

Western PA Conference

125

Believe Again!

Plan for Ministry
2009



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Submitted to the 2009 Annual Conference

Bring to AC2009

**Western Pennsylvania Annual Conference
Believe Again! Plan for Ministry Report
 June 2009**

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Submitted by: Michelle Wobrak, Implementation Team Chairperson
 Tracy Merrick, *Believe Again!* Plan for Ministry, Director
 Team Conveners / Co-Conveners and Team Members

Assembled and written by: *Believe Again!* PR and Reporting Team
 Convener: Drew Harvey
 Members: Jackie Campbell, Ron Fleming,
 Bill Jacka, Tracy Merrick, Mark Rehn

Section 1 - Introduction

Our Grand Deposit

John Wesley called it our “grand deposit.” He wasn’t referring to a bank account, but to the deposit of faith known as the Doctrine of Christian Perfection. Wesley believed that Christians should take seriously the command of Jesus to “be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.” (Matthew 5:48) Therefore, Wesley believed that Christian people could and ought to be “perfect in love,” not free from error or human mistake, but free to love perfectly even as we have been perfectly loved. After all, Jesus said, “This is my commandment that you love one another even as I have loved you (John 15:12).” Of course. Christian Perfection is the Grand Deposit of Methodism, and some would say the engine that propelled the Wesleyan movement to seek to change lives and indeed to change the very social fabric of our world.

The Believe Again! Plan also has a “grand deposit.” Central to that deposit is the Vision of the Western Pennsylvania Annual Conference:

To ignite and sustain a passionate, spiritual connection with Christ among all people in Western Pennsylvania.

Indeed, we might even add, “and the world.” Truly this is the Grand Deposit which empowers the mission and core value of our Conference. Our mission, “to provide leadership, connection, and resources to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world,” and our Core Value of love both flow from this essential vision. As we ignite and sustain a passionate spiritual connection with Christ we find both our mission, our intention to share in Christ’s ministry, and the manner in which we seek to live life and to live out the gospel, enriched by Christ’s love, both unalterably formed. We are transformed by our spiritual connection with Christ, and as a result seek to transform the people and communities of Western Pennsylvania. When we do that, we cannot help but transform the people and communities of the world, to ignite and sustain in people everywhere a passionate spiritual connection with our Lord Jesus Christ.

Today Paul summons us to be about this task in those marvelous words in Romans 12:1-2 when he wrote:

“Therefore present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this

world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.”

Finding the power of God to transform life, which comes from sacrificing ourselves before God as a “living sacrifice,” leads us to ignite a vision which in turn leads us to seek “Christian perfection.” The perfect living out in love of the spiritual and passionate connection with Christ in everyday life is just that simple, and just that profound. This is what the outcome of ***Believe Again!*** is all about.

Obedience to the Vision

St. Paul, in his defense before King Agrippa in Acts 26:19, states, “I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision.” Think how many times God enabled the church to grow and develop in the Book of Acts as a result of a vision:

- Peter saw the vision of the net let down from heaven, and was led to baptize Cornelius, a Gentile (Acts 10);
- Paul saw the Risen Christ in a vision on the Road to Damascus (Acts 9:1-9);
- Ananias saw and heard Christ command him to baptize Saul (Acts 9:10-19); and,
- Paul saw the vision of the “man of Macedonia” and changed the direction of his ministry, taking the gospel west to Europe (Acts 16:6-10).

And on and on the story goes. The vision of the Gospel, an explosive dynamic vision, changed the direction of evangelism and outreach. In doing so Paul changed the course of human history and made possible our presence in the church of Jesus Christ. Think of it: you and I believe because saints of old were obedient to the vision of Jesus Christ! Our Conference received a “Grand Deposit” of the faith from these saints of old. Now it is our charge to pass on the Grand Deposit, our vision for the Western Pennsylvania Annual Conference. We have enjoyed the fruits of “***Believe Again!***” for these past three years. Let us convey now the Grand Deposit to our people, our conference and our churches for the transformation of lives and communities in the times to come.

Contributed by Drew Harvey,
Implementation Team, Vice Chairperson

Section 2 - Annual Conference Vision, Mission, Core Value

The Annual Conference adopted Vision, Mission, and Core Value statements when it approved its new Strategic Plan in June 2006. At that time, the three statements became the Vision, Mission, and Core Value of the Annual Conference.

Vision

To ignite and sustain a passionate, spiritual connection with Christ among all people in Western Pennsylvania.

Mission

To provide leadership, connection, and resources to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

Core Value *

Our core value is love: We love the Lord our God with all our hearts, souls, minds and strength and our neighbors as ourselves. This value is commanded by Jesus, inspired by our Wesleyan heritage including to spread scriptural holiness over the land and witnessed through our integrity, accountability and inclusiveness.

* The core value was amended at the 2007 Annual Conference by adding the phrase "including 'to spread scriptural holiness over the land.'" One definition of scriptural holiness is included in the mission statement of the Methodist Church of Ireland adopted in 1993, "Scriptural Holiness, then, is the way of life, inspired by the Holy Scripture and empowered by the Holy Spirit, which seeks to let the presence and love of God be known in every part of God's creation, loving by both word and deed."

Section 3 - Believe Again! Goals and Objectives

At Annual Conference in June 2006, the following were adopted as the goals and objectives of the Western Pennsylvania Conference.

GOAL 1: DISCOVER

Ensure that United Methodist communities of faith are healthy, effective, and strategically positioned, throughout Western Pennsylvania

- Create performance standards for United Methodist churches and evaluate church effectiveness
- Develop a strategic plan for local church placement in Western Pennsylvania including existing and potential new locations.
- Provide evaluation, training and financial resources for mission churches. (Discipline paragraph 260.1)

GOAL 2: STRETCH

Increase United Methodist presence within Western Pennsylvania by developing new communities of faith and new ministry groups

- Create new methods of funding new congregations.
- Intentionally explore establishing new communities of faith with particular emphasis given to ethnic/multi-cultural congregations
- Intentionally explore establishing new ministry groups every year in each district with special attention given to campus ministries, youth, young adults and ethnic/multi-cultural groups

GOAL 3: LEAD

Expect and achieve excellence in lay and clergy leadership

- Create a focus on health and wholeness for laity and clergy (spiritual, physical, mental, emotional, and social health)
- Recruit train, deploy, supervise and support laity
- Recruit, train, deploy, supervise and support clergy
- Create a culture of inclusiveness within the Annual Conference, building bridges across theological differences, and dismantling racism, sexism, ageism and discrimination of persons with disabilities. (Refer to Discipline paragraph 138 for definition of inclusiveness)

GOAL 4: GO

Increase local church involvement in mission, justice and outreach ministry, locally, regionally, nationally and globally

- Equip local churches to reach out in ministry.
- Create opportunities to plug into connectional ministry; local, regional, national and international
- Advocate for those who suffer injustice and work to change unjust systems, including injustice in our own church community.

GOAL5: CONNECT

Improve the ministry and systems of the Annual Conference to better facilitate disciple-making

- Implement a holistic approach to the superintendency including supervisory, programmatic and spiritual leadership.
 - Implement a new role for the districts as partners in ministry.
 - Align committees and task-teams to support our vision for ministry.
 - Align the Annual Conference staff to support this vision for ministry.
 - Improve communications throughout the Annual Conference
 - Improve budgeting and financial reporting systems of the Annual Conference
 - Strengthen the financial aspects of stewardship within the Annual Conference
 - Create an integrated systems environment
-

Section 4 - Culture Shift

To be a Conference which **believes again**, we will:

Live the Vision, Mission, and Core Value

- All decisions within the Conference and its agencies must be aligned with the Vision, Mission, and Core Value
- During decision-making, these questions must be asked:
 - Will the results of the decision draw the Conference closer to its vision, “To ignite and sustain a passionate, spiritual connection with Christ among all people in Western Pennsylvania”?
 - Is the action consistent with the Mission, “To provide leadership, connection, and resources to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world”?
 - Will the decision help the Conference more completely live the Core Value of love?

Focus on equipping ministry across Western Pennsylvania

- Ministries across the Conference are the primary focus of the *Believe Again!* Plan for Ministry, many in local churches and many in ministries beyond the local church.
- This focus adds another question to decision-making processes:
 - How will this decision strengthen ministries in their mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation for the world?

Be servant leaders

- Servant leaders demonstrate:
 - The heart of Christ
 - A heartfelt sense of call to servanthood
 - A deep commitment to listen intently to others
 - An understanding and appreciation of others' feelings and circumstances
 - A prophetic awareness of the cultural diversity of all God's people
 - An aptitude for understanding the past and thinking beyond day-to-day realities in formulating plans for the future
 - An ability to coach, counsel, and build consensus
 - A passion for contributing to the greater good
 - An on-going commitment to support the growth and development of others
 - A desire to bring wholeness where brokenness exists
 - A track record of building community
-

Section 5 - Outcomes of *Believe Again!*

Believe again in an exciting future for United Methodists in Western Pennsylvania!

Believe again that each United Methodist will:

- Experience a sustained passionate spiritual connection with Jesus Christ
- Live the Core Value of love for God and our neighbors
- Learn to live a more healthy life - spiritually, physically, intellectually, emotionally and socially

Believe again that each United Methodist ministry will:

- Focus on making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world
- Be led by lay and clergy servant leaders
- Be served by faithful, effective and fruitful clergy leadership
- Move to greater health through:

Passionate Spirituality	Empowering Leadership
Inspiring Worship	Need-Oriented Evangelism
Effective Structures	Holistic Small Groups
Loving Relationships	Gift-Based Ministries
- Welcome people of color and demonstrate zero tolerance for racism

- Understand poverty and aggressively work to address the causes of poverty and ease the burdens of the poor (both justice and charity)

Believe again that the Western PA Conference will:

- Serve ministries by providing leadership, connection, and resources to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world
- Improve the effectiveness of lay and clergy leadership
- Help existing ministries to improve their health
- Work actively to establish new communities of faith and ministry groups
- Provide opportunities for congregations and their members to participate in mission experiences
- Improve communications, structures and systems across the Conference to better facilitate disciple-making

Believe again that communities in Western Pennsylvania and around the world will:

- Experience renewal resulting from the influence of healthy ministries
- Be transformed by Volunteers in Mission work teams, missions projects, and social justice ministries
- Be nurtured by the living presence of Jesus Christ

Section 6 - Priorities for 2009

The *Believe Again!* Implementation Team has identified the following nine priorities as areas of primary focus for 2009:

- Since the majority of the recommendations do not require Annual Conference action, they will be implemented by the agencies responsible for the priority and will be reported to the Implementation Team and the Conference Connectional Network.
- Aspects of the recommendations which require Annual Conference approval have been included in the legislation which is being submitted to the 2009 Annual Conference for its consideration.
- The financial implications of the recommendations are included in the *Believe Again!* Financial Plan and the Annual Conference Budget.
- The *Believe Again!* Implementation Team, the proposed Directional Oversight Team, and the Conference Connectional Network will track the implementation of the recommendations.

1 – Dismantling Racism:

- Continue dismantling racism priority and Crossroads Ministry partnership to address systemic racism

- Responsibility: Ethnic Minority Local Church
 - Financial plan:
 - Believe Again funds (2009 & 2010) - \$31,100
 - Mission Share (2008 carry-over and 2009) - \$68,900
- 2 – District Directors of Ministry (DDM):
- Keep the original intent of DDM positions alive by offering districts seed money, volunteers, etc..
 - Responsibility: Cabinet / CCN / Directional Oversight Team
 - Financial plan:
 - Believe Again funds (2009) - \$130,843
 - Mission Share (2008 carry-over) - \$169,157 has been placed in a pool by the Council on Finance and Administration to be administered by CCN. The Transition Team is proposing that decisions regarding the use of these funds be made by the Directional Oversight Team and CCN.
- 3 – Conference Connectional Network (CCN):
- Suggested items to be considered by CCN:
 - Purpose of CCN, Time and location of meetings
 - Outside facilitator to help develop process for meetings to ensure Vision – Mission - Core Value embraced and lived out.
 - Responsibility: CCN / Directional Oversight Team
- 4 - Parish and Community Development Processes:
- Every church assessed by 2012
 - Employ Parish and Community Development Director
 - Responsibility: Parish and Community Development
 - Financial plan:
 - Believe Again funds (2009 & 2010) - \$143,000
 - Mission Share (2009) - \$20,000
- 5 – New Conference Website:
- Develop and implement a new conference website with appropriate support and maintenance staff
 - Responsibility: Website Team
 - Financial plan:
 - Believe Again funds - \$23,000
 - Mission Share (2008 carryover) - \$7,000
- 6 - Conference Coordinator for Health and Wholeness:
- Hire Conference Coordinator for Health As Wholeness for one year
 - Responsibility: Health as Wholeness

- Financial plan:
 - Believe Again funds (2009 & 2010) - \$60,000

7 - Campus Ministries:

- Design and fund campus ministries
- Responsibility: Higher Education and Ministry
- Financial plan: no funding allocated at this time, pending the development of a plan

8 – Conference Staff:

- Complete staff audit and develop staffing model to support Annual Conference Mission – Vision - Core Value
- Responsibility: Director of Connectional Ministries and Conference Treasurer

9 - Poverty Symposia:

- Conduct Poverty Symposiums with high profile speakers
- Utilize poverty ministry representatives to personalize
- Complete Poverty Directory
- Responsibility: Poverty Team
- Financial plan:
 - Believe Again funds (2009) - \$5,000
 - Mission Share (2009) - \$5,000

The following recommendations were not prioritized and may still be implemented but not as a priority:

- Develop endowment for seminary debt
- Develop recommendations for Extension Ministries
- Prepare resources which will assist local churches in implementing Health as Wholeness ministries
- Organize District Boards of Laity
- Organize Partners in Ministry training
- Provide fair access to new church start and church revitalization funds

Section 7 - Transition Plan

A team consisting of Bishop Bickerton, Greg Cox, Lisa Grant, Drew Harvey, Tracy Merrick, and Michelle Wobrak met twice to develop the following ***Believe Again!*** transition plan.

Recommendations:

1 – The goal is to ensure that the Vision, Mission, and Core Value will be embodied in the life of the Annual Conference and its all of agencies.

2 – To accomplish this, a permanent Directional Oversight Team (DOT) be organized through Annual Conference action by 8/1/2009: (The legislation is included in Section 8 of this report)

Purpose:

- To continue to facilitate the embodiment of the Vision, Mission, and Core Value into the life of the Annual Conference and its agencies
- To monitor, anticipate, coordinate, plan, and implement change across the Annual Conference
- To serve as a place where all of the senior leadership functions of the Annual Conference come together for coordination and communication:
 - Conference Connectional Network (CCN) – responsible for the Vision, Mission, Core Value, and Goals of the Annual Conference
 - Executive Team – oversight of program planning and direction
 - Cabinet – supervision of leaders and churches
 - *Believe Again!* Implementation Team representatives (until 12/31/2011) -
- To move the Annual Conference to continue the culture shift:
 - to live its Vision, Mission, and Core value
 - to focus on the ministries of the Annual Conference through the local church and ministries beyond the local church
 - to become servant leaders
- To oversee the implementation of the Four Denomination's Four Areas of Focus and the Annual Conference's additional Area of Focus:
 - Principled Leaders
 - New Places for new People
 - Global Health Initiative
 - Poverty
 - Dismantling Racism
- To monitor the implementation of actions taken by General Conference, Annual Conference, the Conference Connectional Network, and other leadership groups

Responsibilities:

- To receive and consider requests for uses of the two pools of funds described below and to recommend actions regarding these requests to the Conference Connectional Network which are consistent with the vision, mission, core value, *Believe Again!* goals and objectives, and the original intent of the funds. The two pools of funds are:
 - The pool of *Believe Again!* fund balances established after the *Believe Again!* Implementation Team ceases to meet (estimated to be approximately \$150,000)
 - The pool of unused 2008 Mission Share District Director of Ministries programming funds established by the Council on Finance and Administration and to be administered by CCN (estimated to be \$169,000)

Membership: maximum of 12

- Bishop
- Director of Connectional Ministries
- Conference Treasurer
- Cabinet: Dean and one other District Superintendent
- Secretary of the Annual Conference
- Conference Connectional Network: Chairperson and two at-large members – 3
- At Large – 3 to ensure inclusiveness (*Believe Again!* Implementation Team members would fill two of these slots until 12/31/2011)

3 – The *Believe Again!* Implementation Team will meet less frequently after Annual Conference and will cease to meet by 12/31/2009.

4 – Request that the *Believe Again!* leadership develop a list action steps which were never implemented

Questions from the Implementation Team which guided the Transition Team's discussion:

- What does transition look like?
- How do we ensure continued focus on the Vision, Mission, and Core Value?
- How does *Believe Again!* become the Annual Conference's true strategic plan and not just an add-on?
- How do we manage and ensure the culture shift?
- Who will implement the big picture in the Annual Conference?
- How do we demonstrate the outcomes of *Believe Again!* ?
- What measurements show change?

- How do we model *Believe Again!* at all levels and change the culture by living it?
 - Suggest a balcony team to ensure integration with representation from the Structure Team, CCN, *Believe Again!* Implementation Team
 - Identify non-negotiables, audacious goals, appropriate theological language
 - What is the transition time line?
 - What groups will assume roles from the Implementation Team and the Task Teams
 - What will be the disposition of *Believe Again!* fund balances?
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Section 8 - *Believe Again!* Legislation

RS 801 *Believe Again!* Transition Plan

Whereas when the 2005 Annual Conference approved the *Believe Again!* Plan for Ministry, it adopted: a) Vision, Mission, and Core Value statements for the Annual Conference, b) a financial plan to support the new initiatives developed by the *Believe Again!* Task Teams, and c) goals and objectives which are consistent with the denomination's Four Areas of Focus.

Whereas the expectation since 2005 has been that the new vision, mission, and core value of the Annual Conference would guide the work of the Annual Conference for the foreseeable future and that the work of *Believe Again!* task teams would be integrated into the life of the Annual Conference,

Whereas the life of the *Believe Again!* Plan for Ministry was envisioned as a three year initiative ending in December 2009,

Whereas over \$1,200,000 has been given and designated by churches, individuals, and organizations of Western Pennsylvania to support the *Believe Again!* Plan for Ministry and it is very likely that there will be a balance in these designated funds as of December 31, 2009 of approximately \$235,000, of which approximately \$218,00 has been designated for initiatives in 2010,

Whereas, the Western Pennsylvania Council on Finance and Administration set aside approximately \$169,000 of unspent 2008 Mission Share funds to support district programming consistent with the original intent of the *Believe Again!* plan to establish District Directors of Ministry,

Therefore, be it resolved that:

1 – A Directional Oversight Team (DOT) be convened by August 1, 2009 by the resident bishop

2 – The purposes of the Directional Oversight Team would be:

a – To continue to facilitate the embodiment of the Vision, Mission, and Core Value into the life of the Annual Conference and its agencies

b - To monitor, anticipate, coordinate, plan, and implement change across the Annual Conference

c - To serve as a place where all of the senior leadership functions of the Annual Conference come together for coordination and communication, including the Conference Connectional Network, the Executive Team, the Cabinet, and the *Believe Again!* Implementation Team.

d - To move the Annual Conference to continue its culture shift to live its Vision, Mission, and Core Value, to focus on the ministries of the annual conference through the local church and ministries beyond the local church, and to become servant leaders

e - To oversee the implementation of the denomination's Four Areas of Focus: Principled Leaders, New Places for New People, Global Health Initiative, and Poverty as well as the Annual Conference focus area of Dismantling Racism.

f - To monitor the implementation of actions taken by General Conference, Annual Conference, the Conference Connectional Network, and other leadership groups

3 – An additional responsibility of the Directional Oversight Team would be to receive and consider requests for uses of the two pools of funds described below and to recommend actions regarding these requests to the Conference Connectional Network which are consistent with the Vision, Mission, Core Value, Believe Again! goals and objectives, and the original intent of the funds. The two pools of funds are:

a - The pool of *Believe Again!* fund balances remaining after the *Believe Again!* Implementation Team ceases to meet in 2009 (estimated to be approximately \$235,000, of which approximately \$218,000 has been designated for initiatives in 2010.)

b - The pool of unused 2008 Mission Share District Director of Ministries programming funds established by the Council on Finance and Administration and to be administered by CCN (estimated to be \$169,000)

4 – The Directional Oversight Team will be amenable to the Conference Connectional Network.

5 – The membership of the Directional Oversight Team would be a maximum of twelve and would include the following participants: the resident Bishop, Director of Connectional Ministries, Conference Treasurer, the Dean of the Cabinet and one other District Superintendent, Secretary of the Annual Conference, the Conference Connectional Network Chairperson, two CCN at-large members, and three at-large members to ensure inclusiveness. Through 12/31/2011 two of the three at-large members shall be individuals who were active members of the *Believe Again!* Implementation Team. The chairperson of the Directional Oversight Team will be one of the at-large members of the Conference Connectional Network

6 – The Directional Oversight Team will replace the “Monitoring Team” described in Conference Rule 3.3.16 and the conference rules will be modified to reflect the purpose, membership, and relationships of the Directional Oversight Team.

Believe Again! Implementation Team
Michelle Wobrak, Chairperson

Believe Again! Transition Team
Bishop Bickerton, Greg Cox, Lisa Grant,
Drew Harvey, Tracy Merrick, Michelle Wobrak

Conference Connectional Network
Greg Cox, Chairperson

RS 802 Connection Sunday

Whereas, the body of United Methodists in Western Pennsylvania has many members

Whereas, “For in the one spirit, we were all baptized into one body —Jews or Greeks, slaves or free-- and we were all made to drink of one Spirit”; and,

Whereas, as part of the “connection of the people called ‘Methodist,’” the Western Pennsylvania Annual Conference has much to celebrate in Christ; and,

Whereas, the Wesleyan “Grand Deposit” of Christian perfection summons us to grow in our love for God and neighbor, and to “move on” to Christian perfection in love; and

Whereas, the Annual Conference now shares a common vision **“to ignite and sustain a passionate spiritual connection among all people in Western Pennsylvania;”** and,

Whereas, many United Methodists are unaware of the benefits, blessings, and relationships within the connection,

Therefore, be it resolved that

1 – The local churches and ministries of the Western Pennsylvania Annual Conference celebrate Connection Sunday on or before July 12, 2009 and use the attached “Litany for Connection Sunday” and the Connection Sunday candle provided at Annual Conference during their worship service(s).

2 – In order to celebrate the connection on the same day across the Annual Conference, it is highly recommended that every church observe July 12, 2009 as Connection Sunday.

3 – Each pastor and/or lay member of Annual Conference provide a report during the Connection Sunday service(s).

Believe Again! Implementation Team
Michelle Wobrak, Chairperson

Believe Again! PR & Reporting Team
Drew Harvey, Chairperson

Conference Connectional Network
Greg Cox, Chairperson

A Litany for Connection Sunday Based on I Corinthians 12

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.

We praise you, O God, for the churches and people of the Western Pennsylvania Conference, one body, composed of many congregations from Erie to Jollytown, from Sharon to Johnstown, from Benezette to Bethel Park...

For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free-- and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

We praise you, O God, for the Vision of our Conference, “to ignite and sustain a passionate spiritual connection with all people in Western Pennsylvania.”

Indeed the body does not consist of one member, but of many.

Help us, O God, to strengthen the connection we share, lay and clergy, so that we may indeed “make disciples of Jesus Christ” for the transformation of our communities and world.

If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many members, yet one body.

We celebrate the appointment of our pastor(s), _____, to the _____ United Methodist Church, and covenant to join our pastor(s) in the work of ministry in Western Pennsylvania and beyond. We rejoice to share in ministry with the clergy who are associated with this congregation. (Here let those clergy in extension ministry and or those in the retired relationship be named, including those who are ordained deacons.)

...the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable...

Help us to remember brothers and sisters who have served faithfully as ministers of the Gospel in the Central Conferences with little income and pension in their older years, for they too are connected to each of us through Christ.

If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.

Enlighten our hearts and minds, to focus on the needs of our world, to shape our ministry according to the focal points of need in our Conference, nation, and global community,

- ***to develop principled Christian leaders, both clergy and lay, for the church and the world***
- ***to develop new places for new people and renew existing congregations,***
- ***to engage in ministry with the poor,***
- ***to stamp out killer diseases of poverty by improving health globally, and***
- ***to dismantle racism wherever it may exist.***

Now you are the body of Christ, and individually members of it.

We praise God for those who are members of our Annual Conference, for our Bishop, Thomas J. Bickerton; for our district superintendent, _____; for our pastor(s), _____; and our lay member(s) _____. As we hear

their report of the recent session of the Western Pennsylvania Annual Conference, we praise you, O God, for the initiatives and actions they report!

Here let the pastor(s) or lay member(s) of the Conference give an oral report.

We covenant together to support the work of Christ in our midst and in our world, and we praise you for the work of all lay persons of this local congregation and of all congregations in our conference. We give thanks for all those everywhere who seek to minister to human needs, for they inspire us all to live the love of Christ. Therefore, we join together in reaffirming our vow as members of the United Methodist Church to support the church by our prayers, presence, gifts, service and witness. And now, we pray that you, O God, will enable each of us individually, and as a congregation, to fulfill the vision of our Conference. We light this candle as a reminder of Christ, the Light of the World. Let this flame symbolize our Connection and our resolve to share Christ's light throughout the world, and to "ignite and sustain a passionate spiritual connection among all people in Western Pennsylvania" and beyond! Amen and amen!

*Here let the Connectional Candle be lit!
Following the lighting of the candle a suitable hymn such as "Pass It On" (#572
UMH)*

Section 9 - Financial Plan Summary

The *Believe Again!* Implementation Team would like to express its appreciation to all of the congregations, organizations, and individuals which have supported the *Believe Again!* Plan for Ministry with their gifts, time, talents, and prayers! The response over the last three years has been wonderful! The funds which have been donated have been and will continue to be managed very carefully to ensure that the churches and ministries of the Annual Conference receive the maximum investment possible!

Appendix C includes the detailed Financial Plan which reflects the income and expense categories. The following summary data is an extraction from that report.

Income (as of 12/31/2008):

From 450 Churches / Charges / Individuals	\$861,316
Other Receipts:	\$354,536
Total Receipts:	\$1,215,852

Expenses supported from *Believe Again!* Funds

2006 Actual	\$73,568
2007 Actual	\$281,208
2008 Actual	\$58,649
2009 Projected	\$567,461
2010 Projected	\$218,450
Projected Expenses through 12/31/2010:	\$1,199,336

The proposed Directional Oversight Team will oversee any expenditures from *Believe Again!* fund balances after the Implementation Team meetings cease in late 2009. This includes both the projects designated to receive allocations totaling \$218,450 in 2010 and the projected balance of \$16,516 as of 12/31/2010.

Section 10 - History

The following outline is a brief history of key events associated with the *Believe Again!* Plan for Ministry.

2005

- Conference Council decided to proceed with a strategic planning process and contracted with Strategy Solutions to serve as consultants
- Interactive listening sessions at Annual Conference kickoff the process and reflect broad-based support for change
- 100 listening posts conducted across the Annual Conference
- Listening process extended to include focus groups of targeted audiences; Internet and paper-based forms made available to churches
- First draft of Mission, Core Values, Goals, and Objectives developed by Strategic Planning Committee

2006

- Internet-based feedback solicited to receive reactions to the Vision, Mission, Core Value, Goals, and Objectives
- Strategic Plan known as *Believe Again!* presented and adopted by Annual Conference in June
- *Believe Again!* kites distributed at Annual Conference
- Implementation Team organized
- Part-time *Believe Again!* Director hired (Tracy Merrick)
- Full-time Missions / VIM Director hired (Diane Miller)

2007

- Churches supported *Believe Again!* financially by giving or pledging \$1 million
- Eighth Avenue Place in Homestead initiated as a new community of faith with \$50,000 support from *Believe Again!* funds
- Volunteers in Mission (VIM) experiences organized by Diane Miller: Louisiana, Alaska, and Western Pennsylvania responses to flooding in Aliquippa and Plum Borough
- Communications audit completed
- Comprehensive technology plan completed, internal technology infrastructure enhanced, and multiple systems upgraded
- Annual Conference approved four *Believe Again!* resolutions:
 - Core Value amended to include “to spread scripture holiness over the land”
 - Mandatory Dismantling Racism Training
 - Expanded Conference Connectional Network
 - *Believe Again!* Funding Plan
- *Believe Again!* line items included in the 2008 Conference Budget adopted by Annual Conference
- *Believe Again!* Bible Study written by Drew Harvey distributed at Annual Conference
- By yearend, 16 *Believe Again!* Teams were meeting, involving 120 members, 30 serving on a Conference committee for the first time:
 - Implementation Team

- Cabinet Study Team
- Church Assessment Team
- Clergy Study Team
- District Study Team
- Health as Wholeness Team
- Laity Study Team
- Local Church Strategic Placement Team
- Mission Share Task Team
- Newest Methods of Funding Task Team
- Poverty Strategy Team
- PR and Reporting Team
- Racial / Ethnic Inclusion Team
- Structure Study Task Team
- Support Systems Team
- Technology Team

2008

- Task Teams developed recommendations and reports in January
- Implementation Team Retreat in February:
 - Reviewed recommendations and reports
 - Aligned recommendations
 - Prioritized the financial plan
 - Approved legislation and recommendations
 - Approved hiring of the following staff, subject to funding approval: Five full-time district program staff persons, position to support new church starts, church strategic placement, and church health, and a Communications Director
- Task Teams prepare final reports in March
- Implementation Team gives final approval to far-reaching resolutions, recommendations, and report on April 15th
- *Believe Again!* line items fully integrated into 2009 Conference Budget prepared for 2008 Annual Conference
- Brian Bauknight hired in Leadership Development capacity and Bob Higginbotham appointed as full-time Assistant to the Bishop effective July 1st
- Volunteer in Missions (VIM) experiences organized / being organized by Diane Miller: Louisiana, Habitat House during Annual Conference, Paraguay, Russia
- Poverty Study Team has sponsored two highly successful life-transforming Poverty Simulations with 150 people participating
- Five sessions of Dismantling Racism Training 101 were led by Ed and Lisa Rhymes with over 850 clergy and laity participating
- Standards for Laity in Leadership document developed and distributed by the Laity Study Team

- Interim Conference structure was approved by Annual Conference and implemented thereafter. All agency members were invited to participate in the Orientation and Organization Day on September 6th.
- Expanded Conference Connectional Network with all agency chairpersons present began to meet in September.
- Clergy evaluation process was finalized and Staff-Parish Relations Committee (SPRC) chairpersons were trained by District Superintendents.
- District Lay Leaders were trained in fulfilling their roles and prepared to organize District Boards of Laity.
- By year-end, 10 *Believe Again!* Teams were meeting and four of them have become permanent committees of the Annual Conference. Two new *Believe Again!* Teams were formed and involved more individuals who had not served on Conference committees previously.

Implementation Team

- Cabinet / Clergy / District Study Team
- Ethnic Local Church Concerns – permanent committee
- Extension Ministries Team
- Health as Wholeness Team – permanent committee
- Laity Study Team
- Parish and Community Development – permanent committee
- Poverty Strategy Team – permanent committee
- PR and Reporting Team
- Website Team

2009

- Two Initial orientation sessions conducted by Crossroads Ministry of Chicago. A two day Crossroads working retreat has been scheduled to begin the process of developing a comprehensive long-range plan to address systemic racism within the Annual Conference.
- Partners in Ministry training initiated during a weekend retreat with Roy Trueblood with approximately 70 attendees.
- Four sessions of Dismantling Racism 201 training led by Ed and Lisa Rhymes have been scheduled
- Implementation Team Retreat in January led by Nan Foltz:
 - Reviewed recommendations and reports
 - Determined prioritized set of recommendations reflected in this report
- Implementation Team prepared a funding plan to support the prioritized initiatives

- Transition Team developed a set of recommendations to ensure that the Vision, Mission, and Core Value continue to guide the work of the Annual Conference and to establish a Directional Oversight Team
 - District Director of Ministries positions put on hold and a pool of funds was established to support the ministries they were intended to provide
 - At the Bishop's Days on the Districts, the Health As Wholeness Team has presented the concepts of wholistic health and Highmark staff members have encouraged Highmark participants to take advantage of the services which Highmark provides
 - Local church Staff-Parish Relations Committees (SPRC) have begun to use the new SPRC self-evaluation and clergy evaluation processes
 - A new website for the Annual Conference has been purchased and phase I features should be implemented before Annual Conference in June 2009.
 - Some District Boards of Laity are being organized.
-

Section 11 - Appendices:

Appendix A: Extracts from Team Reports and Team Member Listings:

The following teams and team conveners have been responsible for leading the work of Western Pennsylvania *Believe Again!* Plan for Ministry. All of the work presented in this report has been produced by the individuals and teams listed here. They all deserve a tremendous THANK YOU for all of their efforts. And, a special word of gratitude needs to be expressed to the team conveners / co-conveners who have walked the extra mile to provide tremendous leadership!

This appendix includes extracts from the reports submitted by the *Believe Again!* work teams. Their full reports will be included in an expanded copy of this report on the new website.

The team participants listed are those who have been active since Annual Conference 2008.

Implementation Team

Chairperson: Michelle Wobrak

Vice Chairperson: Drew Harvey

Secretary: Jim Pond

Team Members: Bishop Tom Bickerton, Harry Barbus, Dick Carlson, Sung Shik Chung, David Coul, Faith Geer, Pat Harbison, Ron Hoellein, Joy Conti, Dave Keller, Leanna Lake, Mary Lou Lazear, Tracy Merrick, Pat Nelson, Eric Park, Gary Pennington, Roberta Plohr, Paul Ritchey, Paul Taylor, Duane Thompson, William Meekins, Peggy Ward, Kellie Wild, Bob Wilson

Cabinet / District Study Team

Convener(s): Mary Lou Lazear and Faith Geer

Team members: Joan Reasinger

Recommendations: Specific recommendations and their results as follows:

1. Salaries for District Superintendents made consistent and determined linked to clergy salaries:
Action: passed by AC08.
Measurement: instituted and done
2. Wrote job description for District Director of Ministries
Action: passed along to the Cabinet and appropriate personnel committee members.
Measurement: get the persons hired and working to make the bridge happen. See that District Offices are working as Teams in a new paradigm. Local churches are becoming more FEF
3. Supported the Clergy Study Team's recommendations where the DS leadership was needed
Action: Board of Ordained Ministry (BOM) has reorganized its structure to be aligned with the Clergy Team's recommendations.
Measurement: BOM meets and discusses items within each silo/section of the system so that FEF clergy can be developed.
4. Taught local church SPRCs how to use the Evaluation tool created by the Clergy Study Team
Action: Fall meetings to train SPRCs were held throughout the Conference
Measurement: a) SPRC using the Evaluation system, continuing formation classes will be offered that relate to identified needs of clergy,

b) courses taken and recorded by a centralized system

5. Certification of candidates for ministry becomes aligned with the Believe Again outcomes for Faithful, Effective and Fruitful clergy

Action: a) candidates for ministry being supported with mentors
 b) candidates screened with trained District Committee on Ministry
 c) BOM interview process using FEF language to qualify candidates for ministry.
Measurement: FEF clergy in compliance with Believe Again! expectations

Clergy Study Team

Convener(s): Pat Harbison, Ron Hoellein

Team members: Sally Ernst, Deborah Flint, George Gerhart, Skip Green, Kimberly Greway, Don Henley, Tom Kennedy, Tracy Merrick, Terry Shaunessy, Tom Strandburg, Duane Thompson

The Clergy Study Team (CST) submitted a 75 page report of its work and recommendations last year to the Implementation Team, The Bishop, Cabinet, Clergy Session, and the whole Annual Conference. The sixteen recommendations were endorsed and were referred to appropriate groups in the life of the Annual Conference. Several of these recommendations came back to the Clergy Study Team for further refinement.

Recommendations and status:

1-Development of an intentional recruitment system for camps, youth groups, and campus ministry

This recommendation has been referred to BOOM for implementation. A BOOM team is in the process of designing and implementing this recommendation.

2-Renew significant investment in Campus Ministry as outreach from Annual Conference

This has been referred to a variety of committees and as yet as there seems to be little progress toward this goal. One fear is that it has become an agenda for several groups so no one has taken ownership of this recommendation.

3-Develop new models of mentoring systems beyond Discipline required reports

This recommendation is currently in process. A BOOM committee is examining the whole system of mentoring. Some of this progress had to wait until the 2008 Discipline guidelines were developed after the Forth Worth General Conference.

4-Articulate seminary expectations to include leadership training and Wesleyan background beyond minimal history, polity, and doctrine requirement

This recommendation is in process beginning with the January interview process for those seeking provisional conference relationship. Currently there is no clearly defined articulation of how this recommendation is to be implemented by BOOM.

5-Expect all Probationary Candidates and Full Member and Elder candidates to be able to clearly articulate Wesleyan theology, tradition, and polity

BOOM is in the process of determining how this recommendation will be defined, articulated, and applied.

6-Develop regional District Committee on Ministry (DCom) concepts to improve quality, consistency, and mandate BOOM training for DCom members

This design is still being worked through philosophically and pragmatically. Training of DCom members is in process and had to wait until new Discipline guidelines were published and produced. These new training opportunities are scheduled in the late winter of 2009.

7-Development of a 3 million dollar endowment for reducing graduate student indebtedness or for scholarship support for graduate education

The Clergy Study Team has recruited a committee of persons to begin to work on this goal. The group is recruited but has yet to meet to begin this process.

8-Implement Continuing Education (CE) requirements using Olmsted Manor as a base and providing ongoing continuing formation opportunities for pastors to fulfill CE Discipline requirements and continuing education compacts with DS and local church SPRC

A Continuing Formation Committee has been formed with representatives from Pastor's Academy, Olmsted Manor, BOOM, Annual Conference staff, and anyone who has a stake in continuing formation. This group is process right now determining a wide array of continuing formation opportunities based upon the CE guidelines that are a part of the new three year Pastor's Evaluation process. This committee will shortly have a range of possibilities and guidelines for all clergy as the first round of pastoral evaluations are completed in the spring of 2009.

9-DS will focus on management and accountability through intentional process of supervision

This process has been implemented with the new evaluation process and procedures that were designed and introduced at Annual Conference 2008 and in educational sessions in each district in the fall of 2008.

10-Enhance DS Disciplinary responsibilities of pastoral support through developing systems via area chaplaincies, peer support, or other models

This has been a Bishop and Cabinet responsibility. They will have to describe progress in this area.

11-Assign a task team to examine clergy housing

This was assigned to the Bishop to appoint such a team. The Bishop and Cabinet will have to describe progress of this recommendation.

12-Revise and Update current "Living and Working Conditions" of the pastor

This was assigned to BOOM and BOOM will have to describe progress on this document.

13-Examine current health plan to ensure all pastors have reasonable distance access medical and hospital care

This was assigned to Board of Pensions and they will have to describe progress on this recommendation.

14-Study process of setting pastoral salaries that is not current salary based

This was referred to Cabinet, BOOM, and Equitable Salary Committee. They will have to describe where they stand on this recommendation.

15-Develop a consistent Conference-wide evaluation process

This was a priority of the CST and this has been done. A new evaluation process is being implemented beginning January 2009. It is a three year process that meets the specifications outlined by the Bishop. It meets all Disciplinary requirements. It addresses weaknesses and strengths and seeks to improve the faithful, effective, and fruitful work of pastors. It also seeks to make the SPRC, Church Council, and local churches become the most effective channels of ministry that they can become. This is linked to an ongoing CE process for every local pastor under appointment.

16-Design an intentional strategy for funding transitions

This has been referred to Cabinet, Bishop, and BOOM. They will have to describe process on this recommendation.

It is important to note that the Board of Ordained Ministry has been reorganized according to the throughput chart that moves a candidate from call to exiting. A person has been added to the Executive Committee of BOOM whose responsibility it is to monitor the recommendations of the Clergy Study Team in regard to BOOM function. The Clergy Study Team has since June added appropriate persons from BOOM to sit on our committee to facilitate transition of recommendations.

Several of the recommendations from the Clergy Study Team have been referred to other groups. These groups may be presenting significant funds for the implementation of their recommendations. The group responsibility for significant investment in Campus Ministry, the group for developing funds for reduction of clergy indebtedness, the group looking at "Living and Working Conditions" of the pastor, and any subcommittee of BOOM with new responsibilities may all ask for significant dollars to fulfill their obligations. These recommendations have gone beyond the purview of the Clergy Study Team.

Extension Ministries

Convener(s): Donna Fetterman and Jack Aupperle

Team members: Larry Bridge, Drew Harvey, Tracy Merrick, Kellie Wild

The Extension Ministries Team was convened to examine the relationship of those appointed to extension ministries and the annual conference. From the very beginning, it was evident that much clarification was needed. It was evident that there was a disconnect between those serving in extension ministries and the life of the annual conference. Somehow, extension ministry was thought of

being something other than ministry. It was perceived as being outside of the life of the church. There were even concerns that extension ministers were seen as not really being in ministry. At the most extreme point of concern there was a sense that the conference had knowingly or unknowingly conveyed the idea that ministry only happens in the local church.

It is evident that there are countless issues that involve several levels and areas of the conference. There are issues concerning the Cabinet as well as the Board of Ordained Ministry. There are questions about the real value that we place upon those in extension ministry. What role do they have to play in the life of the annual conference? Are they named to committees and involved in ongoing emphases? There was a strong sentiment that we need to create a setting where we can dialogue about these issues. The committee strongly believes that this dialogue requires a Priority Task Force comprised of people who are mindful of these issues and willing to address them.

The work of the Extension Ministries Team has been exciting and informative. Our discussion of ministry has yielded several key concepts that we believe to be Biblical and very much in the Wesleyan heritage. The scripture is clear that ministry has many expressions. Not all ministries address the same constituency or expressed need. The ministry of Jesus suggests a wide and varied approach that dealt with a vast spectrum of human conditions and situations. Pauline thinking suggests that we must be all things to all people. Martin Luther understood the wonder and potential of ministry when he spoke about “The priesthood of all believers.” In the life of Jesus, the teaching of Paul and the example of Martin Luther, we see that ministry has countless faces.

Our team has concluded that ministry, no matter its setting, scope, or style is still ministry. It is called into existence by the questions, needs, hopes and dreams of the people it seeks to serve. Ministry in the Wesleyan sense is based on the notion that “The world is my parish.” This means that wherever the living Word of God is faithfully proclaimed in the world, ministry is being done in that place and time. It is essential to discuss ministry in its myriad expressions so that each ministry is perceived and treated with equity. It is even more important to understand ministry in the widest context. To do less may mean ignoring a very real need or opportunity to serve Christ in our age. Ministry done in local churches and countless other settings needs to be perceived as valid ministry. All ministries are valid.

This means many things. It means that some human need such as hunger, disease prevention, or education is being addressed. It means that some opportunity for life such as vocational direction or personal achievement is realized. Ministry means that the lonely are visited, the forgotten are remembered, the disenfranchised are empowered and the lost found. It can also mean that people may discover in the ministry of the church such vital experiences of God that they embrace the Gospel of Jesus, thus becoming

disciples. Our discussions concluded that each time the church reaches toward the community or the community reaches toward the church, ministry in a variety of shapes can happen.

A second understanding of extension ministry means that each time the church reaches out in an extension of itself into the world that expression needs to be grounded in the Christian core values of love and redemption. The term extension ministry is redundant. Any extension of the church into any phase of the culture is done in the name of Christ. We are motivated, guided and directed in all of our ministries by the ethics and values that Jesus taught. Our purpose for any ministry by laity or the ordained is to extend the love of God in Christ into the human condition. While that extension can take many forms, its inspiration and gift is the redeeming love of God, which is revealed in Jesus. That is why we go. That is why we serve. That is why we do whatever it is that we do in addressing the human condition. Our ministry is consistently guided and called into existence by the mandate of Jesus to care for the world. We must never lose sight of this cardinal reality. We are involved in ministry, no matter its place or style, at the call of Christ. Ministry means meeting the human condition in the context of Jesus Christ.

Another area of interest involves the notion that ministry can and should be a matrix of interaction which seeks to utilize and support every agent for good. Christianity must face the reality that we share a great deal in common with other faith traditions. While we read from different books, worship in different ways, and embrace different symbols, the faith community is truly an intersection, a matrix at which there can be a sharing of common principle and purpose. To that end, it is highly recommended that our structures acknowledge and support this concept that we have named "The Fabric of Ministry." This phrase suggests that ministry is not about separate tracks of endeavor competing in the world for members or turf. It means that ministry understands that people of different theological traditions can come together to share in a common purpose of hope and support for our world. It is ministry that embraces attempts by all persons and traditions that speak to and become involved with the human condition. It is understood that such ministries must and do move beyond the literal and figurative walls of the buildings and institutions. The Fabric of Ministry concept relates to the hungry, the forgotten, the disenfranchised, the victims of injustice and the rejected of our society. The Fabric of Ministry is a concept, which creates an umbrella of ministry that covers the widest variety of styles, traditions and priorities that one could imagine.

A mosquito does not know the difference between an United Methodist net and an Islamic net. Hunger is equally satisfied by Jewish bread as by Catholic bread. Health is encouraged by physicians of many theological stripes. Our hope is that the structures of our denomination and conference reflect the strengths of many hands sharing in many tasks as well as affirming the uniqueness of our tradition. The times in which we live call for and will benefit from a Fabric of Ministry

approach rather than a separatist style of ministry. The duplication of ministry or arrogance about the manner in which it is done is not helpful.

Lastly it is our conviction that the issues raised in this document are of sufficient complexity and importance that people should be brought together to study, discuss, and make recommendations regarding structural changes in our denomination and conference. Structure is important and tends to expand or limit our degree of effectiveness. That discussion should explore the need for change that will enhance our effectiveness as a communion as well as enhance our inclusive understanding of the Gospel. The directions that this report envisions require a broad and wide reaching discussion so that details can reflect an appropriate approach to doing the ministry of Christ in our time. People from every level of church life need to come together to facilitate this important work. We recommend that focus groups be designed to gather data. It may also be desirable to gather this kind of data anonymously in some way.

A Priority Task Force should be created to determine the nature of change needed to increase the effectiveness of our ministry. From the outset, the issue of change should be thoroughly understood, mindful that the changes needed to serve our time may not be incremental but systemic. These changes will mandate that we move beyond an understanding of faith that is self-serving, self-preserving and self-fulfilling. The world in which we find ourselves is shockingly similar to the world of John Wesley. The needs of our society are extremely challenging. We must embrace Dietrich Bonhoeffer's concept of a world come of age. We must speak to that world in ways that respect it and acknowledge its diversity. The church must encounter the world in a manner that is responsive to its questions rather than being consumed by antiquated answers.

Our discussions have concluded that there are countless opportunities for the church to be involved in ministry, which holds a broad understanding of purpose. We do not need to make artificial distinctions between "our way" and "another way." It is possible to embrace the widest interpretation of ministry without losing a sense of its uniqueness. It is imperative that we envision change as a friend rather than an enemy. Structure can either be an enabler of progress or a deterrent to creative ways of looking at the world. Sage advice once said "some men look at the world as it is and say 'why?'. I dream of things that never were and say why not."* (* This is a quote from George Bernard Shaw)

Health as Wholeness Team

Convener(s): Joy Burt Conti

Team members: Leanna Lake, Tracy Merrick, Becky Pomeroy, Lois Slocum, Dara Sterling, Elena Swann, Dean Ziegler

The vision of the team is for the development of “communities of * wholistic wellness” throughout the Annual Conference --- communities that support and nourish the development of the interrelated and dynamic wellness of body, mind and spirit. Wholistic wellness helps then to promote and sustain that passionate spiritual connection with Christ.

*Wholistic wellness includes the spiritual, physical, psychological, mental, social/interpersonal and environmental aspects of wellness.

The mission of the Health As Wholeness Team is to provide leadership, connection and resources that will assist the people of Western Pennsylvania to live lives that are wholistically healthy (body, mind and spirit) and therefore will enable them to more effectively fulfill the mission of the United Methodist Church, “to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.”

The recommendations of this team are based on the scripture “to love” – to love God through service to others, to love ourselves by practicing wholistic health promoting behaviors (for body, mind and spirit) and to love others through providing them with the care, information, tools and opportunities to live wholistically healthy lives.

Purpose of the Health As Wholeness Focus:

- Support and develop health ministries in local churches and extension ministries that reach out in love to promote health and care of clergy, staff, congregations and communities
- Provide and promote information, tools, resources and opportunities for wholistic wellness for all in Western Pennsylvania: clergy, staff, congregations and surrounding communities

Recommendations:

- #1 – Conduct Promotional/educational campaign, “Following the Path to Wholeness” to promote wellness: (2009 and beyond)
- Presentations by team members on John Wesley’s teachings and health and wholeness
 - Newsletters on Wellness from HIGHMARK (Example: “Maintain Don’t Gain” newsletters included in E-News and on Conference website during December 2008 and beyond)
 - Articles on Health as Wholeness by/through team members
 - Promote the worksite health promotion programs from HIGHMARK available throughout the conference

- Conference web site, newsletters, emails and “Cross and Flame”; communications --- staff assistance will continue to be needed
- Information resources on wellness on the Conference web site
- Investigate use of Arkansas Conference Web site
- Continued identification, production and dissemination of materials and tools for wellness programs and health ministry.
- Presence at Annual Conference in June 2009 and 2010
 - 2009 - Presentation on Wholistic Health with possible theme: “Following the path to wholeness and refurbishing your temple”
 - Possibilities:
 - Presentation on Health as Wholeness
 - Table with information and resources for wellness
 - Walking marathon daily with districts competing for prizes
 - Preparation for marathon through HIGHMARK programs:
 - 10,000 Steps
 - Strides for Health
 - 2010 – Significant blitz on Wholistic Health

#2 – Promote use of HIGHMARK resources for the wellness of clergy and lay staff: (2009 and beyond)

- Coordination with Board of Pensions by Health As Wholeness (HAW) Team
- Coordination of resources and programs with HIGHMARK by HAW Team
- Coordination with HIGHMARK for Bishop’s District Days by HAW Team (10 programs in first half of 2009)
- Promotion of HIGHMARK resources
- Promotion of the Health Risk Assessment
- Promotion of Health as Wholeness

#3 - Form Wellness Teams for creating wellness-promoting opportunities for clergy and lay staff

- Formation of pilot Wellness Team at Conference Center (February 2009)
- Formation of other Wellness Teams (2009 and beyond)
- Coordination of HIGHMARK resources with Wellness Teams

#4 - Coordinate HIGHMARK Worksite Wellness programs that provide the tools and opportunities for improved wholistic health of clergy and staff groups / Wellness Teams

- Coordinate and promote community based programs and worksite wellness program

- HAW team members will take training to increase the offerings around the conference
- Examples:
 - Eat Well for Life I and II
 - Discover Relaxation within I and II
 - Diabetes Prevention and Awareness
 - 10,000 Step Challenge
 - Strides for Health
 - Bands on the run
 - And many more

#5 - Promote, coordinate and implement wellness- promoting programs provided through the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits (GBOPHB) for the wellness of clergy, spouses and staff.

- Servant Leadership: A model for Personal and Professional Self-Care
 - First level training: Joy Conti, Barb Lewis, and Bob Lewis have been trained
 - Second level training: They will be trained in March 2009
 - Training throughout WPA beginning in second half of 2009
- Computerized Pedometer Program (available after June 30, 2009)
 - Clergy and Spouses can earn money while walking and improving their health
 - Half of the cost paid by GBOPHB --- cost to conference of \$1.50/ person/month
 - Training to be announced
 - Coordination by a dedicated position (#11)
- Care Management and Employee Assistance Program – to be announced

#6 – Identify and offer other Wholistic wellness programs for clergy and lay staff (Example, “Walk with Jesus”)

#7 - Promote the care and nurture of clergy and their families that is necessary for the development of their wholistic wellness. Health as Wholeness Team will work closely with BOOM and the Cabinet and through health ministry teams and SPRC committees of local churches and extension ministries

- Provide information, resources and support for the development of Health Ministry Teams which support:

- Outreach ministries that support the work of the clergy in such areas as visitation, support groups, transportation, etc.
- Health- promoting opportunities, such as the walking program “Walk To Jerusalem”
- Provide resources and information materials/videos on care and nurture of clergy and families
- Participate in development of training for SPRC committees
- Investigate the use of Virginia Conference Thrival Kit for the development of programs for Western Pennsylvania

#8 – Conduct Demonstration Program in Connellsville District with STEPs program of Fayette County:

- For Clergy and spouses (January 2009)
 - Begins with day of caring and an opportunity to learn what support and programs would be desired by clergy and spouses
 - Additional programs will be provided as requested
- For Congregations (February 2009)
 - Begins with a day of sharing and sampling of health ministry tools
 - Additional support and programs will be offered based on requests of individual congregations

#9 – Promote Communities of Wholistic Wellness through Health Ministry Teams in local churches, building on their ministries and the gifts of all members. (\$7,000)

- Provide consultation to local churches and extension ministries for development and expansion of health ministries
- Develop pool of trained volunteers to serve each district for support to health ministry development and expansion.
- Provide tools and resources for health ministries
- Provide other tools and information on the new web site for easy access and reduced cost.
- Provide mini-grants (similar to Central PA conference) for the development and expansion of health ministries
- Develop tools, materials and training for health ministers in the local churches and extension ministries.
- Continue dialogue with other faith traditions and their health ministry programs.

#10 - Implement a plan for easily, accessible and comprehensive care for mental, interpersonal and spiritual health, all parts of wholistic wellness, by the Health as Wholeness Team working closely with BOOM and the Cabinet.

#11 -- Conference Position of Coordinator for Health as Wholeness (\$50,000)

- 2008 General Conference mandated formation of a Health as Wholeness Team in every Conference and the GBOPHB and the General Board of Church and Society recommend that each church also develop a Health as Wholeness Team.
- The work required to bring about a culture shift in the understanding of what wholeness means and to engage people in health promoting behaviors necessitates at least a part time person.
- To support and provide the resources to all local churches and extension ministries in the development of Health Ministries requires more additional time and expertise than Health as Wholeness volunteers have.
- Effective programs in other conferences have demonstrated that a person dedicated to these issues is needed for success.
- Successful promotion and coordination of GBPHB's programs, such as the pedometer program, will require time, personnel, computer and promotional materials.

#12 -- Investigate grant possibilities and respond accordingly to find additional funding for health ministries -- Was begun by Health as Wholeness Team and will be ongoing.

- Methodist Foundations
- Local and national funders with a particular interest in faith-based initiatives
- Highmark

Laity Study Team

Convener(s): Gary Pennington

Team Members: Joel Garrett, Sharon Gregory, Cooky Seth, Tracy Merrick, Pat Morris, Louise Patterson, Sharon Schwab, Sandra Zeigler-Jackson

Recommendations:

- District Boards of Laity – Support the District Lay Leaders and District Superintendents in forming District Boards of Laity and provide up to \$5,000 in funds to support kickoff meetings. Some, but not all, Districts have already organized District Boards of Laity.
- Partners in Ministry Training – organize initial Partners in Ministry training with Roy Trueblood with funding of \$15,000. Roy Trueblood

came to Western Pennsylvania to conduct the Partners in Ministry kickoff in March 2009 with District Superintendents and teams from across the Conference participating.

Parish and Community Development

Convener(s): Pat Nelson

Team members: Kevin Haley, Beth Nelson, Sharon Schwab, Chris Livermore, Emma Smith, Sang Choi, Thom Bonomo, John Phipps, Karen Phillips, Chris Whitehead, Jeff Bobin, Don Scandrol, Lisa Grant

Recommendations include:

- a fair and equitable application process for all churches and communities of faith to access money available through our committee, and only with the authorization of the P&CD team
- the development of a Conference “Viability Study” process (and funding) to assist the Cabinet with work done in para. #213
- a conference-wide training program, including development of lay leadership, for the instruction and experience of planting, developing, and reproducing present and potential communities of faith
- the development of an “apprenticeship” program to create on-going development of churches in the areas of assessment, “birthing” and leadership development
- the eventual employment of a director for the work being done by the committee
- a strategic timeline and financial chart for the funding and development of new church starts

Poverty Team

Convener(s): David Keller and Glenna Wilson

Team members: Judy Bailey, Tom Barnicott, Audrey Bell, Pat Cleary, Terry Collins, Cheryl Davis, Jan Emblidge, Terry Guiste, Melanie Hildebrandt, Gretchen Hulse, Dick Monheim, Paul Schradling, Glenna Wilson

Through our “poverty simulations,” mentoring “circles” workshops, and our poverty ministry directory, we intent to “equip and empower” our congregations to wholeheartedly be personally involved in poverty ministries. These ministries are all a consequence of the transformation of the heart by Christ within us. We hope that General Conference ministries and/or Annual Conference speakers (the choice of whom is made by the bishop), will contribute to that spiritual chemistry of warming and transforming hearts to be disciples of Jesus. Our focus is to make ever more clear the connection between the call of Jesus to us and the needs of the poor.

We have scheduled “Poverty simulations” March 28 (Connellsville), April 26 (Erie), and this summer at the School of Mission (one for the youth and one for the adults).

We intend to lift up the concept of “mentoring” through the example of a ministry called “Circles.”

We are continuing to put together our “Poverty Ministry Directory” with descriptions of Western PA and global poverty ministries that can serve as illuminating examples or as ministries in which local churches can directly participate.

Ethnic Minority Local Church (Formerly Racial Ethnic Inclusion Team)

Convener(s): William Meekins, Jr. and Robert A. Wilson

Team members: Annette Bolds, Sung Chik Chung, Sharon Gregory, Leanna Lake, Tracy Merrick, Troy Miller, Bruce Mould, Beth Nelson, Peggy Ward, Kellie Wild

Our intent is to increase awareness and offer training so leaders have the skills to create change which eliminates racism and requires inclusion.

Embracing persons of color is certainly a mandate as we take seriously our calling to love God and neighbor. Such loving challenges us to move beyond simply welcoming to full inclusion of others respecting and including the voice and leadership they bring.

Taking intention steps to dismantle racism at any level will create a visible, working, diverse, spirit-filled culture on the conference, district, and local church levels.

We have worked with a holistic approach to seek transformation of head and heart concerning prejudice and bias as well as transformation needed to eradicate systemic racism.

We have completed round one of cultural proficiency workshops with Rhymes Consulting services and four more intense workshops are scheduled for 2009.

The initial Workshops to be facilitated by Crossroads Ministry of Chicago are scheduled for January 24 and January 31. Bishop Bickerton has assured us of his participating in the one on January 24. It was intended that these would happen in 2008, but a variety of obstacles prohibited them from being scheduled.

The 2.5 Day Initial Training Workshop of our Dismantling Systemic Racism Team is scheduled for April 30-May 1 & 2.

STRUCTURE STUDY TEAM

Task Team Convener(s): ROBERTA PLOHR

Team members: John Emmett, Mary Grey Emmett, Tracy Merrick, Paul Taylor

An interim conference structure has been implemented that is responsive to the needs of local churches and supports and Annual Conference as it seeks to live into its Mission, Vision and Core value. Specifically, this interim structure will assist the Annual Conference in effectively providing its mission of leadership, connection and resources for the making of disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

The new structure allows the Conference Connectional Network (CCN) to directly communicate with the current entities in order to develop a common understanding of how we as an Annual Conference can live into the Mission, Vision and Core Value by providing leadership, connection and resources. This interim step will lead to a more defined network of teams.

Systems Support Team

Task Team Convener(s): Paul Ritchey

Team members:

Recommendations:

#1: We recommended to the Implementation Team that an inclusion be provided for a Conference Communications Director to coordinate communications from the Conference Center to the local church.

IN PROGRESS, there is a Job Description being worked on by the Conference Communications Team and the Conference Structures Team. Sample Job Description was submitted by Systems Support Team in October of 2008

#2. We recommended to the Implementation team that they include a provision for a full-time paid Design and Content Manager to coordinate technology for Web Design and Operation, or to hire an outside consultant to maintain this position.

This recommendation is DELAYED; the issue has been referred to the Conference Communications Director for action.

#3. We recommended to the Implementation team that they include a provision for the Technology Team to become a permanent and standing committee of the Annual Conference in its planning.

This recommendation is IN PROGRESS; the Technology Team continues to meet at regular intervals and is in the process of becoming a permanent committee.

#4. We recommended to the Implementation team that they review the budget to insure inclusion of the Marketing and the Design for Web Page Development in the CMS Provider Line Item, and the Conference positions listed in the previous recommendations.

IN PROGRESS, referred to the Budget Committee for review.

#5. We recommended that the Interlink not move to an Electronic Only Copy.

IN PROGRESS, referred to the Budget Committee for review.

Website Task Force

Convener(s): Frank Bloise

Website Team: Larry Bridge, Thelma Castor, Ron Fleming, Lisa Grant, Ben Harsch, Tracy Merrick, Mark Rehn

The Website Team sees a new Annual Conference website as a key tool which will assist the Annual Conference “ignite and sustain passionate spiritual connections with Christ among all people in Western PA” by helping people connect with local churches, by conveying information, by providing resources, by calling newcomers into the community, and through internal and external communications.

In support of the Annual Conference mission, the new website will function as a robust portal to provide resources, to support connections, to call to community, to encourage involvement and to communicate externally and internally.

The new website will also be a means of conveying the messages of our core value of love and our key values of integrity, accountability, and inclusiveness internally within the Annual Conference and externally to the world about us.

The website is being developed with all ministries in mind, whether in the local church or beyond. It will be easy to use and will serve as a key repository of resources / information for both United Methodists and non-United Methodists.

The Annual Conference has signed a contract with Brick River, a website vendor which supports thirty United Methodist Annual Conferences, with the expectation that the first features of the website will be implemented before Annual Conference 2009. It is the team’s understanding that most of the functions listed below can be supported by the features already included in the website which has been selected!

The following phased implementation approach has been developed:

Phase One – Target: June 2009

- Directory of churches, clergy, and agencies
- Conference Calendar
- Conference Forms
- News and Stories
- Find-A-Church
- Media Resource Center
- On-line Event Registration – pilot functionality included in website
- Columns by Bishop, Director of Connectional Ministries, Treasurer, etc.
- Blog pilot – start with Bishop’s blog
- Data feed from Mission Base systems

Phase Two – Following Phase One (possible completion in September – October 2009)

- District Calendars
- District “Spaces”
- Missions / VIM “Space”
- Youth “Space”
- Safe Sanctuaries – depending upon functionality
- Resources – manuals, journals, etc
- Event Registration – complete implementation
- Financial – budget, mission share, agency income / expenses
- Statistical Tables
- Candidacy module
- Blogs – other Conference-wide

Future Phases – Following Phase Two (2009, 2010, and beyond)

- Media Resource Center – possible enhancements, if necessary
- Local Church calendars
- Conference Agency “spaces”
- Local Church “spaces”
- Camping Module
- Clergy tools – resources, blogs, etc.
- Educational Programs
- Data – Churches, cabinet, agencies
- On-line Meetings, forums
- On-line Donations

Recommendations:

#1 – Select, design, and implement a new website for the Annual Conference in 2009 which meets the expectations and includes features prioritized from the list in the attached Website working document. The Brick River package has been selected and \$30,000 has been allocated in the *Believe Again!* Financial Plan to cover the purchase, implementation, and training costs.

#2 – Develop a recommendation for staff to support the website. The design for this staff will be dependent upon the product and the features selected. During the initial stages of implementation as each Conference agency establishes its own web space, the need for this support will be greater. Probable range of costs \$15,000 - \$35,000 for the first year.

Appendix B: Standards for Laity in Leadership:



Standards for Laity in Leadership

Annual Conference Vision: To ignite and sustain a passionate, spiritual connection with Christ among all people in Western Pennsylvania.

Annual Conference Mission: To provide leadership, connection, and resources to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

Annual Conference Core Value: Our core value is love: We love the Lord our God with all our hearts, souls, minds and strength and our neighbors as ourselves. This value is commanded by Jesus, inspired by our Wesleyan heritage including to spread scriptural holiness over the land and witnessed through our integrity, accountability and inclusiveness.

The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ. (Ephesians 4:11-13, NRSV)

As disciples of Jesus Christ, lay and clergy leaders have been called to faithfully and joyfully serve God and to wisely utilize their spiritual gifts, time, and talents to enhance the life of the body of Christ. They have been called to partner together and complement each other's gifts in leading the community of faith to focus on its vision, to fulfill its mission, and to live its core values.

This document is intended to provide standards for lay leadership within the Western Pennsylvania Annual Conference and its churches, to describe the characteristics of faithful, effective, and fruitful laity in leadership positions, and to encourage them to become more faithful, effective, and fruitful in their roles as they serve and lead the community of faith.

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Faithful Leaders:

Faithful leaders live in a covenant relationship with God through Jesus Christ and with all of God's creation. A faithful leader:

- Lives the vows of baptism and membership, including the commitment to support The United Methodist Church through prayer, presence, gifts, service, and witness
- Practices spiritual disciplines, such as regular worship, prayer, Bible study, communion, fasting, Christian conferencing, participation in accountability groups, and other works of piety and mercy
- Is open to the transforming work of the Holy Spirit in his/her life
- Seeks to be a good steward of all of God's gifts including time, talents and treasures
- Witnesses to God's love in the world in daily life
- Understands and uses his/her spiritual gifts
- Attempts to live a holistically healthy life, spiritually, physically, intellectually, emotionally, and socially

Effective Leaders:

Effective leaders seek to live like Christ and strive to faithfully fulfill their responsibilities. An effective leader:

- Embraces and promotes the vision of a sustained passionate spiritual connection with Christ
- Focuses attention on the mission of The United Methodist Church, to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world, and the mission of the community of faith being served
- Understands how her/his leadership role contributes to the fulfillment of the mission of The United Methodist Church and the mission of the community of faith being served
- Demonstrates a servant-leader approach, an ability to lead by example, a sense of accountability, and integrity in all his/her relationships and work
- Lives out a commitment to fulfill the responsibilities associated with her/his leadership role
- Remains Christ-centered and practices spiritual discernment in all settings
- Ministers to the body he/she is serving
- Encourages others to understand and utilize their spiritual gifts
- Develops and implements plans to accomplish the results the body anticipates from his/her leadership role

Fruitful Leaders:

Fruitful leaders lead the community of faith to move toward its vision, to fulfill its mission, and to live its core value. A fruitful leader:

- Is actively involved in deepening sustained, spiritual connections with Jesus Christ in others
- Works to transform the community of faith being served into an organization which more effectively shares God's love and participates in mission and ministry outside the organization
- Holds the body accountable to living its core values
- Produces the transformational results the community of faith from his/her leadership role
- Mentors potential leaders
- Embraces diversity and inclusiveness, works for social justice, combats racism in all its forms, and addresses issues of poverty

He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God? (Micah 6:8, NRSV)

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