

Re: Upper New York Annual Conference

January 9, 2015

A Collaborative Partnership to Be and Make Disciples

The Council of Bishops in late 2009 requested the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits (GBPHB) and the General Council on Finance and Administration (GCFA) provide annual conferences of The United Methodist Church (UMC) with a Financial Advisory Consulting Team—known as FACT—to help conferences assess their current financial situation. Based on the general agencies' day-to-day work throughout the connection, FACT researches, shares best practices and makes recommendations to help conferences best reach their desired strategic goals. Bishop Mark Webb of the Upper New York Annual Conference (UNYAC) engaged FACT in June 2014. FACT, under the leadership of Bishop Bruce Blake, then worked closely with a diverse and representative group of UNYAC members. This "FACT Report" hereby presents our collaborative findings and recommendations.

FACT often finds that UMC conferences are merely operating, not really knowing where they are headed; and even when they do know what they would like to accomplish—their vision or mission—most conferences have not done the hard work of detailing a strategic map toward actual achievement. Not so in the UNYAC! FACT was pleasantly surprised to find both a realistic vision and detailed mission map in process. UNYAC's vision and mission map are based on input from UNYAC members during the "Bishop's Days in the Districts," Bishop Webb's visits to the local churches, and his collaboration with various clergy and laity teams and committees throughout the conference. The current version of UNYAC's Mission Map provides many strategic steps that, when successfully implemented, will result in its members living the mission and achieving the vision:

"To live the Gospel of Jesus Christ and be God's love for our neighbors in all places!"

FACT's typical process results in a report that begins with the most critical success factor: clear vision and strategic planning. In the case of the UNYAC, however, we chose to deviate from that practice, recognizing that the UNYAC is already well on its way to formulating a vision statement and plan.

It is the judgment of FACT that the Mission Map, which Bishop Webb has been developing in consultation with UNYAC leadership and members, provides the foundation for the vision that has the potential to unify the UNYAC. For this vision to be experienced and fully realized, many persons need to be involved in the continuing development of the Mission Map so it can become accepted and embraced as the strategic plan for the UNYAC. Bishop Webb would like, and FACT supports, further refinement and buy-in of the vision and Mission Map. He reports that he has waited intentionally for FACT's results before leading forward to a final version of the Mission Map. FACT's detailed assessment of the collaborative nature of the work completed thus far further supports FACT modifying its normal process and instead providing direct feedback and recommendations that further enhance the UNYAC's Mission Map.

This report reflects the opinions of FACT members, but not necessarily the views of their conferences or general agencies.

A strategic plan is essential to address many of the dilemmas identified in the September 13, 2014, meeting between FACT and the designated leaders of the UNYAC. When a strategic plan is in place, it becomes a standard and measuring principle with which every component of the life of the annual conference is assessed. In other words, whether or not an existing program is continued is determined on the basis of whether or not it is aligned with the strategic plan. Whether or not a new program is adopted is determined on the same basis.

Therefore FACT recommends the following:

The Mission Map in its current state as a single document drafted by the UNYAC should be split into two documents to form a: 1) Mission Statement, and 2) Mission Map. The Mission Statement document would contain the first portion of the UNYAC's present document, including content through the *Our Core Values* section. The Mission Map, the second document, would contain the strategic steps and metrics.

The Mission Statement will allow UNYAC members to more easily understand, appreciate and embrace the evolving mission of the conference and local churches. The Mission Map will describe details, methods and means by which the UNYAC will accomplish its Mission Statement.

FACT recommends that the Mission Map, guided by the Mission Statement, become the strategic plan for the UNYAC and that the Conference Leadership Team, the Extended Cabinet and the Leadership and Administrative Ministry Oversight Team (MOT) review, amend for improvement, and present the revised Mission Statement for adoption at the 2015 annual conference session. Between November 2014 and April 2015, the process of review, amendment and recommendation will be communicated throughout UNYAC so that the conference will be aware of the significant action that will be proposed to the 2015 annual conference session.

This process will enable more leaders and members of the UNYAC to be a part of the strategic plan's creation—thus helping avoid the predictable reaction of reservation and sometimes negativity to a strategic plan that is merely "handed down" by leadership. Presuming annual conference session approval of the strategic plan in spring 2015, the plan will become the standard for assessing every decision for the 2017-2020 Quadrennium, including every component of the UNYAC budget. FACT will be available to consult with those who review, amend and recommend action to the 2015 annual conference as well as those budget-building agencies of the annual conference that will, for the first time, have a common reference on which to base their decisions.

The members of the UNYAC and its four predecessor conferences have been through a lot of changes: changes in leadership, processes, culture, etc. ... and the loss of old and comfortable ways. It is the assessment of FACT that in a new annual conference unity can be a difficult but essential ingredient if it is to leave its past and move into the future. Certainly, open and honest conversations must become part of the UNYAC culture.

Furthermore, earlier practices and previous lack of transparency since the unification of the UNYAC—particularly financial reporting—have understandably caused erosion in trust. Fortunately, trust has begun to be restored—a process that will continue. FACT observes a sense of urgency that is both essential and evident in UNYAC members, especially its leaders. We are reminded of Leonardo da Vinci's "I have been impressed with the urgency of doing. Knowing is not enough; we must apply. Being willing is not enough; we must do!"

Mission Statement

“Living Into the Vision”

A *MISSION MAP* for the
Upper New York Annual Conference of
The United Methodist Church

*** January 9, 2015 Version ***

INTRODUCTION

In the Executive Summary of *The Plan of Union of The Upper New York Annual Conference* adopted on June 19, 2010, it states: “The Plan of Union provides the practical outline for how [the union] will be done in accordance with our polity and the 2008 *Book of Discipline*. It is designed to be organic; providing a framework for the unification, while permitting change as we further discern God’s will and how our Annual Conference will grow into the future.”

This strategic document intends to build upon the foundation laid in *The Plan of Union* and assist us to move forward as God leads us in effectively fulfilling our purpose as the people of God called United Methodists. This document is intended to guide the immediate and future work of the Upper New York Conference Leadership Team, the Cabinet and other appropriate committees, teams and agencies of the annual conference. It is meant to be a roadmap for creating a culture and cultivating an environment that allows the people of God known as United Methodists in the Upper New York Annual Conference to boldly live as the Church of Jesus Christ.

DEFINING KEY TERMS

Before we examine the mission, purpose and tasks of our annual conference, it is important to define some key terms: 1) Disciple of Jesus Christ; 2) Transformational Leader; and 3) Vital Congregation. These terms effectively name the fruit (outcomes) we seek through our ministries. Put simply, all that follows in this document is aimed at increasing the number of disciples of Jesus Christ, transformational leaders and vital congregations for the Glory of God and the benefit of God’s people.

- A **Disciple of Jesus Christ** is a person who confesses faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, continues to be transformed by the grace of God, engages in life-long practices of learning and spiritual formation to follow Jesus, while boldly connecting with the world around them to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ and serve like Jesus, with urgency and love for the transformation of the world.
- A **Transformational Leader** is a disciple of Jesus Christ who acknowledges the call of God—*clergy and laity*—and the gifts for ministry that have been given to them, while continuing to be open to the refining work of the Holy Spirit. They assess the gifts and needs of the

congregation and community, set courageous vision and goals for ministry and equip the congregation to make new disciples and further develop all disciples through relevant worship, vital faith formation, life changing mission and radical giving of time, talent and resources. A transformational leader helps the people of God discover the movement of God's Spirit in their lives and the life of the community around them.

- A **Vital Congregation** is inwardly transformed and outwardly focused. Vital congregations are Spirit-filled, forward leaning communities of believers (disciples) that grow, both numerically and spiritually over time, welcome all people (Galatians 3.28); make more disciples of Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28.18-20) and serve the world radically like Christ, through life-changing ministry and mission that build up the community of faith and transform lives and social conditions in the community and world (Micah 6.8 and Luke 4.17-21). A vital congregation joins God in the work that God is already doing. Vital churches have powerful stories, measurable fruitfulness and life changing ministries. Markers of a vital congregation include:
 - Inviting and inspiring worship
 - Presence of disciples
 - Engaged disciples in mission and outreach
 - Gifted, empowered and equipped lay leadership
 - Effective, equipped and inspired clergy leadership
 - Small group ministries
 - Strong children's & youth ministries
 - Generous giving

OUR CURRENT REALITY

This strategic document emerges¹ in response to many of the same longings which inspired the original *Plan of Union*:

- To hear God's voice and feel the pulse of God's heart.
- To align our conversations, practices and behaviors with what God is doing in us, among us and with our neighbors.
- To remember, reclaim and rejoice in our core identity as followers of Jesus Christ.
- To communicate the good news of Jesus Christ with clarity, conviction and compassion with all people in all places.
- To share life and ministry in partnership with neighbors and communities, connecting one another to the good news of Jesus Christ.

¹ This document is the fruit of conversations between members of the Upper New York Conference in 2013-2014: Bishop's Days on the Districts in the spring and fall of 2013; joint meetings of the Conference Leadership Team and Extended Cabinet in the fall of 2013; the spring 2014 meeting of the Connectional Table; and the Finance and Administrative Team leaders gathering in the spring of 2014.

But it is also based on a clear-eyed assessment of the current reality of the mission, purpose and ministries annual conference and its congregations². As stated in the *Plentiful Harvest* document, United Methodists in Upper New York are alarmed by years of numerical and spiritual decline, yet hopeful that we will, with God and each other's help, reverse this trend and become vital congregations—both new faith communities and renewed existing congregations—extend United Methodist witness by “living the Gospel of Jesus Christ and being God's love with our neighbors in all places.” Indeed, our success or failure as an Annual Conference may be measured in terms of how fearlessly, effectively and tenaciously we undertake this challenge.

Given the current reality of our conference, we are convinced we must change the way we are doing ministry in order to be faithful to our calling and fruitful in our work. This document is offered as a strategic road map to identify and guide the steps needed to make these changes.

The current reality of the UNYAC is further detailed in the dilemmas (defined as conditions/issues that, if not addressed, will result in the conference's decline or even demise) that have financial implications. Dilemmas with financial implications—direct or indirect—were identified and prioritized by 21 UNYAC members who participated in initial interviews and face-to-face meetings with FACT members.

Nineteen identified UNYAC dilemmas are presented below in unedited form (the numbers in parenthesis indicate votes received as part of the prioritization process):

- Deficiency of effective leadership (7)
- Quality of pastoral leadership (1)
- Equipping leaders for context: leaders are not equipped to lead congregations in our current world/reality; inability to recruit younger and ethnically diverse pastoral leaders (5)
- Lack of education and understanding of connectional giving (9)
- Significant lack of trust—local church and the conference—Full Cabinet (DS, Executive Staff, Conference Lay Leader) as well as Conference Office Staff (8)
- Corporate depression: reality of grief work from creation of new conference versus a willingness to stay in a victim mentality. This reality affects every area of our mission/ministry, including willingness to provide financial resources (1)
- Apathy about the Church, about the clergy-church-conference connection (4)

² *The Conference will partner with the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits (GBPHB) and the General Council on Finance and Administration (GCFA) to form a Financial Advisory Consulting Team—known as FACT—to assess our current assets and liabilities, future needs, and steps necessary to reach our goals. It will also produce two demographic studies, one focused on our churches and the other on the neighborhoods and communities in which they are situated and serve. From these studies, we will seek to gain clarity about whom we are, where (and with whom) we live, and what we have to share as we live into our vision.*

Note: The boxed text within the Mission Map reflects feedback from the first FACT meeting, held September 13, 2014, in Syracuse, N.Y.

- There is a conflict between how the local church and conference understand their mutual covenant (2)
- Impact of geography: communication, relationships, deployment: geographical size of conference creates barriers including communication, developing relationships and creating trust that then impacts ownership of a common mission which impacts giving to ministry shares. Upper New York has still not found its identity (4)
- Lack of clear and sufficient data to support decisions (9)
 - E.g., Climbing/exploding operating expenses
 - E.g., There is confusion and conflict around level of conference staff salaries and the value added by conference staff.
- There are significant challenges related to how we are funding our pension and health benefits challenges (4)
- Disconnect between spiritual relevance and financial behavior (8)
- Lack of evangelism (2)
- Vision and Spiritual condition: We have a mission problem and a vision problem. Ultimately a spiritual problem. We are more focused on our preferences and our problems than on listening for God's call and guidance. Inability to communicate purpose of annual conference and provide the narrative around our shared purpose. Churches struggle to understand their purpose and if they do get the purpose they struggle with the paradigm shift required for ministry in the 21st-century world (7)
- Does our structure and the decisions it makes reflect an organization looking to expand UM presence in UNY or preserve existing congregation? How do we respond in a way that enables us to truly live out our mission? (2)
- Casual attitude toward relationship with Christ, including "privatistic" nature of our culture (2)
- Not communicating effectively enough for understanding and participation (11)
- Paradigm shift: We have not identified the metrics and guiding questions that define vitality, transformation and guide accountability. Annual Conference has not made the paradigm shift in structure and practice of living the purpose of the AC (4)
- Alignment of resources toward building/away from life-support: a large number of declining congregations, resulting in a greater inability to effectively accomplish the mission and reduces resources that are available through ministry shares. This also impacts through a need to subsidize congregations with resources that could be used in other ways (3)

THE MISSION OF THE LOCAL CHURCH

At the heart of our vision for a faithful and fruitful United Methodist Church in Upper New York are the mission and ministry of the local church. Annual Conferences do not make disciples; local churches do. The conference can help make the local churches better.

Although the mission and ministry of the local church are reflected throughout the whole of the Biblical account, these passages of Scripture are foundational³:

The Great Commandment—to love the Lord our God with all of our heart, soul, and mind and to love our neighbor as ourselves. (Matthew 22.36-40)

The Great Commission—to go into all the world and make disciples of all nations. (Matthew 28.16-20)

The Church—All the believers were united and shared everything. They would sell pieces of property and possessions and distribute the proceeds to everyone who needed them. Every day, they met together in the temple and ate in their homes. They shared food with gladness and simplicity. They praised God and demonstrated God's goodness to everyone. The Lord added daily to the community those who were being saved. (Acts 2.44-47)

The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church defines the mission of the local church this way in ¶120:

The mission of the Church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. Local Churches provide the most significant arena through which disciple making occurs.

The function of the local church as defined in ¶202 of *The Book of Discipline* of The United Methodist Church continues to assist our understanding of the mission we share:

The church of Jesus Christ exists in and for the world. It is primarily at the level of the charge consisting of one or more local churches that the church encounters the world. The local church is a strategic base from which Christians move out to the structures of society. The function of the local church, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, is to help people to accept and confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and to live their daily lives in light of their relationship with God. Therefore, the local church is to minister to persons in the community where the church is located, to provide appropriate training and nurture to all, to cooperate in ministry with other local churches, to defend God's creation and live as an ecologically responsible community, and to participate in the worldwide mission of the church, as minimal expectations of an authentic church.

³ Other passages noted: Isaiah 49:6; Micah 6:8; Matthew 5:13-16; John 21:15-17; Acts 1:8

THE PURPOSE OF THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE

As United Methodists, we seek to enhance and expand the mission and ministries of local churches by joining together as an annual conference. *The Book of Discipline* in ¶601 defines the purpose of the annual conference as:

to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world by equipping its local churches for ministry and by providing a connection for ministry beyond the local church; all to the glory of God.”

In fulfilling this purpose, the primary tasks of the Upper New York Annual Conference are to:

- ✓ Recruit, train, equip and deploy transformational clergy and lay leadership so that our congregations will joyfully and faithfully live out the vision of UNY.
- ✓ Resource our local churches with effective tools and practices for effective disciple-making in the 21st century, and re-forming the church for vitality, relevance and fruitfulness.
- ✓ Nurture a planting culture where people are recognizing the movement of the Spirit in their neighborhoods to plant new communities of faith; and, provide the training, support and resources needed for people to plant new, sustainable communities of faith.
- ✓ Align resources to support the purpose of the annual conference and the mission of the local church and implement a system of accountability for mission and ministry at all levels.
- ✓ Communicate how we share a common mission as United Methodist Christians in the 21st century.

OUR CORE VALUES

Though we aspire to be guided by many significant values, only a few—our core values—“lie at the heart of the organization’s identity, do not change over time, and must already exist. In other words, they cannot be contrived.”⁴

The core values of the Upper New York Conference are:

- **Centrality of the Local Church**—“The local church provides the most significant arena through which disciple-making occurs.” (¶201)—Mission happens at the local church.
- **Connectionalism**—“We are connected by sharing a common tradition of faith ... a constitutional polity ... a common mission ... a common ethos that characterizes our distinctive way of doing things.” (¶132)—We do big things together.
- **Partnership of Laity and Clergy**—“The United Methodist tradition has recognized that laypersons as well as ordained persons are gifted and called by God to lead the Church.” (¶134)—The power of partnership.

⁴ Lencioni, Patrick. *The Advantage*, Jossey-Bass, 2012. pp 93-94.

We seek to be known and defined by other values, too. These aspirational values help define how we intend to live and work together as we grow into the people God longs for us to be. Among these values are:

- The amazing grace of God available to all
- The gift and necessity of transformational leadership
- Ministries with the poor, the marginalized and those yet to meet Christ
- An intentionally diverse community open to all persons
- Worship which engages the hearts and minds of diverse people
- Continuous learning and risk-taking ministry
- Decision making based upon the discernment of God's leading
- Our connectional church and Wesleyan heritage⁵
- A balance between adaptive and technical approaches to leadership and ministry⁶

OUR DESIRED OUTCOMES

When outcomes are specified and focused on, it must be understood that outcomes can be influenced but cannot be controlled. On the other hand, effort (inputs) can and must be managed. It is necessary that the inputs be identified: What type and level of resources—inputs—are being committed to achieve the desired outcomes? For example, is the intensity of the effort “worth it” to realize the desired outcomes? Is the quantity of resources appropriate for achieving target results? Furthermore, a team cannot control whether or not they will win. They can only control the effort required to do their best, which will enhance their opportunity to win. When the emphasis is on winning, rather than on effort, less will always be accomplished.

After controlling the inputs, both the outputs, and more importantly the outcomes, should be assessed against the strategic plan; and then the inputs are modified (or cancelled if appropriate) to optimize the outcomes to achieve the strategic plan and mission.

While our desired outcomes for the ministry of the Upper New York Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church are disciples of Jesus Christ, transformational leaders and vital congregations, specific markers of these outcomes must continually be identified and measured. Some of our current markers include the areas of:

- Transformational Leaders
- Vital Congregations
- Neighborhoods

⁵ See “Our Distinctive Heritage as United Methodists,” The Book of Discipline 2012, pp. 49–54.

⁶ Adaptive leadership recognizes there are basically two kinds of problems that people confuse when trying to find solutions. First, there are “technical problems” where an adequate response has been developed; there are one or more experts with general credibility and an established procedure will suffice. ... The problem is more mechanical and someone can “fix” it. The second kind of problems is “adaptive problems” where there are no set procedures, no recognized experts, and no adequate responses developed... The problem definition is not clear cut and technical fixes are unavailable. It calls for adaptive leadership where the leader does not have the answers. Instead, the leader has to orient people to their places and roles, control conflict, and establish and maintain norms in order to orchestrate people working together to find new solutions that will succeed. (From <http://www.conservationleadership.org/index.php?section=overview-adaptive-leadership-defined>).

See the *Markers of Our Desired Outcomes* section in this Mission Map for specific markers in the above areas as well as the *Signs and Measures of Transformation* section for signs of transformation in leaders and congregations that will help the UNYAC know we are living into our vision as we approach 2020.

LIVING INTO THE VISION

It is our conviction and hope that as we live together our common mission and carry out the purpose of the annual conference through our primary task(s), we will create an environment that will allow us to experience God's preferred present and future and we will more fully live out the vision we have established for The Upper New York Annual Conference:

"To live the Gospel of Jesus Christ and be God's love for our neighbors in all places."



Mission Map

Based on synthesis of survey interviews, data trends and analysis, and the dilemmas that surfaced from the September 13 meeting, FACT identified several critical dilemma categories to be addressed by the UNYAC:

1. Unidentified depth of leadership
2. Ignorance and/or ambiguity concerning United Methodist ethos
3. Lack of or no evidence of trust
4. Lack of alignment and transparency of financial resources
5. Lack of communication within the conference
6. Process needed to implement the Mission Map

One of FACT's primary roles is to listen; and to take previous discussions of dilemmas out of the backroom, if any, and project them to the front of the room for all to see and work on. Doing so is part of best practice transparency and building trust through trustworthiness. Our recommendations are formulated keeping in mind that many of the identified dilemmas are also "adaptive challenges" facing the conference (i.e., the type of work in which the conference as a whole needs to learn new skills, attitudes and behaviors in order to make progress on the work at hand). In each identified recommendation to address these dilemmas, FACT offers "solutions"—some which have been successful for other UMC conferences facing similar challenges. The recommendations include action plans to address dilemmas on a holistic basis beyond the simple financial or technological fixes. FACT believes that we can thereby assist in creating lasting change.

Below, FACT has aligned the *Strategic Steps to Accomplish Our Task* into FACT's critical dilemma categories. In some instances, we have included the same strategic step in more than one category based on appropriateness. FACT has developed several recommendations within each dilemma category based on prioritizing the strategic steps. While all the strategic steps are important, it is best practice to prioritize and sequence the work for fruitful and self-sustaining results.

STRATEGIC STEPS TO ACCOMPLISH OUR TASK

Grounded in the values and guided by the *Holy Spirit and the* primary tasks of the Upper New York Annual Conference, the following general strategic steps will be developed.

Dilemma 1: Unidentified depth of leadership

Dilemmas input from September 13 FACT meeting

- Quality of pastoral leadership
- Deficiency of effective leadership. These strategic steps address dilemmas concerning effective leadership. As the process for review, amendment and recommendation takes place, interested persons with leadership qualities will be discovered. Research has shown that the primary factor in leadership is passion. To be passionate requires motivation. The key to motivation is clarity of task. In a new annual conference, clarity of a common task is missing. Therefore, motivation is missing. Therefore there is no passion, which results in ineffective or nonexistent leadership.
- Equipping leaders for context: Leaders are not equipped to lead congregations in our current world/reality; inability to recruit younger and ethnically diverse pastoral leaders.

Observations

“Successful churches/pastors/leaders are willing to do what unsuccessful churches/pastors/leaders are unwilling to do,” “Are you willing to do ‘whatever-it-takes’? Most congregations won’t unless they have a leader who will.”—UMC Reverend Adam Hamilton, *Church of the Resurrection, Leawood, Kansas*

FACT believes that one of the greatest resources of the UNYAC is the positive feeling focused toward the leadership of Bishop Webb and the hope for the future that his assignment to the Upper New York Episcopal Area provides. His valued leadership and fresh perspective post-unification are assets that must continue to be leveraged as a way to further enhance and accelerate the transformation of the UNYAC. This positive feeling can be utilized to open the door to greater trust, better morale and a renewed sense of the value of the Connection, so the conference can move quickly to capitalize on those positive and hopeful feelings.

Developing Leaders

One of the key differences between those churches that are highly vital and those that are not is effective clergy and lay leadership. The UNYAC needs to develop a comprehensive plan to equip leaders for the future.

FACT Recommendations

Recommendation 1.1: Develop and implement a process of clergy recruitment, enlistment, licensing, commissioning and ordination.

The Conference Leadership Team (CLT), working closely with the UNYAC Board of Ordained Ministry, and must establish a program to attract, develop and retain transformational leaders, with specific attention given to developing transformational leaders of color.

Recommendation 1.2: Develop a culture of lifelong clergy learning and leadership excellence.

FACT believes that one of the best ways to increase vital ministry in the UNYAC is to invest time, energy and money in learning models that improve the effectiveness of clergy leaders. The cabinet needs to partner with the Conference Board of Ordained Ministry to provide resources for leadership development for clergy at every stage of ministry. Other UMC conferences have been effective by focusing on different clergy development needs in the early years of ministry, the later years of one’s ministry, and the years in between. This includes training processes that will provide for healthy self-care, equipping clergy for transitions in ministry, and enabling practical skill development for leading local congregations, including how to empower a healthy partnership between clergy and laity in local church ministry. Incentives for clergy participation (such as locations where clergy and spouses can also experience some renewal time at minimal expense to the clergy family) can foster a more positive feeling for participating and less perception of these opportunities as being mandates from on high. Resources for leadership development for both clergy and laity should be easily accessible on UNYAC’s website.

Recommendation 1.3: Establish, communicate and support an understanding of the roles and expectations of laity.

Laity are key assets of the denomination, and are all-too-often underutilized throughout the Connection. Conference leadership—both lay and clergy (to be identified at the UNYAC meeting on November 22)—must be willing to support and hold congregations and each other accountable for achieving those expectations.

FACT recommends that the cabinet consider new appointment-making strategies that can use clergy deployment as a means of enhancing the role of laity, particularly in small congregations. We recommend this include larger circuits with individual congregations led and pastored by their lay members under supervision of an elder. This enhanced formalization of laity appointments and roles can be an important part of the cabinet's work in identifying and establishing congregations that are financially sustainable.

FACT identifies three steps for beginning this process:

1. Establish a specific, challenging, conference-wide statement—to be signed—on the rights and responsibilities of laity that calls for a transition to high-commitment discipleship. FACT recommends that this statement or call reflect a well-rounded understanding of discipleship that includes the ministries of mercy, justice/witness and worship/prayer—including John Wesley's covenant prayer, devotion and learning. The statement also should include specific expectations for lay leaders on offering their prayers, presence, gifts, service and witness. We recommend the statement to be considered and approved by the UNYAC at its 2015 annual conference session.
2. Upon passage of the statement and through Fall 2015, FACT recommends that the UNYAC work through existing centers of strong lay leadership (perhaps Lay Servants and Lay Speakers, United Methodist Women, United Methodist Men, youth and those involved in leadership in young people's ministry, etc.)—where appropriate—to objectively assess which existing lay groups are most likely to adopt an understanding of discipleship that is perhaps different than their present ideas and practice. These identified lay leaders and others would then establish a network of lay advocates who can work with churches on increasing the level of commitment and quality of personal discipleship among the laity.
3. As part of a larger conference wide effort to establish goals and strategies for each congregation, we recommend that every church develop a plan for empowering the ministry of laity, including specific expectations on offering their prayers, presence, gifts, service and witness (examples might be an emphasis on Stephen Ministries, BeFriends Ministry, et. al.). This can be measured by specific laity hours performing this work, thereby freeing up clergy for more transformational leadership work.

Recommendation 1.4: The bishop and co-chairs of the Board of Ordained Ministry appoint a strategic personnel planning group whose purpose is to address expectations for holding clergy leadership accountable in the UNYAC.

This group—focused on building effective clergy leaders—must be comprised of lay persons who have experienced exceptional clergy leadership. (There are many laity who are lifelong United Methodists and have developed an understanding of clergy effectiveness. Many of these persons have served on district committees regarding the ministry and on conference Boards of Ordained Ministry.) Additionally, we recommend this planning group include clergy who have demonstrated maximum efforts of pastoral leadership in making disciples for the transformation of the world,

as well as clergy who have shown growth in skills and effectiveness over the course of their ministry careers.

It is recommended that this group be no larger than nine persons—to meet at least once a month and make their recommendations to a joint meeting of the cabinet and Board of Ordained Ministry no later than one month prior to the UNYAC's 2015 annual conference session.

It is recommended that the cabinet and Board of Ordained Ministry report to the executive session of the 2015 Annual Conference concerning the work of this committee if the recommendations are endorsed by the extended cabinet and Board. Furthermore, it is recommended that these expectations are monitored and measured, remedial or training efforts are prescribed and administered for clergy who don't meet the expectations, and the process is maintained until the clergyperson meets expectations or is exited from ministry.

Ineffective Clergy—Transitioning Out of Ministry

Many clergy who have been in ministry a while have worked through many changes in culture and in the Church, and some have adapted to change better than others. Still, FACT believes the shortest route to increasing overall effectiveness of clergy leadership is to work with those who have already given themselves into the covenant of the conference. We also understand that the improvement in skills required by the current ministry context will not be attainable by all who are presently deployed as clergy leaders. For this latter group, FACT recommends several options for gracefully transitioning out of local church ministry.

One method for dealing with the dilemma of ineffective clergy is being used successfully in the Indiana Annual Conference, which they named *Called Anew with Love*. This program is designed to help faltering clergy discern that their original calling to parish ministry may need to be re-examined, and then gives them financial assistance necessary to transition out of ministry. The Called Anew program asks: What does this clergyperson need to transition into a secular job given that he or she is somewhat dependent on the church for a parsonage and pension and health benefits; and what can the conference do to make transition out of ministry as practicable as possible for the pastor and family? The Missouri Annual Conference has a similar program, and we understand the UNYAC is working on its own such program. FACT encourages the UNYAC to study the Indiana and Missouri exiting programs and then modify their emerging program to what will be most effective and efficient within the UNYAC. Church history shows that many clergy and spouses who go through exiting programs wish they would have done so earlier.

Another potential resource for exiting ineffective clergy is the Voluntary Transition Program, which provides eligible clergy with a financially supported method for a grace-filled exit. The Voluntary Transition Program was adopted by General Conference 2012. It began in **January 1, 2013** and will terminate **December 31, 2020**. This program is administered through GBPHB.

For eligible clergy who choose to withdraw from ministry, the Voluntary Transition Program provides a career transition package that includes:

- Severance benefit based on current compensation and years of service
- Continuation of health benefits through the conference plan
- Continuation of active participant death benefit through the Comprehensive Protection Plan (CPP) if applicable during the Transition Period
- Access to outplacement services
- Moving expenses subject to conference policy

Clergy using the Voluntary Transition Program must:

- be in full connection and in good standing;
- enrolled in CPP for a minimum of five years, but not be within two years of eligibility for retirement benefits [under ¶358.2 (b) or (c)];
- have agreement from conference leadership [i.e., district superintendent, Board of Ordained Ministry (chair of Conference Relations Committee of the Board of Ordained Ministry) and bishop] following a consultation and leadership review;
- surrender their credentials (thereby severing the relationship with the associated annual conference); and
- sign the Voluntary Transition Program agreement.

Strategic Steps from the Mission Map

1. Recruit, train, equip and deploy transformational clergy and lay leadership so that our congregations will joyfully and faithfully live out the mission of Jesus Christ and the vision of UNY.

- Develop a “culture of the call” with a clear pathway for recruitment of individuals to ministry, both ordained and lay. This culture of the call will result in a higher percentage of young people and racial-ethnic minority people responding to God’s call to ministry, both ordained and lay, within the Upper New York Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church.
- Develop and continue a consistent process for screening and interviewing candidates for pastoral ministry through the work of the District Committees on Ministry and the Board of Ordained Ministry.
- Equip clergy and lay leaders to identify their strengths and growing edges and assist in providing consistent leadership development opportunities at district, regional and conference levels.⁷
- Appoint clergy leaders with mission as the primary focus, moving toward tenures of 8-10 years for all pastoral appointments.
- Develop a system of evaluation and accountability for clergy leaders, with a plan for growth, remedial mentoring and assisting individuals to live fully God’s call upon their lives.
- Develop an effective and compassionate process for exiting clergy who demonstrate a pattern of ineffectiveness or are sensing a call to something other than pastoral ministry.
- Develop a clear strategy for recruitment, assessment, training, deployment (appointment) and support of potential new faith community leaders.

⁷ e.g., *Hand to Plow, Emotional Quotient Training, Tending the Fire Training, StrengthFinders and other evaluation tools, spiritual formation opportunities, continuing education planning, peer learning groups, context-specific learning opportunities, district/regional training events (worship, preaching, small group formation, evangelism, prayer, community mission engagement and stewardship development.*

Dilemma 2: Ignorance and/or ambiguity concerning United Methodist ethos (“Methodism today”)

Dilemmas input from September 13 FACT meeting

- Dilemma: “We have a mission problem and a vision problem.” This process of review amendment and recommendation communicated throughout the annual conference will underscore the importance that personal preferences must be set aside so that God's call and guidance will be the determining factor of the life of the annual conference.
- Casual attitude toward relationship with Christ, including “privatistic” nature of our culture
- Lack of evangelism

Observations

One of Nobel Laureate and Statesman Dag Hammarskjöld's markings is "maturity is identity." One of the earliest discoveries as a consequence of any merger is the lack of common identity. Values and operating procedures that have been held in common in the previous entities suddenly become null and void—they are no longer applicable or productive. The consequence of this reality is that individuals and groups gravitate to that which is most familiar. Therefore, the newly merged entity is fragmented or at least struggles with common identity. If Hammarskjöld's marking is correct, the result is immature behavior reflected in inconsistency, lack of responsibility, and little or no investment. *This does not mean that persons in a newly merged organization are immature—it means that the organization is immature.*

UNYAC is an “immature” organization, created through the 2010 merger of four previously separate annual conferences. As the UNYAC dilemmas with financial implications were identified and confirmed during the FACT analysis, issues arose under the broad umbrella of faith, mission and vision. It is FACT's assessment that at the heart of the financially related dilemmas is a noticeable absence of emphasis on United Methodist ethos.

Ethos is distinct from doctrine and polity. United Methodist ethos includes practices that have their foundation in doctrine and are often expressed in polity.

In the UNYAC, there are several factors that contribute to this absence of emphasis on ethos. First, there is the states' rights philosophy, which prevails today in the United States culture. In the Church this translates to local church rights. Second is the number of local churches that are served by local pastors. Often, local pastors are not trained and educated concerning ethos. Third is the number of elders who did not attend United Methodist seminaries and often did not experience United Methodist ethos in their preparation for leadership. In the Upper New York Annual Conference 2011-2014 classes of clergy entering conference membership, fewer than half (39%) received their seminary education in United Methodist seminaries.

Central to United Methodist ethos is our practice of connectional life together. Many pastors who are in charge of ministry and mission in congregations identify with the local church rather than the conference where the membership resides and to whom they are accountable and who sent them to serve. Connectionalism is often referred to in terms of “top down” or “bottom up.” These pastors have a vertical understanding of connectional life, rather than a horizontal, “life together” perspective that would be more fruitful.

Therefore, FACT recommends four strategies to be enacted prior to addressing any other program or measurement strategies to enhance disciple-making in the 21st century. The UNYAC must first understand itself as a United Methodist expression of faithfulness—or it will become no different than any other denomination or non-denominational expression of Christian mission.

The practices (ethos) of ministry and mission in the Methodist tradition have proven effective in making disciples. This has been true historically in the United States and Europe, and currently in Africa and the Philippines. The UNYAC must discover, rediscover and utilize this identity in its life together.

Further supporting the conference values of diversity and the importance of diverse leadership, on September 19, 2014, ethnic minority pastors throughout the UNYAC met with the extended cabinet for worship, fellowship and conversation. FACT heartily endorses this important first step and encourages significant, focused follow-through. Its importance is further illustrated and supported by FACT's demographic slides and tables in the index.

FACT Recommendations

Recommendation 2.1: Include a 30-40 minutes educational experience on United Methodist ethos in every local church/charge or church conference for 2015, and thereafter as necessary.

District superintendents are responsible in leading or delegating leadership to others for every local church conference. FACT recommends that the cabinet be responsible for designing this common educational experience. This experience must include an emphasis on the core practices and contributions of The United Methodist Church. For example,

- We are a global experience of faith (not a national church).
- We delegate leadership responsibilities rather than centralize authority.
- We have a horizontal understanding of being connected (we do together what we cannot do separately).
- We are a sent, not called, ministry (the appointive system of clergy).

Recommendation 2.2: Create at least one team of laypersons in each district to be available to work with leaders in local congregations that either are not able or choose not to support the apportionments.

The criteria for selection of laypersons to be on this team must include a commitment to the apportionment system, history in local churches who support the apportionments, and available time to be trained and to meet with local churches. The district superintendent will be responsible for selection, training and deployment of this team. This team shall be recruited and trained by February 16, 2015 to be available to work with local churches that have not been able to support in full their apportionment in 2014. Many conferences have discovered that lay-to-lay dialogue creates the best climate for developing support for our common mission—rather than using local pastors or district superintendents as the sole advocates for apportionments, which can be perceived within the local church as self-serving promotion.

Recommendation 2.3: Develop a Fellowship of Local Pastors on the district, bi-district or tri-district level.

Because the UNYAC has a significant number of congregations served by local pastors, FACT recommends that the Board of Ministry develop a fellowship or team of local pastors on the district, bi-district or tri-district level. This configuration will be determined by the numbers of local pastors and proximity to each other in each district. This Fellowship of Local Pastors will meet at least quarterly to discover, rediscover and utilize the genius of United Methodist ethos in local church ministry. The Board of Ordained Ministry will be responsible for naming a leadership team for each district or regional section of local pastors, and will name one person from its membership to be the coordinator of these teams. These teams will include elders, laity and local pastors from the district or regional sections. This strategy will ensure that this vital and important group of clergy serving local congregations will be supported and continue to be a vital component of the connection of leadership in the UNYAC. It also will enable the local pastors to serve with clarity concerning what it means to be a United Methodist clergy and a United Methodist congregation. ¶323 of *The Book of Discipline* requires the annual conference to have a Fellowship of Local Pastors. The responsibilities of the Board of Ordained Ministry for the Fellowship and the relationship of the Fellowship with the Board is clarified in ¶306 and 6351a of *The Book of Discipline*.

Recommendation 2.4: Develop the Order of Deacons and the Order of Elders in the annual conference.

FACT recommends that the bishop and the Board of Ordained Ministry implement the provisions of ¶306 and 635.1a in the development of these Orders. In the UNYAC, these Orders are the best vehicle to create an ongoing learning environment for the full members of the annual conference concentrating on United Methodist ethos. To be an ongoing learning environment, the Orders must meet more than once a year. The requirement of these Orders was first adopted at the 1996 General Conference. The case for this requirement was that clergy must be connected in covenant with each other, which is more than an administrative relationship. These Orders can be the core experience which provides an understanding of what is different about the United Methodist witness, i.e., how we practice our faith (our ethos) together. The fact that deacons and elders have their church membership located in the annual conference, not the local church, means that their vows of membership are expressed in their commitment to the mission and ministry of the annual conference. For deacons and elders to support the annual conference with their prayers, presence, gifts, service and witness can clarify for the whole body of the UNYAC the identity of the mission and ministry of the conference.

In summary, following implementation of these four recommendations above in 2015, FACT encourages the conference leadership to institute a variety of programs and measuring instruments to strengthen congregational and pastoral effectiveness in making disciples for the transformation of the world, such as the strategic steps listed below. Discovery and rediscovery of United Methodist ethos must occur first; only then can these proposed programs and measurements be received with understanding and commitment. There must be a foundation on which to build the future of the annual conference. FACT submits these recommendations as a foundation for the future.

Strategic Steps from the Mission Map

2. Resource our local churches with effective tools and practices for effective disciple-making in the 21st century, and re-forming the church for vitality, relevance and fruitfulness.

- Equip congregations in ways of understanding ministry context and asking the questions that reveal what God is already doing in and around them. Utilize tools like MissionInsite⁸.
- Equip and assist congregations to clarify focus, mission and purpose and develop behaviors and practices that will increase their core identity and Gospel influence within the community.
- Continue to develop Hand to Plow and similar/other consultation processes that assist congregations in moving to the next level in ministry and mission.
- Develop an effective and compassionate process to assist highly distressed congregations to identify a faithful path toward achieving closure and leaving legacy.
- Develop/Identify resources for small, medium and large membership churches.
- Develop coaching network to work with congregations.
- Develop teaching churches/teams to offer best practices.

3. Nurture a planting culture where people are recognizing the movement of the Spirit in their neighborhoods to plant new communities of faith; and provide the training, support and resources needed for people to plant new, sustainable communities of faith.

- Produce a demographic study of the annual conference to identify areas that have no United Methodist presence or areas that are currently under-served by The United Methodist Church or other Christian churches.
- Partner with communications team to tell the stories of new faith communities which inspire others to plant new things in their own neighborhoods
- Develop a clear strategy for recruitment, assessment, training, deployment (appointment) and support of potential new faith community leaders.
- Develop a financial plan for funding of new faith community work.
- Utilize a range of strategies for new faith communities that include: multiple campus, additional worship services, partner/parent churches, church within a church, Elijah/Elisha, ethnic-minority, small group micro-community networks, closed/reopened facility, vital-mergers, and classic missionary strategies.
- Develop clear benchmarks and strategy for ending a new faith community project.

⁸ MissionInsite is a web-based demographics provider for local church use. In planning ministry, it is important to know the context. MissionInsite provides demographic data that is updated on a regular basis, and the reports are user friendly to the novice or experienced demographer. The reports are free to the local church because the annual conference is under contract with MissionInsite. But in order to access the website you will need to register your local church. <http://www.unyumc.org/pages/detail/1395>. Similar services as also offered by GCFA and GBGM.

Dilemma 3: Lack of or no evidence of trust

Dilemmas input from September 13 FACT meeting

- Significant lack of trust—local church and the conference—Full Cabinet (DS, Executive Staff, Conference Lay Leader) as well as Conference Office Staff
- Impact of Geography: communication, relationships, deployment; geographical size of conference creates barriers including communication, developing relationships and creating trust that then impacts ownership of a common mission, which impacts giving to ministry shares. UNYAC has still not found its identity.

Observations

Change can be tough on people. While change offers the hope of new and better, it can be difficult to lose the comfort of what was. Merging conferences is no different, and unifying four smaller predecessor conferences into one can be even more difficult. Therefore, FACT was not surprised when we heard and saw signs of anxiety, some of which have grown into distrust. Much of this distrust appears targeted at the annual conference organization and its leaders. A lack of trust between clergy, local churches and the conference restricts the growth of the new relationships needed for effective ministry. Furthermore, a critical component of trust is openness and honesty. Conversations—and invitations to conversations—must be grounded in openness and honesty to engender trust between clergy, local churches and the conference.

Primary drivers of distrust in organizations, including United Methodist conferences, include:

- Poor, incomplete or absent effective communication
- Effects of past or current untrustworthy behaviors

Additionally in the UNYAC, distrust appears to have been specifically compounded by the absence of transparency in financial reporting as the new conference struggled for several years consolidating the old accounts.

Restoring trust can be difficult, yet the steps to restoring trust are relatively simple—although they usually take more time than one might expect or hope. Trust is only experienced as trustworthiness is discovered. This discovery does not occur in the life of a group. It occurs only in one-to-one relationships. Therefore to address lack of trust within the UNYAC, one-to-one relations must be fostered among leaders and followers in the life of the annual conference. Because persons who distrust one another seldom volunteer to be in one-to-one relationships, FACT makes the recommendations described below. Remember that trust requires time; time creates presence; presence provides understanding; understanding leads to acceptance; and acceptance is the miracle of grace, which is the Christian prerequisite for trust. The recommendations below are offered because programs, strategies, proclamations, etc. do not create trust. Relationships are the foundation of trust. The lifestyle of the conference must change to enable relationships of trust to be experienced.

FACT Recommendations

To address the current lack of trust dilemma and build the necessary trust for moving forward, FACT recommends the following:

Recommendation 3.1: Publicly and privately admit that there has been a problem with trust.

Admitting a problem is difficult for some, but naming and claiming it is the first step for all in correcting the problem. Conference leaders, staff and committees must tell the stories that the community has in common—particularly the past and painful stories—and must name the negative consequence for trustworthiness that the church now experiences. Show by being precise, graphic and clear that new leaders know the source of old hurts, and then be equally clear that the ghosts of the collective past are put behind.

Recommendation 3.2: Publicly and privately apologize for the past distrust.

Having conference leaders, staff and committees apologize demonstrates that the conference staff and its leadership are both empathetic and accountable (among others throughout the conference); two strong qualities that foster mutuality and support. This, in turn, accelerates the building of trust. One example of a possible message could be:

We hear, know and experience that some trust had been lost throughout the conference, including the last few years as we've all struggled to grow into our new conference. Restoring and maintaining trust is vital to moving forward. And while the cause of this distrust can stem from many parts of the conference (be it the conference leadership, conference staff, conference committees, local church leadership or membership), we the undersigned sincerely apologize for any distrust our actions or inactions may have inadvertently caused. We hereby commit to build that critical trust by being trustworthy—in all our words (spoken and written) and deeds. We look forward to partnering with you in helping restore trust among God's people as we do His work.

Those sentiments could both be written and spoken over the next few weeks or months as the Mission Statement and Mission Map are shared, finalized and implemented.

Recommendation 3.3: Commit to restoring and then maintaining trust.

Intentionally view every action, spoken word and written correspondence (including e-mails, texts, etc.) as an opportunity to demonstrate and build your or your committee's trustworthiness by carrying out, delivering on and living up to your actions, spoken words and written correspondence. Further, do so in a timely manner. A remedy for a trust deficit cannot lie in demanding renewed trust from those with whom trust has been eroded. Trust is created when individuals choose to fill relationships with their own acts of trustworthiness—large or small—over time. No action or event is too insignificant to be an opportunity to build trust.

FACT knows one of the best and easiest ways to overcome the trustworthiness factor is simply to be straightforward and to manage expectations. (For example, when you can't make the original "deadline," let the other party know in advance.) Thus:

- Miss no opportunity to set reachable expectations and then meet them.

- Leave constituents pleasantly surprised by the promptness with which the conference office responds to inquiries and requests. Customer service work rules can be devised for all, and in leadership's prompt responsiveness to all communications. For example, establishing a simple administrative rule that all incoming correspondence will be answered within one business day and all staff who cannot answer a question will be responsible to find the answer within two business days (after managing the expectation of the caller/e-mailer) goes a long way to prove trustworthiness.

Recommendation 3.4: Leverage trust gained from financial transparency.

A clear and high standard of transparency is relevant here. The interviews FACT conducted revealed widespread appreciation for significant improvement in financial transparency. Indeed, the UNYAC has experienced directly the positive consequences for the trustworthiness of the whole enterprise by enhancing the trustworthiness of one aspect: its financial transparency. Using that telling example, the UNYAC should extend that learning to other aspects of its work.

Recommendation 3.5: Explain the “why,” not just the “what.”

FACT also heard testimony that decisions have been announced without disclosure of their rationale; that is, “No one explained the why.” Many people distrust one another or their committees/cabinet, Council on Finance and Administration (CF&A), Board of Ministry, Conference Board of Pensions (CBOP), etc., because they either feel the others are not being trustworthy or they don't know why others act or decide as they do.

The standard for transparency is not “only as transparent as required,” but “how much more transparent can we make our organization's processes?” Individuals and committees will often communicate the “what” but not the “why” of a particular decision or action. When underlying rationale is ignored or glossed over, colleagues may fill that void with wrong and often unpleasant information ... that's human nature and nature abhors a vacuum. Thus, accompany many or most rules, procedures and executive actions with their rationale (the why) in succinct and understandable language—except for the truly rare confidential information. It is clear to FACT that the UNYAC should waste no time to address this dilemma. It also is clear to FACT that if trustworthiness is left unaddressed, a financial crisis could occur in which Mission Shares may not be supported and the lack of trust will drive local churches and pastors to implement individualistic and independent strategies for mission and ministry. The financial implications of this recommendation are immediate. The conference budget can easily become an “us/them” battleground. But to be supported, the conference budget must become a “we” document. Developing one-to-one relationships eliminates turf battles and “we together can do something that separately we cannot do” becomes the infrastructure of support for the connection. This transparency is the responsibility of all as members of the conference; because of the past lapses, transparency is particularly expected for the conference office, its leaders and its committees.

FACT notes that this problem of transparency can exist at all levels of every organization. The Church is no exception, particularly as it combines paid and volunteer staff with decision-making authority at many levels. Distrust in our church systems occurs within the conference, the district, the local church and committees at each of these levels. When UNYAC leaders set the example, it is hoped that all of UNYAC will take note and follow suit.

Dilemma 4: Lack of alignment and transparency of financial resources

Dilemmas input from September 13 FACT meeting

- Apathy about the Church, about the clergy-church-conference connection. These strategic steps address the dilemma apathy about the church. The meaning of apathy is: “I don’t care” or “We don’t care.” This process of review, amendment and recommendation communicated throughout the annual conference will enable a variety of persons to experience investment in the future and therefore care about the future, which will replace apathy as a primary attitude in the annual conference.
- Does our structure and the decisions it makes reflect an organization looking to expand UM presence in UNYAC or preserve existing congregations? How do we respond in a way that enables us to truly live out our mission? These strategic steps address the dilemma, living out our mission. This process of review, amendment and recommendation communicated throughout the annual conference will enable the annual conference to be future-oriented instead of preservation-oriented. Mission respects the past but is not governed by it. A strategic plan moves the annual conference into the future.
- There is a conflict between how the local church and conference understand their mutual covenant. These strategic steps address the dilemma concerning the mutual covenant between local church and annual conference. This process of review, amendment and recommendation communicated throughout the annual conference will clarify the relationship of the covenant, which is the essential value in our connectional system.
 - These strategic steps address the dilemma identified as “corporate depression.” Depression is the opposite of expression. This process of review, amendment and recommendation communicated throughout the annual conference will facilitate expression of opinion, which will counter the existing depression that is essentially not being able to express one's opinion. Therefore, investment in the future is impossible.
 - Corporate Depression: Reality of grief work from creation of new conference versus a willingness to stay in a victim mentality. This reality affects every area of our mission/ministry, including willingness to provide financial resources.
- Paradigm shift: UNYAC has not identified the metrics and guiding questions that define vitality and transformation and guide accountability. UNYAC has not made the paradigm shift in structure and practice of living the purpose of the annual conference. These strategic steps address the dilemma, the lack of metrics and guiding questions that define vitality and transformation and guide accountability. The strategic plan that is adopted will identify these metrics and guiding questions for every component of the annual conference as well as every local congregation.
- Alignment of resources toward building/away from life-support: A large number of declining congregations, resulting in a greater inability to effectively accomplish the mission and reducing resources that are available through ministry shares. This also has impact through a need to subsidize congregations with resources that could be used in other ways. This recommendation addresses the dilemma “the alignment of resources away from life-support” to accomplish the common mission. The strategic plan, as it becomes the reference basis for all decisions of the annual conference, has at its core the alignment of resources with the common mission. The

reallocation of resources is the intended consequence of the adoption and implementation of the strategic plan.

- Lack of clear and sufficient data to support decisions.
 - E.g. Climbing/exploding operating expenses
 - E.g. Confusion and conflict around the level of conference staff salaries and the value added by conference staff.
- There are significant challenges related to how we are funding our pension and health benefits challenges.
- Disconnect between spiritual relevance and financial behavior.
- Does our structure and the decisions it makes reflect an organization looking to expand UM presence in the UNYAC or preserve existing congregation? How do we respond in a way that enables us to truly live out our mission?

FACT Recommendations

Through its research, FACT has learned and observed that the financial challenges of the UNYAC are many and severe, and will only exacerbate unless they are swiftly addressed. The good news is that these issues have reasonable solutions, provided they are approached in a disciplined manner. The bottom line is that the conference and its local churches must be self-sustainable and live within their means.

Thus, FACT has numerous financial recommendations but has limited them now to six key areas of focus, so as not to overwhelm those involved and to increase the probability of lasting success. Part and parcel to this success is measurement; it's been said that what gets measured, gets done. Therefore, FACT is recommending that the UNYAC and local churches get back to the basics, by living within their means while still meeting their connectional obligations. These connectional obligations are financial and non-financial. Living within one's means often involves hard choices, and transparent and long-term budgeting provides the opportunities to align funding with the strategic Mission Map.

Recommendation 4.1: Establish a process for quarterly reporting and review of local church attendance, professions of faith and outreach.

The first area of focus is the non-financial obligations, as this effort is not about putting money over mission; to the contrary, it is about good stewardship and aligning spending with mission, so the conference and local churches have more money for more effective ministry. Then UNYAC will be not simply *talking* about mission, but actually achieving the mission "to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world" ... since local churches provide the most significant arena through which disciple-making occurs.

FACT recommends that local churches provide focused quarterly reporting of attendance, professions of faith and outreach within the respective mission fields to their respective districts for review and analysis. This action item can be accomplished by using the existing tools found on www.umvitalcongregations.org such as the Vital Signs dashboard, and continuing to refine the metrics that UNYAC has identified in their draft *Metrics for Vital Congregations and More Disciples* section. FACT recommends, however, that the metrics be defined around quarterly reporting expectations.

Truly cleaning up the membership rolls and reporting weekly attendance information will also put this new data in proper perspective. The district superintendents will provide a summary of the reporting to the cabinet for further review. The district superintendents will encourage and empower local church leadership to grow these levels at least commensurate with the changes in local demographics, both as part of their mentoring of charge clergy, but also as members of the cabinet, including fruitful and meritorious appointments. These non-financial objectives can have significant indirect financial implications.

FACT has noticed that in some UMC conferences pastors fail to complete annual statistical reports. While some pastors may see no need for reports, conference leaders must have consistent and validated data upon which to judge strategic leadership. At present, one conference is considering legislation that would require the names of those pastors who fail to return the required annual reports be read into the record of the Clergy Session following the standard question on clergy character. Evidence-based leadership will only replace hunch-based leadership when all of us finally agree to be candid about the facts of our ministry expressed importantly—but not exclusively—numerically.

Another conference (Iowa) increases its apportionment to each church by 10% when the pastor fails to submit the annual statistical and financial report. It does so by conference rule. The rule passed overwhelmingly because all the pastors who do report know that their efforts at compliance are nullified by those few who persist in noncompliance.

Recommendation 4.2: Increase amount and percentage of mission shares paid by local churches.

The next area of focus related to financial transparency is direct financial obligations and their implications. As mentioned elsewhere in this report, the initial lack of transparency on financial matters since the UNYAC was formed created a lack of trust with and for the conference and its staff. Fortunately with its new treasurer, Kevin Domanico, UNYAC financial information is now being prepared and shared. Yet many underlying financial challenges remain. FACT's research and discussions with key conference and committee staff noted that the conference is not currently living within its means, nor meeting all of its financial obligations—most notably, the subsidization of mission shares or general church apportionments and pension contributions.

FACT was pleased to see the conference has already begun to address the mission share issue by no longer subsidizing them. This has resulted in UNYAC moving from about 80% of billed apportionments, down to a U.S. low of about 60%. While this number may be shocking, FACT applauds this stark reality approach as the first step in building accountability with the local churches to meet their mission share obligation as members of the prayerful and powerful United Methodist connection. One additional way to build accountability would be to publish monthly all mission share payment percentages on the UNYAC website. FACT commends the conference for celebrating the 100% churches for 2013 ministry shares and those on track for 2014, but notes that it is also important to shed light on those churches that are behind in their mission share payments. Without full transparency of both those that meet its obligations and those that do not, systematic problems become masked and the path remains unsustainable over the long term.

Furthermore, UNYAC needs to change the conversation around the mission shares for general church apportionments. In 2013, UNYAC had \$2.46 million in unpaid general church apportionments, yet its churches gave nearly \$2.25 million to non-United Methodist ministries. While every church has and should continue to have the option of directing its offerings to worthy ministries outside the United Methodist connection, this fact should challenge UNYAC to consider how well they are telling the connection story to local churches and what they can learn from the success of these other ministries in

telling the UNYAC story. Most importantly, are the current UMC ministries and the non-UMC ministries helping the UNYAC achieve its mission?

Of course, some churches that do not fully pay their apportioned amount are not doing so by choice but as a result of current financial reality. Nevertheless, FACT noted that the churches that did not fully pay their apportionments in 2013 gave nearly \$690,000 to non-United Methodist causes, and in a number of cases, individual churches gave more to these causes than their unpaid apportionments. FACT recommends that conference leadership, including the Council on Finance and Administration, monitor these numbers carefully and engage churches that appear to have the financial capacity to pay apportionments but are choosing to direct that money elsewhere.

FACT also noted that 55 churches in 2013 paid *none* of their general church apportionments, leaving \$420,000 in unpaid apportionments. Although these churches are quite small (none had more than 100 in average worship attendance), we believe that every church (and certainly every pastor under appointment) should be able to contribute something—however small—in apportionments.

FACT also recommends that the cabinet leadership make it clear to pastors that total non-payment of apportionments is unacceptable.

The experiences in other UMC conferences may be instructive:

For example, California-Nevada Annual Conference at one time had general church apportionment payments as low as the UNYAC. California-Nevada is now trying to reverse that trend, and has enjoyed some early success. California-Nevada requires a monthly statement of all local church revenue, accompanied by a tithe of that amount. “Enthusiasm for paying apportionments went up when we started trusting them (the local churches) to do the math themselves,” said the conference treasurer. For the first time in years, the amount of dollars paid and the percentage apportioned paid have both increased in that conference.

The New Mexico Annual Conference Council on Finance and Administration did a study that compared the amount of ordinary operational revenue in each church to each church’s apportionment. It discovered that its formula was apportioning some churches as much as 17% of revenue and others as little as 6%. This happened because the longstanding formula relied on expense with many unique exclusions. Meanwhile, the conference budget bore little resemblance to the actual expenses the treasurer paid out over the course of each year. All “aspirational” amounts in the adopted budget were simply never paid because the conference lacked adequate revenue. The combination of inequitable apportionment calculations and relatively meaningless budgets eroded financial trustworthiness, and apportionment payment declined. New legislation is being designed to remedy both conditions in the New Mexico Conference.

Recommendation 4.3: Foster a greater understanding of local church self-sustainability throughout the UNYAC and increase payments of pension contributions and health insurance premiums.

The next area of focus is local church self-sustainability. FACT recommends that local churches pay their health insurance premiums and pension contributions *in full and on time*, lest they put the rest of the UNYAC at risk (for unpaid premiums and contributions) and fellow UMC conferences potentially liable for additional pension contributions. It also is critical that local churches keep their maintenance and debt obligations current. Therefore, FACT believes it is essential for the local churches, their clergy and lay leadership, the conference leadership (including the treasurer, conference benefits officer and cabinet), the Council on Finance and Administration, the

Conference Board of Pensions and the Board of Ordained Ministry all regularly measure, achieve and maintain self-sustainability on these critical areas. Long-term subsidization of local church bills by the conference is not sustainable and takes needed funds away from other UNYAC programs. Similar to the mission shares recommendation above, FACT recommends publishing the payment status of direct bills monthly on the UNYAC website as a means to increase transparency and accountability. FACT also recommends that the cabinet leadership make it clear to local pastors that the non-payment of pension contributions and insurance premiums is unacceptable.

With monthly reporting, many local churches will quickly discover the need for either higher weekly offerings or changes in their budgets and spending habits. But before too many churches get too concerned about the potential changes they may have to implement, please know these changes will occur eventually—with or without your intentions or theirs. It is simply a matter of whether the clergy and laity leadership want to have the changes happen to them, or whether they want to optimize the positives and minimize the negatives of the inevitable consequences. Church leadership must ask itself two questions: “What do we need?” and “What can we afford?” The answers must be based in reality in the present day and looking out into the future. If necessary, hard choices may need to be made and some staffing levels may need to be reduced or cut to save necessary costs.

FACT acknowledges the difficult choices many local churches face: Without a significant increase in offerings or reduction in discretionary costs, there may need to be changes in who serves the local churches (full-time elder versus a part-time local pastor, etc.), and well as where worship takes place (the local church built decades ago for hundreds in attendance, yet serving just scores now versus sharing a sanctuary with another denomination, renting a theatre, or using people’s homes as happened when Methodism began its growth).

Again, regular reporting of related metrics (attendees per full-time clergy, timeliness of payments on obligations, etc.) will be used in mentoring and appointments.

Recommendation 4.4: Establish a budget process (annual and long term) that is strategically aligned with the Mission Map.

The next area of focus is the strategic alignment and design of the UNYAC budget (annually and long term). There are three types of budgeting: 1) based on what happened last year, 2) response to crisis, and 3) strategic—based on aligning all resources with one’s strategic plan. There is a fourth type of budgeting, which FACT definitely does not recommend: the “insanity budget” i.e., doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results.

Currently it appears the UNYAC is operating with a hybrid of the first two budget scenarios (based on last year and response to crisis). FACT recommends that UNYAC moves to strategic planning with a long-term budgeting model. There must be a rolling five-year financial (operational) plan in alignment with the UNYAC strategic plan (the Mission Map). (Zero-based budgeting is best, as opposed to the typical budgeting approach of JELLY+, i.e., Just Exactly Like Last Year Plus Inflation.) Regular financial reporting of the current year’s budget performance will provide the appropriate information for decision support. This five-year plan would be created for UNYAC to better document future trends in mission shares and other income streams, and to identify the funds available for programs and administrative expenses over the long term, as well as the accumulation of needed reserves.

The conference is currently operating sub-optimally, which in part compelled Bishop Webb to create the Mission Map to provide a definitive long-term strategy. The five-year financial plan as recommended by FACT would support the Mission Map. The conference needs to focus its operations in alignment with its long-term strategy in order to support and achieve its stated mission. FACT understands that the UNYAC intends to initiate a capital campaign to augment the financial position of the conference. Certainly campaigns can be and have been proven to be effective on an interim basis in providing needed financial resources. However, they should clearly be tied to specific purposes supported within the Mission Map and at a time that would result in acceptance by the members of the conference.

Whatever the issue—from people to programs to budgets and everything related to them—the decisions practically answer themselves when put in the context of strategy. Does this or that decision support the strategy—that is, does it facilitate achievement of mission? If not, the person is not hired or the ministry is not performed. At the least, these misaligned resources are being used to delay the UNYAC from achieving its strategic mission; at worst, indecisiveness could prevent the conference from ever achieving it.

If the decision supports the UNYAC in achieving its long-term strategic mission, then the question is asked if the conference can afford (aka “living within its means”) the person, ministry, etc., on a long-term, total-cost basis. If so, the decision is made and effectively implemented, measured and reassessed.

If this process says “no” to a person or ministry, etc., it doesn’t mean that the person or ministry lacks worth; it just means their worth is not in alignment with the UNYAC’s strategy, means or mission. The person or ministry may be better suited elsewhere, and it is in the best interest of all parties that all resources—be they human or capital—work where they are most effective. This type of decision-making is not rocket science, nor does it need to take several months to develop. Much of the necessary knowledge and work already exist within the conference, its people and its various task forces over the years. The key is to draw this information out, formalize it, and effectively communicate throughout the entire conference and related communities.

Diving deeper into the budgetary options may find that the existing structures of the predecessor conferences may or may not align with the ministry and administrative needs of the new conference. Use the Mission Map to build the budget from the ground up instead of following the last few years’ budgets. This approach will present hard choices related to UNYAC regarding long-term funding of ministries—i.e. people, programs and property. UNYAC has merged conferences, but no choices have yet been made on areas such as districts, camp properties, etc.

FACT holds the view that budgeting to strategic goals is key to institutional success. As described above, however, a better approach is to live strictly within one’s means. The theory is that doing so gradually increases ones means so that eventually one does indeed have sufficient funds to pay for aspirations. In the past, some United Methodist institutions turned the painful corner from insufficiency to abundance by adopting a severe but productive rule: They never allowed their expense budget to exceed the previous year’s actual revenue. When program officers desired larger budgets, they helped the organization raise more money, so that in the subsequent year there was more real money to spend rather than only more aspirational money. Living strictly within one’s means is a difficult step to take, but it has been known to work. The first years are lean indeed, but when growth starts it is balanced growth in both income and expense.

For further background on this area: The initial UNYAC budget was prepared in August 2010 for 2011 shortly after the creation of the merged conference (July 1). UNYAC's treasurer, director of connectional ministries, director of communications and the conference benefits officer collaborated to form the new budget, which was then discussed, reviewed and critiqued by the Council on Finance and Administration. The budget "assumes that the senior Management Team and Conference Leadership in conjunction with the Council on Finance and Administration have the authority to redirect significant funds from areas where they are not needed to areas where funding is needed in the course of the year." This budget—prepared under unusual "crisis" conditions and deadlines by a more limited group than best practices would recommend—became the benchmark for 2012 and 2013 budgets, including no change in overall ask of \$10.7 million. FACT believes it is now time to plan a new approach for the 2016 budget next year—with an approach that is more inclusive, thoughtful, thorough and strategically aligned with the UNYAC Mission Map. The UNYAC financial reporting system appears antiquated and suboptimal in providing the timely and accurate decision support needed by the conference, its officers and committees to properly administer its time, talents and treasure aligned with its strategic Mission Map.

Recommendation 4.5: Create and implement a plan for building conference reserves.

The final area of focus is the building of liquid unrestricted, undesignated, net assets ("reserves"). Reserves are intended to cover occasional rainy day, unique or unplanned expenses. Regrettably, too many UMC conferences have quietly been using whatever limited reserves readily available to subsidize their regular recurring expenses—rather than living within their means. This short-term approach leaves little reserves available for when an unbudgeted expense or opportunity arises (whether unbudgeted in either the annual budget or the five-year financial plan). Without building its reserves, the UNYAC would not have enough funds to cover an unexpected emergency or shortfall beyond its control.

It is said that the best time to plant a tree ... was 20 years ago, and the second best time to plant a tree is ... today. Warren Buffet once said: "Someone's sitting in the shade today because someone planted a tree a long time ago."

The same can be said for reserves. Other conferences have heeded this advice, and even in just a few years have started to build significant reserves from relatively small monthly deposits—that are viewed as mandatory expenses.

Once this recommendation has been activated and progress made toward building the financial reserve, the current angst of not fully carrying one's own weight will quickly be lifted for the conference, and the resultant living within one's own means (as we all have to do individually) will result in less painful problems and more enjoyable time to do as God calls us.

Recommendation 4.6: Establish and communicate a clear role and authority for the Conference Board of Trustees.

FACT believes that conference leadership not only fulfills an essential role for the health of the conference as a body, but should also model best behavior and practices for the local church. Numerous comments during the FACT interviews highlighted the concern over the decision-making authority and actions of the UNYAC trustees, as well as transparency about conference funds in their care. This concern is common throughout our UMC connection. Annual conferences have different traditions and expectations concerning the scope of responsibilities for trustees. A contributing factor has been change in the scope of responsibilities for trustees in 1939, 1968 and in

subsequent General Conferences. In a newly merged annual conference as well as in newly merged local churches, the role of trustees must be clarified. Therefore, it is not surprising that frustrations were expressed regarding decisions made by UNYAC trustees because few in the conference understood the trustees' actions or reasons for those actions. Furthermore, it was reported that some conference and committee work was delayed if not paralyzed because of concern that the trustees might be officious or weigh in beyond their charter. If the UNYAC believes that churches are best served by trustees who are willing to work in partnership with other local church lay and clergy leaders, FACT believes it is important that this cooperation be modeled on the conference level as well. Implementing this recommendation will align the trustees' role, communications about their actions, and conference understanding of the trustees' decisions. Furthermore this recommendation undergirds the areas of leadership, trust, transparency and communications.

Strategic Steps from the Mission Map

4. Align resources to support the purpose of the annual conference and the mission of the local church and implement a system of accountability for mission and ministry at all levels.

Financial Resources

- Intentionally focus 80% of spiritual, financial and human resources toward transformational leadership recruitment, equipping, deployment and multiplication.
- Continue to align the Conference Plan for Funding with mission, objectives and primary task(s) of the annual conference.
- Develop a plan to acquire a Conference Center that will be a place for resourcing mission and ministry, as well as provide hands-on training and ministry opportunities.
- Develop a financial plan for funding of new faith community work.
- Develop/identify resources for small, medium and large membership churches.

Strategies and Structures

- Develop an evaluation process for everything we do, asking the question "does this help us fulfill our purpose, objectives and primary task(s)?" This must include a strategy to stop doing the things that do not meet this criterion.
- Develop a clear definition of vital congregation and metrics for on-going assessment of vitality.
- Develop a strategy to effectively and compassionately help congregations redirect, restart, or, when appropriate, end their life cycles.
- Continuously evaluate and adjust the conference structure to ensure focus and effectiveness.

Staffing

- Develop clear definitions of effectiveness with appropriate metrics for on-going assessment of ministries of Bishop, District Superintendents and Conference staff.
- Develop clear definitions of effectiveness with appropriate metrics for on-going assessment of ministries of parish clergy.
- Establish a clergy covenant to guide all clergy of the Upper New York Annual Conference.

- Develop a strategy to deploy conference staff for the work of equipping/resourcing leaders and congregations.
- Develop effective strategies and practices to recruit, support and retain women and ethnic and racial minority staff persons.
- Develop a strategy to move District Superintendents from the role of managers to the role of missional strategist.

Dilemma 5: Lack of communication within the conference

Dilemmas input from September 13 FACT meeting

- Lack of education and understanding of connectional giving.
- Not communicating effectively enough for understanding and participation.

FACT Recommendations

The role of communications, by its very nature, is often thought of as a support function. Communications, however, must be a strategic function. This is particularly essential in terms of the UNYAC Mission Map—without making the communications plan both robust and pragmatic, there will be disconnects across the conference as UNYAC attempts to implement the Mission Map. Strategic communications will be key to generating broad understanding, buy-in and ownership of the Mission Map. Without commitment to strategic communications, the UNYAC will be unable to realize broad and lasting success across areas described in the Mission Map: leadership, United Methodist ethos, trust, alignment and transparency of financial resources. A thorough and strategic communications plan can help overcome resistance.

“The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place.”—George Bernard Shaw

FACT’s recommendations for the communication dilemma are designed to yield a strategic communications plan that will drive “Living into the Vision” for the UNYAC.

Recommendation 5.1: Assemble a small group with representation from each of the four predecessor annual conferences to draft a comprehensive strategic communications plan addressing key audiences.

This must be a team of no more than eight people, and they should be charged with the tasks of defining and improving communications in the UNYAC. This group should develop a keen understanding of the Mission Map to guide its work. Included in this group should be:

- The conference staff person responsible for communications
- A member of the appointive cabinet
- The head of the Board of Ordained Ministry or his/her designee
- The head of the conference communications committee (or committee with this responsibility)
- The lay leader or his/her designee
- The Director of Connectional Ministries or his/her designee
- One or two others to bring diverse perspectives to the conversations

This group will need to prioritize the various audiences. In the UNYAC, FACT finds five principal audiences who need to receive communications:

- Conference leaders (lay and clergy)
- All clergy members of the annual conference
- The key laypersons in leadership roles in each local church
- All involved laity in the local churches
- All members/attendees who are part of each local church

Recommendation 5.2: Prioritize the messages and specify key components of the strategic communications plan to ensure it is clear, complete, actionable and meaningful.

You cannot communicate everything to everyone all at once. The messaging needs to be prioritized. The most important communications now are messages that explain the Mission Map, how it was shaped and informed by dialogues Bishop Webb had during District visits, and the process underway to perfect the Mission Map and move it forward. That message must be delivered repeatedly, and must contain current and consistent information. Moreover, the group should consider what aspects of the strategic communications plan should be communicated and how plan information should be disseminated—to whom, by what vehicles, and by when.

From the interviews and the first FACT meeting in September, we also heard that some priority should then be given to other topics. FACT suggests prioritizing these other topics as follows:

1. Celebrating our common mission of:
 - a God of love and compassion, and
 - how that mission is being lived out locally and globally
2. Servicing Christ and our connection through mission and Ministry Shares, and educating about the importance of connectional giving on the conference and global levels
3. Developing support for new faith settings, new ministry settings and new neighborhoods
4. Teaching about who we are as United Methodists, our history and our ethos

Other topics can be added, but FACT reminds the communications group to avoid the trap of adding every message that anyone thinks is important. Communications must be focused to be effective; too many topics dilute the effectiveness of even the best communications efforts.

The communication group will need to identify in their plan the various media available and determine their applicability to various audiences and types of messages. This will also help to define the “language” that will be the most effective. For best saturation, FACT suggests utilizing a broad mix of digital and print media.

Timing and sequencing of the communications work must align with other components for implementing the Mission Map.

Recommendation 5.3: Identify expected outcomes and a process for collecting feedback for strategic communications.

To be successful in this communications strategy, FACT believes there needs to be a clear understanding on the part of all leaders as to the expected outcomes, as well as clear criteria established for measuring results. The concept of this communication being a “conversation” with

the conference as a whole mandates the inclusion of a mechanism for receiving feedback from the audiences and evaluating the effectiveness of the communications strategy. Key tasks include:

- Specify key outcomes by target audience
- Determine the process for monitoring outcomes
- Establish an approach for obtaining feedback from different audiences
- Determine steps for sharing the plan conference-wide (i.e., how to disseminate and distribute the plan across the UNYAC)
- Assess ways to collect ongoing feedback and incorporate in the plan for continuous improvement

Excellent communication involves more listening than speaking; as the old saying goes, “God gave us one mouth and two ears, so we should listen twice as much as we speak.” By defining the expected outcomes of various communication efforts and then measuring the success of those efforts against expected outcomes, UNYAC will not only develop a more effective communications program, but will also convince your audience that you really do want to hear what they are trying to tell you. In short, effective two-way communication builds trust.

A strategic communications plan is inextricably linked to the success of the UNYAC’s Mission Map. The plan can become a GPS for realizing a shared vision, common mission, and enhanced understanding of and participation in the work of the UNYAC.

FACT’s recommendations reflect the strategic steps below.

Strategic Steps from the Mission Map

5. Communicate how we share a common mission as United Methodist Christians in the 21st century.

- Develop a strategic plan of communication that focuses on common mission and celebrates God stories of how that mission is being lived out locally and globally.
- Develop a strategic plan of communication that teaches who we are as United Methodists. (history and doctrine)
- Develop a strategic plan of communication that celebrates our connection through Ministry Shares and will result in 80% of our congregations contributing 100% of ministry shares annually.
- Partner with communications team to tell the stories of new faith communities that inspire others to plant new things in their own neighborhoods

Dilemma 6: Process needed to implement the Mission Map

The final recommendation is one identified by FACT but not born directly out of feedback from the UNYAC members who were in attendance at the September meeting or through interviews. As outlined throughout this document, the work already done in developing the detailed Mission Map is a tremendous jumpstart for the UNYAC in identifying a vision, detailed action steps and corresponding measurements. That said, the overall length and level of detail may lead to many conference members feeling overwhelmed, unable to digest the entire contents, and potentially discounting the likelihood of embracing the vision and living out its direction. The Mission Map’s course could be viewed as exhausting and so long that an already “fatigued” conference would be

challenged to follow it. Thus, the Mission Map would fail without having the opportunity to succeed.

FACT therefore recommends, as discussed earlier in this report, that the Mission Map be “uncoupled,” creating two distinct but inter-related documents: the Mission Statement and Mission Map. These two related documents can be used to guide the UNYAC in all aspects of engagement. The Mission Statement should receive wide distribution to all, while the details of the Mission Map would initially be best suited for those who are involved in leadership within the UNYAC. Following are specific recommendations regarding the steps to be taken with these two documents.

FACT Recommendations

Recommendation 6.1: Present and approve the Mission Statement at the 2015 annual conference session.

FACT recommends that the Mission Statement become the official Vision and Mission of the UNYAC. It should be seen by all, embraced and, by recommendation at the 2015 Annual Conference, officially become the Vision and Mission Statement of the UNYAC. While the current Mission Map has been shared somewhat at various meetings and with some of the leadership teams, FACT recommends broader, far-reaching communication of the Mission Statement throughout the conference. Additionally, input and “buy in” from clergy and laity across the entire UNYAC is essential. The document should be released in draft form to leadership groups, influential constituency “pockets” across the regions, and with an eye toward reaching a broad cross-section of laity and clergy from the four predecessor conferences to ensure a sense of inclusion in providing input and drafting the new UNYAC Mission Statement. Broad communications will help individuals understand that this Mission Statement will be utilized to guide the UNYAC with strategic planning, setting future direction, aligning resources, and making virtually all decisions that impact the future of the UNYAC.

Recommendation 6.2: Establish five teams to address the dilemma areas in this report.

Coming out of the second meeting (November 22, 2014), FACT recommends that there be five diverse teams established from the perspective of lay/clergy, geography, race, gender, roles and age. Each team will address one of the specific dilemma areas set forth in this FACT Report to determine how best to implement the prioritized action steps. These teams will be challenged to provide more structure and prioritization to the Mission Map in terms of action steps, implementation, and ultimately how progress and completion will be measured. Each team should identify a leader who will coordinate the team’s efforts and communicate progress to the project manager on a regular basis. The teams should meet regularly in order to be effective in defining and prioritizing action steps and augmenting the measurements that will be widely used to identify progress. Maintaining records of discussions and decisions and sharing with team members and ultimately other teams will be critical elements of each team’s responsibilities.

The sheer number of recommendations (action steps) will be overwhelming to conference members as a whole, and must therefore be prioritized within each dilemma subgroup for impact, visibility and realistic achievement. Some “easy wins” should be included and communicated broadly, so the conference can celebrate early success in the extensive journey of creating the new UNYAC culture, and to demonstrate that this effort is different from those in the past, which end up

sitting on shelves. Specifically, FACT recommends the following two items (Recommendations 6.3 and 6.4) to help provide structure for the implementation and ongoing work of the UNYAC:

Recommendation 6.3: Identify a “project manager.”

The project manager will be viewed as the leader and main point of contact for the implementation of the FACT and Mission Map recommendations. A subset of the FACT members will host bi-weekly calls with the project manager to assess progress and provide counsel on direction of the UNYAC’s implementation. The appropriate sequencing across all of the recommendations including identification of dependencies among recommendations should be coordinated and monitored by the project manager.

FACT will host the third meeting in Syracuse with Bishop Webb, other key leaders, the project manager and the leaders of each team approximately within three months after the November meeting to hear reports from the teams as to the progress and challenges faced by each of the 5 teams. Assessments will then be made by conference leadership and FACT as to how best to provide ongoing support to the individual teams, their leaders and the overall implementation process.

Recommendation 6.4: Re-examine the markers of our desired outcomes to specify markers grounded in evidence, projections and pragmatic resourcing.

To ensure realistic progress and associated timing, the markers for the UNYAC’s desired outcomes must be undergirded by current facts of and future trends in the Upper New York region. A meaningful implementation of the Mission Map should reflect pragmatism even as the Mission Map reflects optimism for the UNYAC’s future. Specifically, at the conclusion of each of the following “Marker” citations, you will see insertion points for the current reality and a 2020 goal. FACT recommends that each be based on cited evidence—not the combined hunches of “experts.” Furthermore, each 2020 goal needs to be achievable. For example, do you realistically intend to quintuple the number of vital congregation within five years? If so, make a convincing case citing relevant evidence that it can be done. Ask equally challenging questions of each marker as you set defensible goals.

MARKERS OF OUR DESIRED OUTCOMES

Transformational Leaders

- The number of transformational leaders recruited, equipped, deployed and supported will increase as we intentionally retool existing leaders, increase the racial-ethnic diversity and gender equity of lay and clergy leaders and reduce the average age of lay and clergy leadership. [current reality TBD; 2020 goal TBD]

Vital Congregations

- The number of vital congregations will increase with more local congregations growing every year in new adult professions of faith, more persons in worship, additional small groups and more ministries that reach into the mission field. [current reality 6% ; 2020 goal – 40%]⁹
- Worship attendance in congregations will grow by 5%/year as congregations develop worship that is relevant, inspiring and connects with people in a 21st century world. [current reality TBD; 2020 goal – 60% of congregations growing]
- More worshippers will be engaged in a small group focused on maturing disciples. [current reality TBD ; 2020 goal – 75% of worshipping congregation]
- The total number of children, youth and young adult participating in effective children, youth and young adult ministries that connect with the community will increase. [current reality TBD; 2020 goal TBD]
- The number and variety of new faith communities planted will increase. [current reality TBD; 2020 goal – 100 new faith communities planted]
- The capacity and competency of all congregations to regularly identify their context for ministry, discover what God is already doing and develop a pathway to vitality will be enhanced. [current reality TBD ; 2020 goal TBD]
- The participation of racial-ethnic minority active and consistent constituents and members will increase. [current reality – 2%; 2020 goal – 25%]
- The number of congregations manifesting a culture of generosity through giving for ministry and mission will increase. [current reality \$/worshipper? TBD; 2020 goal \$\$/worshipper? TBD] (identify amount per worshipper on mission per year and set a goal)
- The number of churches paying 100% of ministry shares will increase. [current reality 65%; 2020 goal – 100%]

Neighborhoods

- The number of congregations equipped and actively engaged in hands-on justice and mercy ministries in the community and around the world as evidenced by the percentage of worshippers involved will increase. [current reality 22%; 2020 goal – 75%]

⁹UMC Vital Congregations metric

- A comprehensive capital campaign for Africa 360, new faith community development, conference center and ongoing and emerging mission opportunities will be successfully carried out. [current reality TBD; 2020 goal TBD]

SIGNS AND MEASURES OF TRANSFORMATION

The following signs of transformation in leaders and congregations and will help us know we are living into our vision as we approach 2020. We will measure our progress annually using a common set of metrics so we can adjust our strategies and better align our resources to sustain and enhance our success.

Metrics for Transformational Leaders

- Does the leader demonstrate a growing and deep relationship with Jesus Christ, in connection with other disciples?
- Can the leader articulate their call to leadership, the purpose of ministry and demonstrate an understanding of the context in which they serve?
- Is the leader communicating vision for ministry and bearing fruit in areas of vitality
- Is the leader developing other leaders?

Metrics for Vital Congregations and More Disciples

Worship

- Average worship attendance
- # of repeat visitors annually

Professions of Faith

- # of adult professions
- # of confirmands

Leaders (directing, coordinating or equipping others) engaged in ministry and mission

- # of youth leaders
- # of young adult leaders
- # of adult leaders
- # of leaders who have participated in life of church for less than 2 years
- # of leaders who have participated in life of church for less than 5 years

Individuals involved in groups for the purpose of spiritual formation

- # of children
- # of youth
- # of young adult
- # of adults
- # of individuals who have participated in the life of church for less than 6 months

Individuals involved in mission and outreach

- # of individuals participating on a short-term mission team
 - Locally
 - Nationally
 - Globally
- # of justice and mercy ministries with the community
 - # of individuals serving
 - # of individuals being served
- # of persons trained and engaged in the work of evangelism

Giving

- % of growth in giving income
- # number of giving units increasing their giving
- % of giving to mission and outreach ministries
- % of ministry shares paid

LIVING INTO THE VISION

It is our conviction and hope that as we live together our common mission and carry out the purpose of the annual conference through our primary task(s), we will create an environment that will allow us to experience God's preferred present and future and we will more fully live out the vision we have established for The Upper New York Annual Conference:

"To live the Gospel of Jesus Christ and be God's love for our neighbors in all places."

In Closing...

Some UMC annual conferences react to FACT engagements with a sense of urgency, others defensively, and to some extent many feel overwhelmed. To the latter, rest assured: throughout our extensive work with the good people of the UNYAC and throughout the Connection, given your will, we have not encountered any hurdle that cannot be cleared. All these matters can and have been addressed successfully before. Often what is needed most is leadership (at all levels and types—clergy and laity) and courage to make the tough decisions, lest the conference continue to do the same ineffective things over and over again, foolishly expecting different outcomes. More specific to the UNYAC, leadership must be renewed and trust must be earned again to successfully live into the vision the UNYAC has affirmed.

FACT recommends that all in the UNYAC focus on the future by recognizing the positive, transparent leadership and changes that are progressing, letting go of the past by figuratively throwing away the “old CDs” of distrust; and building momentum from the newly created goodwill and trust, especially in regard to developing a deep and vital partnership among clergy and laity, so we can all do as God calls us to do and live.

Be encouraged!

FACT Members:

Bishop Bruce Blake (retired); and GBPHB, GBOD, GBHEM and GCFA personnel: Brian Berg, Anne Borish, Scott Brewer, Ron Coleman, Paul Dirdak, Dale Jones, Tim Koch, Ross Lundstrom, Dan O’Neill and Ken Sloane