Jurisdiction's bishops launch #WeAreMore social media campaign

The bishops of the South Central Jurisdiction have joined together to produce a campaign focused on stories that connect people and proclaim that #WeAreMore when united through Jesus Christ. The campaign, called “We Are More,” is designed to engage the people in the pews through sharing and listening to one another’s stories.

“People seem to be anxiously bracing themselves as we draw near to General Conference. Some hope for change, others fear division, and most feel uncertain about what may happen,” said Bishop Robert Schnase of Missouri. “Instead, we wanted to inspire people to remember that discipleship in Jesus Christ is more than buildings and structures, more than those in worship, more than the United Methodist Church, even more than the issues that divide us. Regardless of what happens at General Conference, United Methodists will continue to be called by God to ministries that transform lives, that offer hope to an anguished world, that relieve suffering, and that offer God’s grace to everyone. Sharing stories of how God uses ordinary people and works through ordinary congregations each and every day reminds us not to forget the kingdom work needed in the days following General Conference.”

The campaign features video, audio and blog stories with a participatory component. Anyone can upload their own story via the website, www.wearemore.faith for consideration in the campaign. Look for #WeAreMore stories in your social media networks.

Stay up to date with what's happening at General Conference

If you want to stay updated with what is going on each day during General Conference in Portland, Oregon, you can check the conference website at www.greatplainsumc.org/generalconference.

The conference communications staff will share information from United Methodist News Service as well as the staff’s own stories detailing decisions made, reaction from the Great Plains delegation and how others from Kansas and Nebraska are working in the open and behind the scenes.

So far, you can check out a story about a possible method for Christian conferencing, opening worship and a photo gallery. Also, check out video from our delegates as the conference continues.
Three churches, 1 district receive first 'Culture of Call' grants

Three churches and one district in the Great Plains Conference are the recipients of monetary grants that will help them develop a “Culture of Call” in the two-state region.

The churches are FirstLight (in Olathe), Lenexa and Tonganoxie United Methodist churches, all in Kansas; and the Great West District in Nebraska.

“We wanted to provide an opportunity to put some resources with casting a vision for churches and districts and different entities of the Great Plains United Methodist Church to consider what it would look like to cultivate a culture of call,” said Ashlee Alley, clergy recruitment and development director for the conference.

Read the full story.

Saint Paul School of Theology partners with academy

Saint Paul School of Theology and The Academy for Spiritual Formation are partnering to offer a Doctor of Ministry (DMin) in prophetic witness and service with an emphasis in spiritual formation beginning Fall 2016. This is the first time a seminary has worked with The Academy for Spiritual Formation, a ministry of The Upper Room, to co-develop an advanced degree.

The new doctor of ministry degree weaves together the spiritual renewal and grounding of the Two-Year Academy for Spiritual Formation with Saint Paul coursework and faculty engagement. The goal is to maintain focus on pastoral leaders’ spiritual formation — both for their own lives and for their ministry in the church and the world. Through study, experiential formation within disciplined community and a final praxis thesis, DMin students will be able to align a deeper sense of God’s presence in their own lives with their work in ministry as they seek to engage God’s mission in the world and sustain a hope and a vision for church renewal.

DMin students will complete 30 credit hours over three years. Saint Paul coursework will run concurrently with the Two-Year Academy through online and video-linked courses offered at both Kansas City and Oklahoma City campuses. Throughout the program, students will participate in The Academy for Spiritual Formation’s rhythm of study, silence, worship and small-group formation. The third year of study will focus on the doctor of ministry student’s praxis thesis. The first cohort will be enrolled in the Two-Year Academy being held at St. Benedict Center in Schuyler, Nebraska, starting Aug. 9.

Ecumenical in scope, the program is open to those who have applied and been admitted to the Two-Year Academy, have also completed a master’s of divinity, master’s in philosophy or master’s in religion degree, and who successfully complete the Saint Paul admissions process.

For additional information, visit www.spst.edu/doctor-of-ministry or contact Dr. Amy Oden, professor of early church history and spirituality, at amy.oden@spst.edu.
2016 'Pass the Torch' Scholarship recipients named

A total of 13 “Pass the Torch” scholarships were awarded in 2016 for the upcoming academic year. This was the largest number of awards in the history of the program. Scholarships were given to Course of Study students and seminary students.

The “Pass the Torch” scholarship program was established in 1971 by the Kansas West Retirees and Spouses Association. The first scholarship was given in 1995.

This year’s recipients were Marcee Binder, Mary Courtney, Dorothy Ellsworth, Stacy Ellsworth, Marsha Haney, Julie King, John Lewis, Alex Rossow, Nick Smith, Gina Tyler, Kathy Webster, Richard Webster and Suzanne Werthmann.

The scholarship fund is invested with the Kansas Area United Methodist Foundation. The Scholarship Committee is currently comprised of retired pastors and spouses from the former Kansas West Conference, but there is a commitment to broaden the committee’s membership. Through 2015, a total of $70,025 has been distributed in scholarship assistance.

The Scholarship Committee uses “5 percent of the average fair market value of the Pass the Torch Endowment for the last three years to determine the amount of funds available for scholarships each year.” This year, an amount of $6,000 was distributed. The amount of this year’s awards ranged from $150 to $300 for Course of Study students and $500 to $1,000 for seminary students.

There is no geographic restriction or preference given to scholarship applicants. In 2016, there were scholarship recipients from each of the former conferences that now comprise the Great Plains Conference. Six were for Course of Study students, and seven were for seminary students. Schools where students plan to attend this coming year are: Asbury Theological Seminary, Iliff School of Theology, Saint Paul School of Theology, United Theological Seminary and Wesley Theological Seminary.

Applicants must be at least certified candidates for the ordained ministry, under care either of a District Committee on Ordained Ministry or the conference Board of Ordained Ministry.

Changes were made in the scholarship application this year, given our reality as the Great Plains Conference. A copy of the application is available on the conference website, and copies were sent to all district superintendents for distribution to eligible applicants.

Members of this year’s “Pass the Torch” committee were Bill and Beverly Salmon, Don and Sue Swender, Don and Darlene Snyder, Gary Harms, Harlan and Judy Rittgers, Jerry and Christine Vogt, and Mark Conard.

Contributions to the “Pass the Torch” Scholarship Fund are always welcome. You may send your donation for this purpose to the “Kansas Area United Methodist Foundation” at Box 605; Hutchinson, KS; 67504-0605.

You may also donate online through the Kansas Area United Methodist Foundation’s website, www.kaumf.org. Your online contribution may be a one-time, weekly or monthly gift. You may designate your contribution “in memory” or “in honor” of someone important to you, perhaps a mentor for your own ministry or as a gift in honor of a new ordinand.
Early registration deadline draws near for Flowing Streams Retreat

May 15 is the early registration deadline for the Flowing Streams Retreat, a three-day spiritual experience retreat scheduled for June 24-26 at Manna House of Prayer in Concordia, Kansas.

Leader for Flowing Streams 2016 is the Rev. Jane Vennard, a noted retreat leader and spiritual formation teacher and author. Her latest book is “Fully Awake and Truly Alive” (Skylight Paths Publishing, 2014). In her book, she encourages the readers to develop spiritual practices as a living part of their whole nature.

Participants can expect to be involved in presentations, spiritual practices, worship, silence for reflection and conversation in small groups.

The retreat is sponsored by the Nebraska Covenant Community, and the Great Plains Conference Academy Council. It uses a format similar to that of the Five Day Academy for Spiritual Formation. Lay persons and clergy of various religious affiliations are welcome.

Registration is now open for the retreat. You may register online at www.gpspiritualformation.org, or for more information, contact the Rev. James Brewer via email at jamesbrewer136@gmail.com, or call him at 402-992-2729.

Please submit your registration with $50 deposit before May 15 to avoid an additional $50 charge for late registration.

We’re in worship ... what do we do?

It’s a typical Sunday morning in the Great Plains Conference and worship is happening in our local churches. Just as we get to the middle of worship, the town’s tornado sirens sound. Oh my goodness, what do we do? Where do we lead our community of faith for safety? Without a plan – without practice – this moment will be total chaos.

The Rev. Hollie Tapley, conference disaster response coordinator, encourages churches to conduct an “Awareness Sunday” during the month of May or June. Make it a priority to educate people on what to do in the moment of a tornado disaster. Hold a drill during worship – practice what you will do, where you will go, how you will respond.

Make May and June your months to "plan and practice." If you need assistance, contact Tapley at htapley@greatplainsumc.org.
2016 Annual Conference Session conference workbook is ready

The 2016 conference workbook is now available. We ask that you print this workbook and bring it with you to the conference. You may also download it to your electronic device if you plan to bring that with you to conference. Please do not plan to access the workbook online during the conference as internet access may be limited at the venue. [Download your copy](#) of the conference workbook.

If you are unable to print the workbook you can order one to be mailed to you for a fee of $25. To order a workbook contact Roxie Delisi at 402-464-5994 ext. 107 or email [rdelisi@greatplainsumc.org](mailto:rdelisi@greatplainsumc.org). Orders must be placed by Monday, May 23. Payments can be mailed to the Lincoln conference office at 3333 Landmark Circle, Lincoln, NE 68504. Please keep in mind that workbooks will not be mailed until payment is received.

Have you registered for conference yet?

If not, please do so by midnight on Tuesday, May 17. Registrations received after this date will incur a $25 late fee. The final deadline to register is at midnight on Tuesday, May 24. [Register now](#).

For any questions regarding the event or to check if you are registered contact Dana Reinhardt at [dreinhardt@greatplainsumc.org](mailto:dreinhardt@greatplainsumc.org) or call 402-464-5994 ext. 105.

Take up special offerings to be gathered during annual conference

Your church can help the Great Plains Conference reach its goals on several fundraising efforts by taking up a special offering to be delivered during the annual conference session June 1-4 in Topeka, Kansas.

Four offerings will be taken during the session, so choose which ones you would like to support and send your special offerings with your pastor or a lay member to annual conference. The offerings this year will go for:

- **Multicultural Mission Partnerships** (offering during opening worship June 1) – The conference is trying to raise $100,000 each for the Lydia Patterson Institute (LPI) in El Paso, Texas; the Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference (OIMC); and the Zimbabwe East Annual Conference. LPI needs funds to make repairs and expand the school. OIMC needs funds to help pay its pastors, which are the lowest-paid in the South Central Jurisdiction. And the Zimbabwe East Conference is building an office to help coordinate ministries. [Learn more about the partnerships and find resources such as bulletin inserts and videos](#).

- **Camp Comeca** (during the memorial service June 2) – The conference is trying to raise $994,000 for our camp near Cozad, Nebraska, to help pay for cabin renovations, debt repayment, swimming pool repair and sewer improvements. [Learn more about the Camp Comeca Renewal campaign](#).

- **Imagine No Malaria** (during the ordination service June 3) – The conference is taking one more offering for this United Methodist Church program aimed at helping curb the spread of malaria by providing mosquito nets and other means to prevent the spread of disease, particularly in developing nations. [Learn more about the Imagine No Malaria campaign](#).
- **Youth Service Fund** (during the youth-led worship service June 4) – Money in this fund supports projects led by youth in the Great Plains Conference via grants to local churches. [Learn more about the fund.](#)

## Annual conference seeks people willing to serve on teams

Do you have a passion for Campus Ministry? Are you concerned with the health and future of all clergy in the conference? Are you willing to step out in faith and help a new church begin ministry that will make even more disciples of Jesus Christ? Is the upkeep to all conference property important to you? If not you, then do you know someone who has a passion for one of these areas.

Nominations are needed for the conference teams of pensions and health benefits, trustees, new church development and campus ministry. If you are interested please go to [www.greatplainsumc.org/serve](http://www.greatplainsumc.org/serve) and nominate potential leaders online.

This call goes out to all United Methodists in the Great Plains Conference. If you have a passion for something please step up and volunteer to serve. DSAs, CLMs, local pastors, ordained clergy, certified lay speakers, members of local church committees and all people who worship in a United Methodist Church are needed.

Nominate yourself, nominate your friends, nominate all God's people. It takes us all to make this conference a place where God’s glory can shine. If you want to be a part of something more than your local church, volunteer today.

Any questions please contact Rev. Tessa Zehring at tzehring@greatplainsumc.org. Hope to see your nomination soon!

## Enjoy concert as part of South Central Jurisdictional Conference

![Enjoy concert as part of South Central Jurisdictional Conference](image)
Take part in SCJ conference by taking part in mass choir

The Holy Spirit is almost certain to be present during the South Central Jurisdictional Conference in Wichita, Kansas, when Grammy and Dove awards nominee William McDowell takes the stage July 15 for the "area night" concert.

Along with a mass choir from more than 20 Wichita-area churches, McDowell will bring his energetic and soulful worship music to the Century II Performing Arts and Convention Center, 225 W. Douglas Ave., in Wichita. McDowell's talents have landed him atop the Billboard Gospel single and album lists. His performance will include his hit songs as well as music from his new album, which was released in February.

A T-shirt with this creative design showcasing that God's love is greater than anything else we will encounter will be for sale for $10 at the same ticket locations and at the South Central Jurisdictional Conference hospitality booth at the Hyatt Hotel. You can reserve yours when you register for the conference.

Email address changes for archivist based in Nebraska

The email address has changed for reaching the conference archivist at Nebraska Wesleyan University.

The email address for Karrie Dvorak, the conference’s previous archivist, has been changed to gpcarchives@greatplainsumc.org. Her previous email address will continue to forward to this new address temporarily. Archives staff will be checking this new email address as well as the archives2@greatplainsumc.org address on a part-time basis as available.

Kansas Area UM Foundation announces rates for May

A Certificate of Participation is a time investment in building the United Methodist witness through the Kansas Area United Methodist Foundation’s loan program for Kansas United Methodist churches and agencies.

An individual or church may invest a $1,000 minimum for one- or two-year participation so that you may strengthen the expansion of the United Methodist witness.

Certificate of Participation May rate:

- One Year: 1.2 percent
- Two Year: 1.5 percent.

To learn more how you may increase your investments at the same time expanding the United Methodist witness, download promotional material for your church such as: flyers, postcards or newsletter/bulletin ads, at: www.kaumf.org or call 1-888-453-8405.
EmberHope’s Chalk Art Festival returns

EmberHope’s eighth annual Chalk Art Festival has been set for 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday, Aug. 6, at Old Town Square in Wichita.

The event includes water games, a chalkboard truck, face painting, a photo booth, snow cones, stuff-a-truck, make-it and take-it crafts and raffles.

More information is at www.emberhope.org.

Newsletters

- United Methodist Committee on Relief: Hotline
- Global Ministries: Global Health
- United Methodist Communications: MyCom
- UMC Development Center: Spiritual Giving
- Lewis Center for Church Leadership: Leading Ideas
- Ministry Matters: May 11, 2016

Classifieds

- Church secretary needed at Worden UMC
- West Heights seeks youth ministry director
- Receptionist/administrative assistant needed at Wichita East Heights UMC

To view these and other classifieds, go to greatplainsumc.org/classifieds.

Press Clips

Congregations across the Great Plains Conference are making the news in their local newspapers.

View our newspaper clipping reports to see if there are stories, ideas and ministry happenings you can learn from to use in your own congregation. Find the press clips at greatplainsumc.org/inthenews. You can see education partnership ideas at greatplainsumc.org/education.

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To submit a letter to the editor, send it to info@greatplainsumc.org.