conference.

5. The CBGM will submit recommendations for CASS to the Alabama-West Florida Annual Conference during its regular annual session. CASS will be granted only upon approval of the Alabama-West Florida Annual Conference and will take effect on the day after the Annual Conference has concluded.

6. CASS will be granted for the remainder of the 4-year cycle within which the application is approved regardless of when the application is submitted. All approved CASS projects will be reviewed for approval annually (see #2 above and #1 below).

CONTINUATION OF CASS:

1. In order to maintain CASS, the mission/ministry must submit a project evaluation provided by the CBGM by January 1 at the end of years 1, 2 and 3 of the cycle, as applicable. Each mission/ministry will submit a new application in the fourth year of the cycle by January 1. (e.g., evaluations submitted January 1 in 2013, 2014 and 2015, application submitted January 1, 2016)

2. The mission/ministry must demonstrate measurable progress toward stated project goals and outcomes.

3. A new church of the Alabama-West Florida Annual Conference may receive CASS for a maximum of five years. After five years, only specific mission projects of the church may receive CASS.

4. A new mission agency of the Alabama-West Florida Annual conference may receive CASS for a maximum of five years. After five years, only specific mission projects of the mission agency may receive CASS.