

Scan the QR code and take a look at our Spring 2020 issue of the Advocate (<https://bit.ly/UNYlocalchurchministry>)



for several examples of how members of the UNY Conference serve God at their local churches and beyond.



**Powerful example of Witness**

The word “witness” was added by the 2008 United Methodist General Conference to highlight the mission and evangelistic responsibilities of church membership. It also reminds United Methodists to live out their vows publicly, said the Rev. Mark W. Stamm, professor of Christian worship at Perkins School of Theology at Southern Methodist University in Dallas.

**Barnes UMC**

In the late ‘90s, Barnes UMC’s neighborhood in Indianapolis was among those leading the city in homicides, said the Rev. Charles Harrison, the church’s senior pastor. He said the violence was affecting the church. “It was creating fear. People were afraid to come into the neighborhood because of the high level of violence, gangs and drug dealers, so we were trying to respond to that,” he said.

Indianapolis Ten Point Coalition, a faith-based nonprofit aimed at helping reduce violence and homicides in the surrounding neighborhoods, was born out of their efforts.

For nearly two decades now, members of Barnes UMC and other volunteers have been walking the streets engaging at-risk youth during Ten Point’s weekly faith walks. Many of the church members are ex-offenders themselves, former drug dealers and gang members, said Rev. Harrison, who is president of the coalition.

“They go out in the evening time into the areas where we’re experiencing the highest levels of violence and their role is to look for those individuals who are drug trafficking, who may be involved in robberies or gang activity. And what they’re doing is their sharing their story with the young people of the mistakes that they made in their life that led many of them to prison. ... They talk about the role that God has played in their life in helping them to turn their life around and get on the right path,” Rev. Harrison said.

“We see ourselves as the light of Christ in the midst of these communities that are experiencing a lot of violence, poverty, lack of quality education opportunities, broken families, and our very presence there says to people that we care.”

“That’s witness when you do things like that and do them publicly,” Rev. Stamm said.

Connecting local churches to each other & ministries around the world



*“It’s a great time to remember your United Methodist vows.”*

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*The Bridge* is a Conference Communications Ministry tool that delivers to local churches news and stories of ministry from around the Upper New York Conference and the world. For more news and stories visit: [www.unyumc.org](http://www.unyumc.org)



 *The Upper New York Conference’s vision is to live the gospel of Jesus Christ and to be God’s love with our neighbors in all places.*

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United Methodists vow to faithfully participate in the Church's ministries by their prayers, their presence, their gifts, their service, and their witness.



## Our United Methodist Vows

**Editor's Note:** The examples shared in this issue were originally published on [umc.org](https://umc.org) in a five-part series on the United Methodist vows.

Now that summer busyness is winding down, many church members resume attending Sunday worship, small groups, and ministries at their local churches. It's a great time to remember your United Methodist vows.

When you become professing members of a United Methodist congregation, you profess your faith in God, your desire to live as disciples of Jesus Christ, and your commitment to join with your church community to keep the vows of your Baptismal Covenant.

Scan the QR code to visit <https://bit.ly/umcvows> as a reminder of the four vows.



One of those vows is to faithfully participate in the life and ministries of your local congregation through your prayers, presence, gifts, service, and

witness. But how can you go beyond the words you profess to actually living into these vows?



### Examples of commitment through prayer

Mary Meyer carried index cards with her wherever she went.

On each was a list of names of people she needed to pray for or other concerns. She would jot down new names and prayer requests as they came to her, and then she'd tuck the cards into her Bible, her purse, or even the cushions of her favorite chair.

If she had a free minute, she was praying.

"I think it's honest to say she was never bored because of her prayer life," said her grandson, Gilbert C. Hanke, top executive of the Commission on United Methodist Men.

Hanke said after his grandmother's death, his parents helped clear out the family's home and found more than a hundred of her prayer cards scattered around in books, drawers, and other places.

"It was like seeds that she planted," Hanke said. "I don't have much from Grandma, but I do have this memory. Every time I see an index card, that's what I think of."

The power of prayer is evident at St. Mark United Methodist Church in Harare, Zimbabwe. The church hosts early morning prayer services that draw as many as 500 people.

Known as rumuko in the local chiShona language, the prayer gatherings are held from 4 to 6 a.m. each day and are focused on individual prayers.



### Example of the blessings of presence

The Rev. Roy Hilburn knows the importance of being present in the local church and the community. When he became senior pastor at Coharie United Methodist Church in Clinton, North Carolina, there were eight members, the youngest of whom was 55.

Now, almost a decade later, membership at the primarily Native American church has more than quadrupled. It's often standing-room only on special occasions.

Early on, Rev. Hilburn encouraged his congregation to actively seek the lost in their midst. Doing so energized members and attracted new ones, including young families. Those fresh faces added fuel to the fire and the church extended its reach.

"We're always looking to help those who are hurting," he said. "That really helps us focus in on community. That makes us look around and see who is in need around us."



### Examples of serving God and others

Serving God and others can take many forms. United Methodist churches offer a variety of service ministries specific to the needs of their local communities. Church members can volunteer to serve on disaster response teams, and the United Methodist Board of Global Ministries provides opportunities to serve at home and around the world doing short-term mission work.

Members of all ages can find volunteer opportunities that feed their passions.

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