the 2018 Connection
The Alabama-West Florida United Methodist Conference
Dear Ministry Partners,

As we launch into a new year, I continue to be amazed at the ministry taking place through our local churches and extension ministries across the Alabama-West Florida Conference. You are transforming our communities, the region, and to the ends of the world. Through the love of Christ shining in the lives of the people across this annual conference, much has been accomplished and the best is yet to come!

A scripture that has meant a lot to me the past few months is found in Philippians 1:18 and 19, “the message about Christ is being preached...so I rejoice. For I know that as you pray for me and the Spirit of Jesus Christ helps me, this will lead to deliverance.” The Apostle Paul writes these words while in a Roman prison. He was sent there because he shared about Christ. I so much appreciate your gift of prayer this past year for me and for our shared ministry together.

Another giving opportunity placed before you is our 2018 Missional Budget. The strength of our United Methodist Church is when we come together to be in shared ministry. Your faithful giving allows so much to take place, especially here in the bounds of the Alabama-West Florida Conference. Each congregation and individual has access to our “missional giving calculator” to identify every ministry and its purpose for being informed about the annual conference budget. This is a wonderful tool, so please use the calculator as a way of informing your church leaders and congregational members of our 2018 missional commitments. The more each of us know and understand, the more you will appreciate what strength is found by supporting our connectional giving.

A key focus of conference leadership is to do all we can to assist the local church to be a vital congregation. A lot of work has happened in the last year to assist our small membership churches through Next Steps Ministry, and we want to increase this effort in the coming year. I am so appreciative to the ACE Leadership program for supporting this effort along with their other areas of leadership. The Antioch Project has assisted our medium size congregations, and I have been working with resourcing our Large Membership Churches so that every church can be all that God is calling us to be.

Nancy and I make personal contributions to the ministries of the Alabama-West Florida Conference and to the churches we visit or share with each Sunday. I would never ask you to do something that I am not willing to do. Therefore, it is with great joy that we join you in this effort.

For me, it is all about winning people to Jesus, seeing the unseen, transforming lives, and called to change this corner of the world.

Together I am looking forward to what God is going to do through our prayers, our presence, our giving, our serving, and our witness in 2018.

Remember, the best is yet to come!

David W. Graves
Bishop, Alabama - West Florida Conference
The United Methodist Church
2018 Covenant Ministries

Apportionments, your church’s “fair share” support for United Methodist missions and ministries, should not be a mystery to you. Read here how you are part of a worldwide service to Christ through The Connection!

- **Not one local church has the combined resources of our United Methodist connection.** Our institutions, colleges, hospitals, seminaries, missionaries and ministers throughout the state, nation and world are efficient channels through which your missional dollars provide effective ministry.

- **Stewardship is a spiritual matter.** Through our missional giving, we give to God, trusting His servants to use our gifts wisely. The Alabama-West Florida Conference is a good steward of your offerings. You are asked to continue your good stewardship.
Benevolence Funds

The United Methodist Book of Discipline calls this the “First benevolent responsibility of the church.” (¶ 247.14)

WORLD SERVICE $1,834,158

World Service: This is the heart of our denomination’s ministry, underwriting Christian mission around the world. It empowers our evangelism work, stimulates church growth, and supports local church programs.

CONFERENCE MISSIONAL GIVING FUND $7,489,896

Conference Benevolence: Our Annual Conference supports a myriad of ministries, missions, programs and administrative tasks. These items in the Conference Budget are combined and funded based upon the approved budget. “Prior claims” items are paid first. The remaining funds are distributed based on the percentage each line is of the combined total budget. (For details on any of the following, contact your district superintendent or the Conference Resource Center). This fund for 2016 includes:

1. Connectional Ministries/Communications $714,600

The Connectional Ministries and Communications Staff serve the districts and local churches by providing resources and leadership to help grow more vital, fruitful, healthier congregations. Your connectional giving supports salaries, benefits and expenses for six (6) program staff and two (2) support staff. Your giving also supports general office expenses including telephone, printing, mailing, computer and miscellaneous expenses.

2. Mission and Ministry Fund $536,000

This fund supports eight (8) of the Boards related to the Conference CORE Team. They are Discipleship, Advocacy and Ethnic Ministries, Higher Education and Campus Ministry, Laity, Church and Society, Global Ministries, Town and Country, and Hispanic Ministries. The Mission and Ministry Fund also provides support for agencies related to the annual conference and new and emerging ministries. Those currently being supported are Dumas Wesley Community Center, Mobile Inner City Metro Ministries, Mary Ellen’s Hearth (Nellie Burge Community Center), The Ark (formerly Noah’s Ark), Alabama Rural Ministries, Pensacola United Methodist Community Ministries, Milk and Honey, and CIRCLES of Transformation. Support for these boards and agencies/ministries is reviewed annually.

3. District Superintendent’s Fund $1,055,800

Provides salary and travel expenses for our eight district superintendents.

4. Conference Claimants Fund $500,000

This fund provides the church’s pension contributions for full-time and part-time pastors for eligible clergy for whom the Alabama West Florida Conference is the responsible entity as approved by the annual conference. It also provides: disability coverage for full time pastors, death benefits for full-time pastors, spouses, dependent children, and retired pastors and their spouses.

5. Health Insurance Fund $1,500,000

As a self-insured conference, this fund pays the health care claims for eligible clergy for whom the Alabama West Florida Conference is the responsible entity as approved by the annual conference. This includes district superintendents, conference office staff, new church start clergy and Wesley Foundation directors. Premium reduction supplements for retired clergy, spouses and surviving spouses are also funded through this fund. Clergy fully pay the premium equivalent for dependent coverage.
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fund</th>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6. Equitable Compensation Fund</td>
<td>$50,000</td>
<td>Several small or new churches cannot bear the total expense of a full-time pastor. Under certain guidelines, the Annual Conference temporarily subsidizes a portion of the minister’s salary with this fund.</td>
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<td>7. Conference Administration Fund</td>
<td>$662,400</td>
<td>This fund finances the costs of Annual Conference sessions, printing the Brochure of Reports, and Journal, and the work of the Fiscal Office. It also includes: Moving Fund for Retirees; Board of Ordained Ministry; the Depository of Archives and Historical Materials; and support of the Area Episcopal Office.</td>
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<td>8. Congregational Development Fund</td>
<td>$388,700</td>
<td>The Congregational Development Fund supports new church development and congregational revitalization. New church pastor’s salaries are supported from this fund as well as grants to help new churches with initial ministry needs. In addition, this fund makes possible ministry consultations to existing congregations, Natural Church Development, and congregational revitalization training. Also, revitalization grants to help congregations become more vital and fruitful are available through the Congregational Development Fund.</td>
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<td>9. Board of Pension &amp; Health Benefits</td>
<td>$25,000</td>
<td>This fund maintains conference-owned homes, including insurance and mortgage payments on homes purchased in the past, for the use of retired pastors or their surviving spouses who are in need. Occupants pay a small amount for rent and a small amount of the maintenance costs to assist this fund. This fund also finances the operation of the Conference Board of Pension and Health Benefit.</td>
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<td>10. Blue Lake Operations Supplement</td>
<td>$190,708</td>
<td>Use of our extensive facilities at Blue Lake Camp would be too expensive for many without this fund.</td>
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<td>11. Blue Lake Capital Improvement/Debt Retirement</td>
<td>$97,304</td>
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<td>12. Huntingdon/Birmingham-Southern Colleges</td>
<td>$620,850</td>
<td>This fund is divided between our two United Methodist Colleges by a mutually agreed upon formula between our Alabama-West Florida Conference and the North Alabama Conference. The North Alabama Conference has a similar fund and together these funds affirm our support for faith based liberal arts education.</td>
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<td>13. Capital and Operating Fund (Trustees)</td>
<td>$190,000</td>
<td>The Conference Trustees administer this fund for property and liability insurance, maintenance of the Conference Episcopal residence, providing conference office space and more.</td>
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<td>14. Student Aid, Huntingdon</td>
<td>$246,450</td>
<td>This fund provides scholarships for United Methodist students at Huntingdon College</td>
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<td>15. Wesley Foundations &amp; Campus Ministry</td>
<td>$572,634</td>
<td>The programs and staff salaries for our nine campus ministries depend on this fund. Campus ministry is a key to developing future leaders of our church and our society.</td>
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<td>16. Homes for the Aging</td>
<td>$64,450</td>
<td>For God’s older children who cannot afford to pay the full cost at our homes for the aging in this Conference.</td>
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<td>17. Academy for Congregational Excellence</td>
<td>$75,000</td>
<td>The Academy for Congregational Excellence is focused on developing the most effective clergy and lay leaders, knowing that effective leadership leads to vital, fruitful congregations. Some of the initial course offerings are Primary Leadership Skills, Preaching Excellence, Building an Effective Leadership Team and Missional Church.</td>
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To learn what portion of these benevolences your church pays, visit the Alabama West Florida Conference calculator at awfumc.org/calculator.
Southeastern Jurisdictional Funds

- Southeastern Jurisdictional Admin Fund $29,100
  Just as with General Conference, every four years our lay and clergy delegates attend the Southeastern Jurisdictional (SEJ) Conference. There they decide on programs, emphases, and missions for our region that are funded under this budget item and elect our Jurisdictional episcopal leaders.

General Church Funds

We join with United Methodists across the country to support these missions.

1. Africa University Fund $55,302
   The UMC is growing in Africa! Africa University empowers Africans to minister in Africa with these funds. Africa University offers courses in agriculture, management, theology, and education.

2. Black College Fund $247,110
   We help support the education of future African-American leaders through our 10 historically Black United Methodist related colleges and one medical school.

3. General Administration Funds $217,791
   This is our share of the cost for General Conference, the quadrennial, worldwide “congress” of Methodism.

4. Episcopal Fund $543,169
   This fund supports all effective bishops and the Episcopal offices, including salaries, all office and travel expenses, plus pensions of retired bishops or their surviving spouses and minor children.

5. Interdenominational Cooperation Fund $48,449
   We are committed to a dialogue and cooperation with other denominations through this fund. It pays United Methodist expenses and budget supported items.

6. Ministerial Education Fund $619,493
   One-fourth of this fund directly benefits ministerial students from our conference. The remainder supports both scholarships and operational expenses at United Methodist schools of theology. With the cost of postgraduate education so high, this fund is an essential help.

District Askings

Your District CORE team directs these funds

1. District Administration Fund $________
2. District Missions Fund $________
3. Other District Outreach Fund $________
   If authorized by your district conference.
Where Your Dollar Goes In A Typical United Methodist Church

5% AC/District/Juris Operations

86% Local Church

7% Benevolent Giving (Second Mile)

2% General Apportionments (First Mile)

Connectional Giving enables United Methodists to do together what no church, district or annual conference could do alone.

All of this—and so much more—is possible because when we join The United Methodist Church, we promise faithfully to participate in its ministries through our prayers, presence, gifts, service and witness. Paying ALL of our apportionments at 100 percent, and giving faithfully to the six church-wide Special Sundays, we become a part of something big and accomplish wonderful things in Jesus’ name!

When you give through your local church or annual conference your gifts expands your church’s ministry globally.
How Your 2018 Fair Share Is Determined

The method our Conference uses to determine your church’s fair share of missional giving is no secret!

• The overall budget for, the district, conference, jurisdiction and general church ministries, is set by the local church representatives at each level. Those budgets are “apportioned” or divided among all churches using an equitable formula. The formula, set by vote of the Annual Conference, is a ratio of current expense items and the local church membership (as reported in your 2016 Local Church Report to the Annual Conference). The formula excludes amounts paid on principle/interest for capital indebtedness, capital building and improvements, apportionments, direct billing for benefits, and all special giving, such as Advance Specials and Special Sunday offerings. In other words, it includes only lines 48 through 57 on the Annual Report.

• Your local church membership is then compared to the overall conference membership (136,940), and the mathematical ratio is expressed as a decimal figure. Your local church financial strength (measured by lines 48 through 57) is then compared to the total of all churches for the conference’s financial strength ($97,107,952), and the mathematical ratio is expressed as a decimal figure. The financial strength of your church is then given a weight of 75%, and membership a weight of 25%, to calculate your total apportionment. Use the following formula for your church.

1. Local Church Membership / 136,940 = Ratio of Conference membership (Membership decimal: 25%)
2. Local Church Financial Strength / $97,107,952 = Ratio of Conference financial strength (Financial decimal). Financial decimal x 3 = Local church financial strength decimal (Financial decimal: 75%)
3. Membership decimal + Financial Strength decimal = Local Church Baseline.
4. Local Church Baseline / 4 = Conference decimal.
5. Conference decimal x Approved Conference Budget Items = Local Church Fair Share of Conference Missional Giving.

Need more details?
Call the Conference Fiscal Office at 1-888-873-3127 or fiscaloffice@awfumc.org
How To Promote Our Connectional Ministry

- Share this brochure with local church officers. In preparation for charge conference, you may wish to fill in the blanks at the right margins with your church’s fair share of the budgeted amounts.

- Use other materials with this brochure. The handbooks, “Giving Beyond Ourselves, A Workbook for Pastors and Congregations” and “Sharing God’s Gifts,” are available from UMCom (1-888-862-3242). Other informational materials are available from Cokesbury (1-800-679-1789).

- Teach and Practice Biblical Stewardship!

This document is produced by the AWF Conference Fiscal Office.
You may download and reprint multiple copies as needed.