

The *Bridge*
May 2024 Issue

Today's youth is tomorrow's future. According to Christian tradition, John the Apostle was the youngest of Jesus' twelve disciples. *Jesus invited him to become a partner in ministry.* United Methodists of Upper New York are invited to become a part of a ministry that celebrates our youth as young disciples. At this year's Annual Conference (May 30-June 1), we will support our youth through the Engage Fund, a new initiative of United Methodists of Upper New York seeking to invest in both the present and future of our youth.

To be a part of this initiative, your congregation is asked to designate a Sunday in May to receive a special "love offering" in support of the Engage Fund. Once collected, your congregation's pastor and lay member will bring your congregation's offering to annual conference and add it to all the other gifts collected from churches across the state during opening worship on the first day of conference.

A portion of this collection will support three upcoming opportunities for Upper New York's youth:

- **Buffalo 10 Scholarship-** a scholarship that honors the ten victims killed in a racially motivated shooting at the Jefferson Avenue Tops Supermarket in Buffalo on May 14, 2022. This scholarship is designed to help youth in the greater Buffalo-area complete their college education.
- **Mission of Peace-** an annual journey of discovery and Shalom to nations in our global community. The goal is to send up to four young people each year to share this experience.
- **National and International Initiatives-** helps youth attendees deepen their faith experience through United Methodist National Youth Gathering and Exploration. In 2025, Bishop Héctor A. Burgos Núñez is leading a pilgrimage to Africa University and would like up to four young people to experience a ministry born

out of the radical generosity and faithfulness of United Methodists and others.

Another portion will remain in the Engage Fund as seed money for future needs and opportunities. Moving forward, the goal is to raise \$500,000 by the end of 2025 to generate a permanent source of income for next-generation initiatives. These initiatives would include resourcing for leaders and congregations for ministries with children, youth, and young adults, leadership development for youth and young adults, and amplifying our capacity to send young people to connectional spiritual and leadership development gatherings. The fund would also supplement our ongoing efforts with Mission of Peace, with a particular emphasis on people of color. We also want to double the capacity of the Buffalo 10 Scholarship, a key area where the Engage Fund could make a significant impact. Look for more information on how you and your congregation can play a part in this bold and vital initiative to invest in our youth.

But you can start investing **today** by generously giving to your congregation's annual conference love offering. Your pastor and/or lay leader will share details on how your congregation will do this.

Make checks out to your church and write "Engage Fund" in the memo line. Thank you for investing in tomorrow's leaders.

A Message from the Bishop

Scan the QR code with the camera on your mobile device to watch a video message from Upper New York Area Resident Bishop, Héctor Burgos Núñez as he introduces the Engage Fund to the Upper New York Conference.

