



According to Christian tradition, the apostle John was the youngest of Jesus' twelve disciples, probably a teenager or a young twenty-something. Despite John's youth or, more likely, because of his youth, Jesus invited him to become a partner in ministry.

Jesus expects his Church to do the same. We are called to nurture young people, serve them, and serve alongside them. While it is true that "youth are the future of the church," they are part of the church today, so we need to invest in their discipleship - today.

In this new season, as we move forward with joy and hope, United Methodists of Upper New York will invest boldly in the next generations of disciples and servant leaders for the church and the world through the Engage Fund.

Our collective effort, the Engage Fund, will serve as a beacon of hope for our young people. It will provide crucial seed funding, empowering them to embark on spiritual and leadership development journeys.

These experiences will help them find their place within the Body of Christ and equip them for impactful witness and ministry in the world. The Engage Fund will also provide seed funding to resource our leaders and congregations for effective ministry with children, youth, and young adults.

The goal is to raise \$500,000 dollars by the end of 2025! Together, with the help of God, we can do this!

This year, during the opening worship of the Annual Conference session, we will gather the initial offering to support the Engage Fund. This will be an opportunity for all Upper New York churches to present their offerings or pledge support for the Engage Fund.

Your generosity through this second mile giving initiative will allow our young people to witness and experience the transforming love of Christ in the Wesleyan Way through local, regional, and global initiatives, including The Buffalo 10 Scholarship, Mission of Peace, and other national and international experiences.

The Buffalo 10 Scholarship honors the ten victims killed in a racially motivated shooting at the Jefferson Avenue Tops Supermarket in Buffalo on May 14, 2022.

The mission of the Buffalo 10 Scholarship is to help youth in the greater Buffalo area persisting inequities by resourcing them to complete their college education so they can help create communities characterized by love, justice, and peace. The goal is to raise the necessary funds to endow this scholarship program permanently.

Mission of Peace is a yearly journey of discovery and Shalom to nations in our global community sponsored by the Northeast Jurisdictional Council on Youth Ministries of the United Methodist Church.

The goal is to send up to four youths each year to share this experience. On each Mission of Peace, participants travel to different countries worldwide to worship in churches, meet youth in churches and civic organizations, and share with people who have a similar longing for peace and understanding.

Lastly, we want our young people to be able to experience national and international initiatives, including the United Methodist National Youth Gathering and Exploration, to deepen their faith and sense of calling and lead in transformational ways.

In 2025, up to four young people will join me and others from Upper New York on a trip to Africa University in the southern African nation of Zimbabwe. Africa U, founded by United Methodists, is a university dedicated to leadership transformation across the African continent.

Together, we can do this. We must do it—for the church’s present and future, our communities, and a world transformed by the healing love of Christ.

1. Have your congregation designate a Sunday in May to take up a unique collection to support the Engage Fund at this year’s annual conference. On this day, you can also collect pledges for the missional fund.
2. Have your pastor and lay member bring your mission offering and pledge to the annual conference to add to the collection during opening worship on the first day of the annual conference, May 30. You can make the check-out to the Upper New York Conference, noting “Engage Fund” on the memo line.

As a public witness to our commitment to our young people, Jazelis and I have pledged to give ten thousand dollars to the Engage Fund by the end of 2025. I know that if we unite our hearts, we will reach our goal, if not surpass it, by 2025.

We are moving forward with joy and hope. Together, through the Engage Fund, we will empower the next generation of Christ-like transformational leaders for the church and the world. Leaders will live the gospel of Jesus Christ and embody God’s love with their neighbors every day and everywhere—all for God’s glory.



Bishop Héctor A. Burgos Núñez
The United Methodist Church
Serving United Methodists of Upper New York