

## **Funding Our Mission:**

Report to Members of the 2020 Annual Conference

### **Introduction:**

During the October 3, 2020 session of Annual Conference, members requested four Conference ministries – Camp and Retreat Ministries (CRM), Hispanic and Latino Ministries (HLM), District Operations (DO), and New Faith Communities (NFC) – report on “how their budget has and will be used.”

The request of New Faith Communities asked that several specific questions be addressed:

- *Details on who gets funding and who makes funding decisions.*
- *How new leaders and locations are chosen.*
- *Demographics of leaders and locations in which new faith communities are established.*
- *Metrics of success.*
- *How new faith communities help grow The United Methodist Church.”*

The Conference also requested “that Vital Congregations provide ... more information on Spiritual Leadership Incorporated (SLI), including: [t]he coaches hired to train leaders [and] [h]ow SLI helps grow and support a thriving United Methodist Church.”

All of reports were requested for publication within 90 days.

### **Camp and Retreat Ministries (CRM) – Bill Gottschalk-Fielding**

**Purpose:** *“CRM is a significant outreach ministry/ mission in the Upper New York region. The UNY UMC shared ministry support along with earned revenue and the gifts of faithful donors is invested in serving nearly 20,000 guests per year with faith, discipleship, spiritual and leadership development opportunities through quality camp and retreat programs. CRM engages all ages and backgrounds, including United Methodists, other denominations, seekers, and the unchurched, offering connection to an expanded Christian community. Many campers and young adults on summer staff make new or renewed faith decisions and go on to pursue careers in ministry or mission. The Committee on Camp and Retreat Ministries (CCRM) and CRM staff are committed to being good stewards of our resources in the goal of making disciples, intentionally developing leaders, and providing meaningful, relevant, viable programs that offer attractive, premiere Christian hospitality so that lives continue to be transformed.”<sup>1</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.unyumc.org/events/narrative-budget#2021%20Narrative%20Budget>, p. 16.

	<b>2019 Actual</b>	<b>2020 Budget</b>	<b>2021 Budget</b>
<b>Conference Support</b>	\$853,678	\$820,000	\$828,728

The Conference’s Camp and Retreat ministries have three primary sources of operating revenue: earned revenue (participant and group fees), donations, and Conference support through shared ministry giving. Total operating revenue for CRM in 2019 was \$2,929,676

In 2019, as in prior years, Conference support funded a) the salaries, benefits, and professional development expenses of the conference director of CRM, the executive assistant to CRM, the five site directors, and the Casowasco program director and office manager/registrar; b) ministry-wide marketing; c) ministry-wide print publications and mailings; d) ministry-wide legal and other contractual fees; and e) other miscellaneous ministry-wide shared services.

Beginning in 2020, when site director and other site staff salaries and benefits were moved into individual site budgets, most conference support was allocated directly to site budgets. The remainder continued to support the salary and benefits of the executive assistant to CRM, as well as the other ministry-wide expenses. This approach to allocating conference support will continue int 2021 and beyond.

**Hispanic/Latino Ministries (HLM) – Carlos Rosa-Laquer:**

***Purpose:** “The goal of the Hispanic Ministries Task Force is to assist lay and clergy leaders in reaching and supporting members of the Hispanic/Latino community. Specifically, this task force seeks to find ways to develop strategies to: (1) Strengthen existing ministries and congregations reaching Hispanic/ Latino communities in Upper New York (UNY), (2) Start new congregations and ministries in UNY, including intentional ministries with children and youth, (3) Identify, equip, and deploy (lay and clergy) leaders that are uniquely equipped to minister to Hispanic/ Latino communities, (4) Identify financial and material resources to support and maintain these strategies.”<sup>2</sup>*

	<b>2019 Actual</b>	<b>2020 Budget</b>	<b>2021 Budget</b>
<b>Conference Support</b>	\$1,140	\$1,000	\$6,500

As United Methodist Christians, we are called to make disciples of Jesus Christ for transformation of the world. As a Conference, we are connecting more than 865 local churches and 91 new communities of faith; we seek to fulfill our mission by living the Gospel of Jesus Christ and being the love of God with our neighbors in all places.

As a Hispanic-Latino Ministry (HLM), we have taken our UNY vision and mission seriously. In 2010, the HLM adopted the vision of establishing new faith communities in

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.unyumc.org/events/narrative-budget#2021%20Narrative%20Budget>, p.6.

each of our districts.

The work carried out during the years 2010 to 2012 laid the foundations by creating a training school for pastoral and laity. The priority focus was training and empowering laity for ministry, discovering pastors and lay members with church planting gifts, developing small group leaders, and planting new faith communities. Our goal was straightforward and simple: create a “greenhouse” of new leaders who would serve as the conference’s bold HLM mission.

We did recognize our limitations in covering the whole Conference. The team has consistently identified the regions with the highest Hispanic-Latino concentration in our conference. We have responded to the call of the UNY mission using every resource available to us. In most cases, the first phase is to establish an NFC. To do this, we use several strategies to discern *why*, *where*, and *how* to serve the Hispanic-Latino communities in our conference. Sometimes, we contact local churches directly to see if they might be interested in contextualizing their ministries to serve the Hispanic-Latino community. At other times, churches around the annual conference invite us to walk with them as facilitators and relationship-builders between the local church and the Hispanic-Latino communities in their midst. In every case, the primary task is collaboration around a shared vision and mission.

The 2010 US Census revealed the secret that was shouted from every high place: the Hispanic-Latino community is the largest minority in the United States. It was not news to us. The 2010 Census numbers are one of the triggers confirming our passion and fueling our vision and mission. In 2010, UNY had only two HLM in two districts. Today, 10 years later, we can share that as a Conference, we have active ministries in six of our 12 Districts:

<b>Ministry</b>	<b>Leadership</b>	<b>In-Worship before COVID-19</b>	<b>weekly-Interacting</b>	<b>On-line</b>
<b>Albany District</b>				
Amsterdam: Restoration (Multi-Cultural)	Rev. Osmar Guerra in active collaboration with Rev. Judith Humpherey-Fox Amsterdam UMC	50	60	380
<b>Binghamton District</b>				
Johnson City: Min. Restauradores	Rev. José L. Rodríguez	15		

(New Faith Community launched during COVID-19)	Domínguez in active collaboration with Rev. Mark Kimpland Endwell UMC and Pastor Sean Chanthasone			
<b>Crossroad District</b>				
Casa de Dios (Multi-Cultural + SEDE) – <b>Fulton, NY</b> (New Faith Community launched during COVID-19)	Rev. Diczan González	65	150	12
<b>Genesee Valley District</b>				
Rochester: Emmanuel (SEDE) (5 small groups)	SY Abdías Joel Ayála Ortíz	75	75	40
Greece: Ríos de Agua Viva (New Faith Community launched during COVID-19)	Rev. Héctor D. Rivera in active collaboration with Rev. Matt Stengel Greece UMC	25	70	410
<b>Niagara Frontier District</b>				
Buffalo: Jehovah Yireh (MC) – 3 small groups	Pastor César Galarza	110	175	900
Bowmansville: Jesús Esperanza Viva (New Faith Community launched during COVID-19)	Rev. Carlos M. & Marta R. Rosa in active collaboration with SY Kevin Curtis Bowmansville UMC	12	45	75 daily
<b>Mohawk District</b>				

Utica: New Harvest (New Faith Community launched during COVID-19)	<b>Rev. Antonio González in active collaboration with Rev. Brasley Chesebro New Hartford UMC and Deacon Rebeca Guthrie UMCW</b>	30	100	830
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In 2010 we had only two ordained elders in full connection, a provisional member and a local pastor. Today, 10 years later, we have nine ordained elders, two provisional members, three local pastors, three certified coach-consultants, 10 planter-planters of new faith communities trained and exercising their leadership. We also have the first Hispanic-Latino called and appointed elder to serve as District Superintendent in UNY.

These achievements are the result of investments made by our Conference in this ministry. In prior years, these investments came primarily through the ministries of new faith communities and vital congregations. Rev. Masland, Director of the New Faith Communities, has been an essential and crucial partner in developing and implementing the HLM strategy. The NFC office has invested<sup>3</sup> in the HLM with human and financial resources, training, and education.

We also recognize the tireless work of the Vital Congregations Office and investment<sup>4</sup> in the HLM. They did propose to train the teams of pastors and their leaders through SLI.

The NFC and Vital Congregation Office, focused on the Conference’s mission and determined to make our HLM vision a reality, have joined forces to make the financial investment needed to train work teams. Why was it done that way? A brief visit to the past budgets allocated by the UNYAC to the HLM (Hispanic-Latino Budget<sup>5</sup>) will confirm such a statement. Without the investment of human, financial, and administrative resources from both offices, we would not be celebrating the goals achieved today. As an annual conference, we can celebrate our investment in the HLM. We had created a team of well-trained bilingual church planters, facilitators, and small group leaders. It is powerful because they are ready to do ministry in contextualization to our Upper New York region. Today we have eight pastors trained in coaching and SLI, ten planter-planters of New Faith Communities f trained and exercising their leadership, and more than 35 leaders trained in diverse capacities.

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<sup>3</sup> New Faith Community of the UNYAC had invested \$840,000.00 in Hispanic-Latino Ministries of the UNYAC between 2014 to 2020. For more detail, PLEASE, see the New Faith Communities report.

<sup>4</sup> Vital Congregation Office has invested \$6,250.00 during 2020 in the Hispanic-Latino Ministries of the UNYAC.

<sup>5</sup> UNYAC Hispanic-Latino Ministries Budgets between 2018 and 2020: \$1,986.00 for 2018; \$700.00 for 2019; \$1,000.00 for 2020

We also thank the UNY camp and retreat ministries for putting their support HLM too. By discounting fees and offering scholarships, HLM has been able to offer several pastoral, couples, families, children and youth, and leadership focused retreats at our camp and retreat ministry sites.

Today we can say we have an ethnically, culturally, and theologically diverse ministry team ready for the new dimension to which we believe God is calling us in the next ten years: Antioquia Initiative (SEDES). We are asking the Upper New York Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church to take under consideration the support of our Hispanic-Latino Ministries during the conference year 2021 with \$6,500.00. It will empower the Hispanic-Latino Ministries team to keep discovering, developing and deploying Christ Following Transformational Leaders for the transformation of the families, communities, and the world.

### **District Operations (DO) – Nola Anderson**

***Purpose:** “The District Office is a resource to the pastors and churches of the District and the District Superintendent. It is an important connector between the pastors and laity of the District, the District Superintendent, and the Conference office. Each District is provided with funding for trainings and workshops that help them to live out our primary task of increasing the leadership capacity of laity and clergy. Each District office employs a part-time District assistant who provides administrative support to the District Superintendent, the churches and pastors of the District. Job duties of the district assistant include reception, answering telephones, database management, calendar maintenance, storage of all church and clergy-related files, provision of general information including annual reports and direct communication through mail, email and websites. Some District Offices provide a computer workstation for persons who may not have access to a computer or internet service at home or in their church in order to complete reports and other Conference related work.”<sup>6</sup>*

	<b>2019 Actual</b>	<b>2020 Budget</b>	<b>2021 Budget</b>
<b>Conference Support</b>	\$2,134,571	\$21,189,619	\$2,206,619

District Superintendents strive to live out and uphold the mission of the United Methodist Church of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world, while at the same time, faithfully living out the vision of Upper New York Conference of being God’s love with our neighbors in all places.

Each district acts as a bridge between the local church and the conference as they seek to align the mission of the UMC and the vision of Upper New York Conference. District superintendents are committed to the task of discovering and developing Christ following transformational leaders so that they can be deployed to do effective ministries.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.unyumc.org/events/narrative-budget#2021%20Narrative%20Budget>, p.14

Ways in which the budget has and will be used:

- To provide ongoing training throughout the year for both clergy and laity
- Annually, over 500 laity in our conference are trained at the district leadership training events.
- Over 100 Pastors participate in the Annual Pastoral Leadership Development.
- 75 lay people were engaged in District Lay Leadership Development
- District held Intentional Discipleship Plan Training and continue to offer these trainings
- Conflict Resolution Training for clergy and laity
- Over 700 laity trained through the District Lay Servant Ministries
- Providing care for candidates and local pastors through the District Committee on Ordained Ministries
- Provide scholarships for Clergy and laity to participate in Leadership Academy and other training
- Stewardship training for clergy and laity
- Mosaix Multiethnic cohort-<https://www.mosaix.info/> - six pastors representing nine congregations are currently participating in this year-long training
- Regional teams training for leaders- laity and clergy
- Account Reimbursement Plan (professional expenses and continuing education) for District Superintendents
- Office rent for some district offices
- Salaries for the District Superintendents, Administrative Assistants, and stipends for the District Associates
- Telecommunications and cable expenses for district offices
- Office supplies for the district offices...stationary, toners etc.
- Equipment purchases/ equipment repairs and maintenance ... computers, printers as needed
- Event/ program expenses
- Postage and mailings
- Hospitality
- Leadership training for District Superintendent
- Recruitment expenses- visiting seminaries to recruit potential pastors
- Marcia McFee Worship Webinar
- Jason Moore Worship Workshop/ Webinar

As Conference Superintendents, we are even more committed during this unprecedented time of COVID 19, to fulfilling our part in achieving the goal of the Conference, as we work towards having 50% of the churches in Upper New York be considered as highly vital by 2025.

## New Faith Communities – Dave Masland

	<b>2019 Actual</b>	<b>2020 Budget</b>	<b>2021 Budget</b>
<b>Conference Support</b>	\$466,890	\$177,000	\$249,000

Purpose: *“The planting of New Faith Communities (NFC) is one of the three central foci of the Upper New York Annual Conference as we seek to live out our mission of “making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.” The staff and various New Faith Community teams of the UNY Conference are continually working to build and improve a system that supports the inspiring, recruiting, assessing, equipping, deploying, coaching, and supervision of the people (both lay and clergy) who feel called by God to create new places for new people.”<sup>7</sup>*

As indicated by Bob Flask (Conference Treasurer) during the AC session, there is no increase in the New Faith Community spending plan for 2020. In fact, the internal NFC spending plan shows a small decrease for 2021. More about this below. There appears to be an increase this year because CF&A is shifting more of the burden for funding NFC’s to the Ministry Share Budget of the Conference. Up until this year, very little of the spending for New Faith Communities has been sourced through the Upper NY Conference budget. As most people will remember, since the inception of our UNY Conference, the primary funding source for New Faith Communities (grants and staffing) has been net proceeds from the sales of closed churches. As indicated in the October 2020 Conference Trustees report to the Conference, the net proceeds from sold properties in 2019-20 did not keep up with carrying costs accrued due to these properties while we awaited sale. The Trustees have little or no money to shift to the New Beginnings Fund or to the camp and retreat ministries program this year.

The choice facing CF&A and conference leaders was to either stop funding the NFC movement, or find another source. Generous individuals and churches have given tens of thousands of dollars to the “New Places for New People Fund” which helped defray some of our ministry costs. Thank you to those churches and individual who gave so much! However, these gifts have not met all the need. After consulting with various teams, CF&A made the choice to shift more of the funding for NFCs to the Ministry Share Budget.

### Details on Who Gets Funding, and Who Makes Funding Decisions:

Since the beginning of Upper NY Conference, there have always been two avenues for new faith community planting teams to receive Conference funding: 1. By applying for money through a standard application (available upon request from the NFC office); or, 2. By having a new church start appointment (which requires funding to meet the needs of the planter) approved by the cabinet.

During the first three years of planting in UNY, there was a small grant team that reviewed

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.unyumc.org/events/narrative-budget#2021%20Narrative%20Budget>, p. 5

all applications for funding. However, because most decisions that impacted NFC funding were being made by the cabinet in order to make appointments, that small team was disbanded.

Avenue #1: Currently, when an NFC team applies for grant money, the application is received and reviewed by the Director of NFCs. The Director is looking for several things to be in place before responding with an answer:

1. The application is for a relatively small amount of money (\$5000 or less) and is a one-time request;
2. The NFC has a plan for reaching new people via a disciple-making pathway;
3. The leaders of the NFC have received Launchpad training;
4. The lead planter has been assessed as having good potential;
5. The lead planter has gathered a team, so they are not a solo heroic leader;
6. The NFC team has raised their own matching funds.

When these things are all in place, the grant will likely be given if funds available. Often, even when a grant is awarded, teams receive less than they have requested because there are not enough funds available.

Avenue #2: Rev. David Masland, as Director of New Faith Communities, has been serving on the appointive cabinet. When a prospective planter with a vision from God is assessed as high potential, the Director of NFCs recommends to the Bishop and Cabinet (in December) that the cabinet consider an appointment (in July) for the purpose of starting a new church or faith community. These potential NFC appointments become part of the prayerful appointment-making discernment process of the entire cabinet. Only after prayerful consultation and cabinet-wide agreement on making the appointment would any funding be approved. And, even then, limits in available funding can sometimes force an NFC plan to be put on hold for a year. The amount being spent out of NFC Funds to make an NFC appointment is approved by the Bishop and cabinet.

### *How new leaders and locations are chosen.*

New NFC/Church planters and locations are never chosen by human beings. Planting is such difficult, often-times discouraging work, that if a person is not clearly gifted and called by God to plant an NFC, they should never be deployed as a planter!

In a few cases, churches have planted NFC's without consulting the NFC office. This is always celebrated! We want everyone to feel "freed up to plant." However, in most cases, the process usually works something like this:

1. A person (lay or clergy) who has been up in the night wrestling with God about a vision for an NFC reaches out to the NFC office, and asks for a conversation.
2. The Director of NFC has a preliminary conversation with that person, asking for details of the vision they have been given. Such questions as "Who are the people God has placed on your heart to reach?" "What do you see as your mission field?"

“Where do you think God wants you to meet these folks?” “What strategy do you think God is calling you to use?” “Is there an existing church that you see as helping to launch this NFC?” “Have you talked to your DS about this vision? And, are they supportive?” are always part of this conversation. Not surprisingly, vision from God almost always includes a particular mission field... a community of people that the planter knows and loves. So, while DSs always have unreached groups of people and communities on their prayer list, DSs and NFC Staff have never decided the location of an NFC! Choosing planters and locations is a discernment process, that always starts in the heart of a planter.

3. The person is encouraged to take a number of these follow up steps:
  - A. To share their vision with other people in their community (inside or outside their church) - anyone they believe might resonate with the vision.
  - B. Talk to one or more people who have already planted an NFC with a similar vision and strategy, to listen and learn from them.
  - B. Talk to other members of the NFC Team in the Conference and listen and learn from them.
  - C. Have LOTS of one-on-one meetings with people living in the mission field, for the purpose of listening and learning as much as possible.
  - D. If the vision is to plant something that may one day resemble a free-standing church, they are asked to take an online assessment, designed to help a potential planter compare themselves (personality type, leadership style, etc.) with “happy planters” across the country in various denominations. The results are discussed in a 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting with the Director of NFC and/or NFC team members.
  - E. Gather a small team to pray with them and begin to shape the vision in further detail. The goal is to eventually have a team of 12. And, from the beginning, team members are asked to donate their own money to invest in the dream.
  - F. Attend a Launchpad training event (or other on-line learning group, where the best practices of planting are taught) with members of their team.
  - G. Find an existing church that understands and supports their vision enough to become a financial services partner for their NFC.
  - H. Send regular updates to the Director of NFCs.
  - I. Find a coach to walk with them throughout the process.

These steps may take months or years. If all these steps are followed and the vision keeps growing clearer and the planter’s sense of call grows stronger, the planter will be encouraged to launch their new faith community. If the planter gets stuck at any of these steps, it may be the case that they simply need more time to discern the shape of God’s call. Or everyone may decide that it is not the right time to plant this NFC.

Since 2013, 215+ persons have made that initial request for a conversation. About 160 of them have made enough progress to launch an NFC.

Demographics of leaders and locations in which new faith communities are established:

Since more than 150 NFCs have been planted in UNY Conference in the past seven+ years, it would be impossible to describe the demographics of all of them. However, we can offer some generalizations.

As mentioned above, we do not plant NFCs unless someone comes to us saying that they believe God is calling them to plant an NFC to reach a particular group of people in a particular setting. We can observe that there has been more energy around planting work among the following groups of people and in the following regions of the Conference:

1. Reaching Diverse People: From the beginning, we have desired to see greater diversity in our Conference, so that the UM Church in upstate NY better reflects the diversity in our cities and counties. With this in mind, we have actively prayed for God to send workers who are gifted and called to reach people of color, especially Hispanic, African American, and Southeast Asian people. God has answered these prayers by sending us planters from Cuba and Puerto Rico (who are now planting five new Hispanic churches, and eight house churches in our Conference), and persons from other Christian traditions (who are now planting two new African American churches, and four new churches reaching various southeast Asian people.). We have used Conference funds (New Beginnings Fund NFC dollars) to pay the salaries of two gifted pastors to lead these movements, Jose Rodriguez and Sean Chanthasone. These persons have not only been language translators, but cross-cultural teachers for anyone who has sought to align themselves with these new churches. In 2020, we are spending 80% of NFC grant money on NFCs designed to reach People of Color. See the chart below to learn how this % has increased each year since UNY started funding NFC planting.

Year	Total NFC Grant Spending	Grants to Reach Persons of Color	%
2012	\$205,000	\$34,000	(17%)
2013	\$154,000	\$66,000	(42%)
2014	\$279,000	\$120,000	(43%)
2015	\$293,000	\$135,000	(46%)
2016	\$368,000	\$194,000	(52%)
2017	\$383,000	\$204,000	(53%)
2018	\$298,000	\$181,000	(61%)
2019	\$279,000	\$197,000	(71%)
2020	\$198,000	\$164,000	(82%)

2. Urban Areas: There has been greater energy in the planting movement in some regions. About half of our NFCs have been planted in what we now call the Lakes Region of the Conference and 90% of these have been planted in Buffalo,

Rochester and Syracuse and the suburban areas around them. It is clear God is placing the people living in these cities in the hearts of gifted planters! Reaching people in these mission fields is never easy though. Many of our NFCs that have been launched and are now closed are in these same areas. Creating a sustainable New Faith Community is always hard in our post-Christendom culture, but it proves especially hard where poverty levels are high. We are still listening to God and are not giving up on finding a way.

3. Demographics of Lead Planters: We currently have 83 active New Faith Communities. A survey of their lead planters shows the following demographic breakdown:

<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>	<b># NFC Planters</b>	<b>%</b>
Caucasian	50	60%
Hispanic (various cultures,)	13 (8 are lay persons)	16%
Asian (various cultures)	10	12%
African American	6	7%
African (various cultures)	3	4%
Native American	1	1%

\*It is important to point out that many of the new churches these folks are planting are designed to be multi-cultural, multi-lingual. This is true for all the churches being planted by our Hispanic planters.

Metrics of success:

We use the same metrics to measure “success” as every other church in Upper NY, though we prefer to use the term “fruitfulness.” By “fruitfulness” we mean effectiveness in bringing new people to discipleship in following Jesus Christ. We want to know the following in regular updates:

1. Do you have a clear, simple disciple-making pathway that moves people forward in their spiritual journey?
2. How many new people have you developed a meaningful relationship with?
3. How many people are attending your online or in-person worship each week?
4. How many people are attending your small groups (in person or online?)
5. How many people have become followers of Jesus since last report?
6. What is the current state of the giving/generosity of your people? Have your weekly offerings increased?
7. How many people are actively using their spiritual gifts to serve your community?

In the first 1-2 years of planting, there are other measures that we watch for:

1. How many one-on-ones have you done with people in your target group?
2. How many people do you now have on your leadership team?

3. How many people have committed to serving on a team to help your vision come to reality?
4. How much money are your leaders contributing to the NFC?
5. How many people are now following your disciple making pathway?

*How do New Faith Communities help grow The United Methodist Church:*

There are five ways we'd like to answer this question:

1. We are becoming more diverse. The NFC movement brings with it an intentionality about reaching targeted groups of people. The church does not become more diverse and more closely mirror our communities just because we hope for it. The church becomes more diverse because the people within it pray for the Spirit to send gifted, called planters, and then equips, supports, resources and deploys them into the mission field. Without a team of people focused on planting new faith communities, the church will always look and sound the same!
2. The NFC Movement IS the UMC. The question implies that the NFC movement is somehow separate from the UM Church, or the Conference. Not true. Ninety percent of the New Faith Communities that have been planted in UNY over the past 7+ years have been planted by existing churches and their leaders. This movement belongs to the UM Church. It is a movement of its people. Every dream, every vision has started in the hearts of the people who call themselves United Methodist in Upper NY. It benefits the UM church because it is growing out of the United Methodist Church.
3. NFCs are the R&D Arm of the Church: For years, people have been saying that the New Faith Community movement is the Research and Development (R&D) branch of the church! Everyone is talking these days about the importance of innovation for leadership in these liminal days of vast change. NFC Planters are on the cusp of innovating the future church. Some are discouraged that 50+ of our NFCs have now closed. We do not see it this way! All these closed NFCs have been experiments with new ways of being church. And, though many of them were relatively short-lived (1-4 years), in every case, new people have been reached, and are now following Jesus in the world. In addition, in every case, we have learned a lot of things that instruct what we will try next. God is bringing about a future church that we believe will look VERY different from what we all have known up until now. The NFC movement is helping to uncover that future church.
4. Every Church Can Learn from Planters. The NFC Teams of Upper NY believe that EVERY church would benefit from learning the best practices of planting work. For years we have offered workshops called, "What every church leader can learn from fruitful church planters." These workshops offer anywhere from 5 to 12 practices (depending on available time) for church leaders to consider adopting. For instance, we believe every church that starts an intentional practice of holding one-on-one meetings with people who are OUTSIDE their church, just for the sake of listening, will become a growing church. The NFC Teams are available to provide conversations about these things with anyone who is interested! Just ask!
5. The NFC Mission = The UMC Mission. Finally, and most importantly, the New Faith

Community movement has the exact same mission as every UM Church... to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. We do not plant new churches for the benefit of the denomination, or the benefit of the Conference. We start new churches to grow the kingdom of God by inviting new people to meet Jesus Christ, receive his grace upon grace, and become his followers in the world every day. We start new churches to ultimately impact communities, by sending more and more Jesus followers into schools, workplaces, and towns so that the world will be blessed with goodness and light. In the long run, as these churches grow and thrive, they can positively impact the denomination and the Conference by giving back to the church that has birthed them (see story below). But that is not the bottom-line goal we have in mind. We are trying to reach the people that our existing churches are not reaching with the good news of God's grace shown to us in Jesus Christ!

### NFC Spending Plan for 2021:

The leaders of the NFC Movement in UNY Conference recognize that the Conference has less money to spend now for any ministry. Therefore, we have been decreasing our grant spending over the past couple of years and will do so again in 2021. As of October 6, 2020, there are plans to spend \$193,000 on grants to support new faith communities in Upper NY. This represents a 48% decrease in what we spent on grants for NFCs in 2016.

### A Closing Story:

In partnership with the DS of the Genesee Valley District, Rev. Vonda Fossitt, the NFC movement in Upper NY brought on board a new planter in 2017, by the name of Pastor Stephen McKnight. Stephen had partnered with his mom to plant a non-denominational house church called "Fragrance of Christ" several years earlier. Stephen's primary ministry was with youth... bringing hundreds of teens to a knowledge of God's love through a basketball program. Rev. Fossitt brought this house church and Stephen into relationship with Upper NY and asked him to turn Fragrance of Christ into an UM Church and to reach many new people, while sharing space with an existing UM congregation. Because we saw this as a relaunch of a church, with new enlarged vision, the Conference provided funding for three years (a total of \$55,000), to provide salary for Stephen so he could focus all his energy on growing the new church.

By God's grace and through Stephen's patient, loving leadership, the Anglo congregation that owned the building very quickly chose to merge their worship and most of their life and ministry with the African American congregation, and MANY new people began to come. Today, Fragrance of Christ is a thriving UM Church! They are no longer dependent on the Conference for funding. And, early in the fall of 2020, the church sent Rev David Masland a check for \$500 to reseed the "New Places for New People Fund." They are so filled with gratitude, they have given back to the Conference that helped them grow! This is just one example of God working through the NFC to bring growth and welcome new disciples into the kingdom of God, but then also to give back in the hope that God

will repeat this amazing story in the future! In our thank you note to the congregation, we assured them that the \$500 will be used in 2021 to help birth another new church! Thanks be to God!

We hope this story inspires MANY to give to the “New Places for New People Fund.” Doing so gives you a chance to partner with God, and people like Stephen, who have been given a vision by God for new ways of reaching new people. Checks can be made out to “Upper NY Annual Conference” with “New Places for New People Fund” in the notation. Thank you!

### **Conference Partnership with Spiritual Leadership Inc. (SLI) – Aaron Bouwens**

Over the past several years the Upper New York Conference has had the opportunity to journey with Spiritual Leadership Inc. (SLI) for the purpose of growing the capacity of Christ following transformational leaders. During the last two decades, SLI has had a formal working relationship with 32 Bishops and 36 annual conferences, including work with bishops’ operational teams or equivalents. SLI estimates it has worked with roughly 1900 UMC congregations over the years as well as partnering with two seminaries. Its United Methodist experience spans Europe and North America as well as work with the broader Methodist family in the Caribbean, South America, Africa, and India.

Initiated by two United Methodist lay people following their calling, SLI brings together the work of growing as a disciple of Jesus and increasing leadership capacity to develop generative ministry driven by a team rather than an individual. One of the best ways to understand the ministry of SLI is through the lens of their values, mission, and vision.

#### **Values**

- Developing Spiritual Leaders who model a community that loves, learns, and leads together
- Creating environments that foster transformation
- Establishing processes that bear fruit

#### **Mission**

Joining Jesus in His revolution discovering, developing, and deploying passionate spiritual leaders.

#### **Vision**

Generative transformation beyond imagination (Ephesians 3:20-21).

The backbone of the SLI movement is generative teams that love, learn, and lead communities to address adaptive challenges. *Loving* so as to continue to grow in discipleship to Jesus. *Learning* because the church faces challenges that require us to learn the way into the future. *Leading*, so that there are more than just meetings, there is action that impacts the world for the sake of Jesus Christ. This is all done in the community of a team because all too often solo heroic leadership is dependent upon the leader to navigate challenging times. As a result, when the leader changes, the whole systems

comes to a halt and the next leader must start over and chart a new direction. Generative teams develop systems and strategies that continue to grow and develop independent of the leaders in the conversation.

While not exclusive to the United Methodist Church, many of the leaders involved with SLI are long-time United Methodists with a passion to see the church thrive. For the twenty years of their existence, SLI has been walking with congregations and Conferences to reconnect with their Wesleyan roots, and live faithful to the Methodist principles of following Jesus.

To guide the SLI process trained, certified coaches are assigned by the Lead Team of SLI based on the context of the project. During their work with the Upper New York Conference SLI has deployed Ideal Curtis and Craig Robertson as coaches. Ideal is a lay person based in Arizona and has been coaching with SLI for over 10 years. Craig is one of the founders, and the Development Partner for SLI. Also deployed during the years have been Andrew Sperry and Aaron Bouwens, both of Upper New York. SLI is dedicated to developing indigenous leadership and both Andrew and Arron have participated in training and apprenticeships.

As additional projects and teams emerge a variety of coaches and other specialists will be engaged to meet the contextual needs of the Conference. There is also ongoing work to discover and develop people who would likely make good coaches. Once discovered, the development through coaching and coach training continues to invest in the ministry of Upper New York in ways that are consistent with the unique culture of the Conference.

To date SLI has worked with the Conference Leadership Team, as well as the Conference Operational Team. In September of 2019 three incubator teams were launched with an initial engagement of 36 pastoral leaders from across the Conference. While some leaders stepped away, nearly 30 of these pastoral leaders spent the year loving, learning, and leading together. During this same time there was a group developed that focused on the Hispanic Ministries of the Conference working with both clergy and lay leaders. In July 2020 as the Conference moved into the regional model for superintending, SLI has been engaged to provide coaching to the emerging Regional Operational Teams. Each team is being asked to explore the adaptive challenges in their regional context so that together the work of discovering, developing, and deploying Christ-following transformational leaders will continue.

Moving into the future, the Upper New York Conference, through the office of Vital Congregations, intends to continue to be in partnership. This will be done by continuing the journey with the teams already at work, while also working with Districts, other Conference teams, the development of Area teams, and local congregations. Each step of the way working to move the thinking and strategies toward the local congregation and the mission and vision of our Conference.