



the Northeastern Jurisdiction of UMW. Of the 12 nominees only four would be elected to be directors for the 2020-2024 quadrennium. Valerie Clark was one of the four women elected!

The UMW Board of Directors consists of 25 women, 20 of whom are elected by their jurisdiction, and five are nominated and elected by the national organization. The board oversees UMW policy, strategic planning, the budget, the care of retirees, and property.

Valerie was so elated with the fact that she had been elected that when her sister called to congratulate her, Valerie responded, "I can't talk right now, I just have to process this." It took a few more phone calls from her sister for Valerie to finally be able to talk.

Valerie said, "I am so honored to be elected to serve on the board!"

She continued, "I have always wanted to help others. If something brings happiness or understanding, that's what I want to do! I feel so blessed; I really wasn't expecting this because there were so many qualified women nominated."

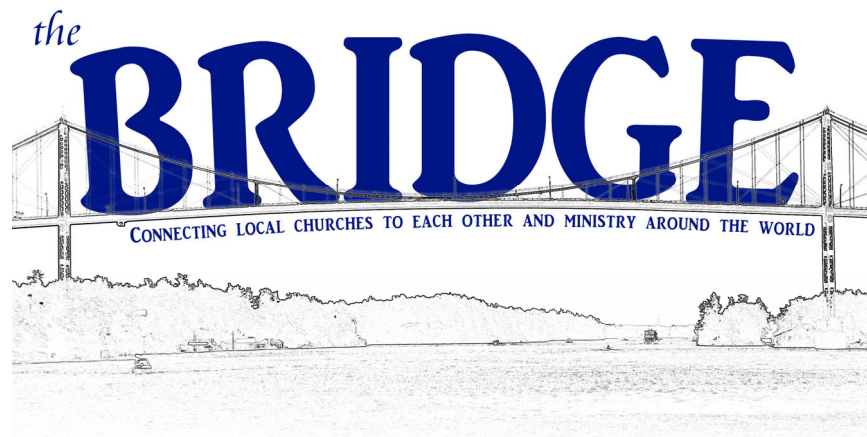
Almost a month after being elected to serve on the board, Valerie said, "It's really an awesome feeling. I still get chills. That's how I felt when I heard the news and that's how I still feel."

Valerie will find out soon what her role on the board will be. Undoubtedly, her infectious enthusiasm and energy along with her leadership experience and strong faith, have prepared her for success in any position she will hold.

*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)**

Find Information and resources about how to improve your church's digital discipleship at <https://www.unyumc.org/about/digital-discipleship>



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.

## A look inside!

Social media—the perfect place to begin digital discipleship	2
Valerie Clark elected to UMW Board of Directors	2

# Social media—the perfect place to begin digital discipleship

By Lori Jagow, Pendleton Center UMC Online Minister

**Editor's Note:** This fall, the Upper New York Conference will be focusing on digital discipleship to help local churches grow their ministries through connecting online. In September, we will release three testimonials from pastors who have used: 1.) Tithe.ly to increase online giving, 2.) Zoom to connect with members for small groups and meetings, and 3.) Facebook to reach large audiences of church members and beyond. In October, we will release news about free online trainings that will be offered related to each of the three platforms.

Below is a story about how social media is the perfect place to begin digital discipleship.

A wonderful example of tapping into the social media ecosystem started when a parishioner at Pendleton Center Church wrote a blog story about how God provided for her homeless ministry at a community fish fry.

The blog was shared to Facebook where many people are looking for interesting content to read. A post was also made to Facebook and Instagram inviting people to come to a fish fry. During a Facebook livestream, the church

gave away a few tickets to their fish fry dinners and more people joined in. Research shows that Facebook livestream attracts seven times more people than a pre-recorded video or a single post. People are looking for interaction.

When people commented on the livestream, they had a chance of winning a ticket. Facebook algorithms let others who may have an interest in your event, know about it by putting it in their newsfeed. Then the church also placed a few inexpensive Facebook ads, did eblasts and community mailings. The result was that more than 13,000 people read the blog and more fish dinners were sold than ever before!

You might say that great social media was helpful in getting people to come to an event. We all can benefit from that, but what does it have to do with Digital Discipleship? My answer, everything.

Once people have become engaged in your social media platforms, the potential is unlimited to invite them to the church be it online or in the building. This influence may take some time to grow, but it will be well worth the wait.

Each media platform can also be used to share information with another network and then point back to the originating network such as your website.



Digital Discipleship is most effective when it begins with social media (where the people are) and drives traffic to your website. This compounding process will reach far more people than posting to your website alone. If you have a Bible study on your website, you can use social media to channel those who are interested to your website. Your website is your landing page.

When it comes to digital ministry, the secret is not having expensive equipment or using a specific platform. No: it's all

about relationships. When you engage people in conversations, comment on photos, and chat in groups, they are helping grow the ministry. This integrated system is one of reaching people. To do this, we need to write about topics people are searching for. In other words: topics with search traffic potential.

When social media is utilized the way it was intended, we will discover that this new ecosystem's waters are so full of fish that our nets will nearly break once we cast into the deep.

## Valerie Clark elected to UMW Board of Directors

By Shannon Hodson, Writer/Editor

On July 16, 2020, Valerie Clark sat nervously at her dining room table. She was watching the livestream of the Northeastern Jurisdiction elections.

A recognized leader in the Upper New York Conference, Valerie is a member of both the Upper New York Conference Leadership Team and the Genesee Valley District Leadership Team. Valerie is also a strong leader at the national level,

serving on the program advisory group for United Methodist Women (UMW).

Valerie felt the call to go further in leadership. She said, "I prayed to God seeking guidance on this calling and God answered, 'Yes, you are ready.'"

On July 16, Valerie was awaiting the results of the election for the UMW Board of Directors. She was one of the 12 nominees from the 10 Conferences of

*Continued on Page 4*