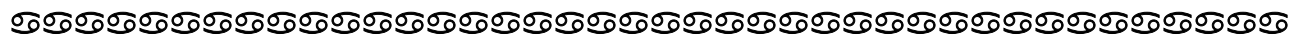


First United Methodist Church
418 North Rock Street
Minneapolis, KS 67467



RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



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THE COMMUNICATOR



Ada/Minneapolis Community UMC

February, 2017

Christ’s Ambassadors by Inviting, Sharing, Nurturing and Forgiving

From the Heart of the Pastor!

Ever since I came to the United States of America in 1993, I have enjoyed watching every presidential election, inauguration and the Interfaith Prayer Service the day after the inauguration. The political posturing and pandering during the primary and national campaigns, name calling and mud-slinging seem to die a gradual death as soon as there is a president-elect. The real deal for me is the peaceful transfer of power from one administration to another. The inauguration is held on January 20, and presidents typically attend a private prayer service the morning of the inauguration and a public worship service the day after. From one president to another, I have watched them putting their hand on the Bible pledging their allegiance to the constitution of the land and promising to help the citizens move forward in their endeavor seeking a better life. At the Interfaith prayer service this year, it was humbling to see leaders of various faiths come together, representing their people across the United States, praying in different languages, reading from different forms of scriptures. Buddhist, Christians, Hindus, Muslim and many others! I said to myself, “This is America at its best!” Recently, the British Minister is quoted saying; “I defy any person to travel to this great country at any time and not to be inspired by its promise and its example.” For me, there is a lot of guidance, admonition and even prophetic truth in simply gathering and setting our sights to sacred texts of scripture in how we are to live in our communities. My heart rejoiced and gave glory to God when the Beatitudes (Matthew 4:3 – 12) was read to all the people present and those watching from a distance.. And when the melody of “How Great Thou Art” beamed from a lady in the choir, I praised God for His presence in the world. I prayed that the whole world follow the example, especially Africa, where I come from and my heart bleeds for God's intervention. I also prayed for our communities here in the States. I prayed the Lord's prayer, especially this part: “Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven!” My mind has not stopped wondering, “what if Christians take the Bible seriously?” I mean very seriously. Many of us have learned from our Sunday school teachers the simple rules such as “love your neighbors as Christ has loved you” and “treat strangers with respect for Sarah welcomed an angel unknowingly” I am praying for an all denomination prayer service for Ottawa County!

Thank you all. See you all in church!
Pastor Kennedy Mukwindidza

FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

1 - Joe Watkins and Nancy Milum
4 - Tamara Krueger
5 - Michelle Owen
6 - Bruce Cleveland
7 - Mara Pounds
9 - Darda Wedel, Javine Bertrand,
Donna Bohn and Rachel Doris
13 - Christine Watkins
14 - Pastor Kennedy Mukwindidza
and Ruthie Sanders
15 - Centonous Buchwald 16 - Pam Feldt and
LeeShawn Grindstaff
18 - Bethany Diercks and Trenton Penn
22 - Rosalee Tibbits
25 - Cheryle Hardesty

FEBRUARY ANNIVERSARIES

9 - David and Debra Pounds
13 - Larry & Javine Bertrand
22 - Rodger and Diana Peck

CHILDREN'S MESSAGES FOR FEBRUARY

5 - Pastor Kennedy Mukwindidza
12 - Puppeteers
19 - Dale Henderson
26 - Shayla Boyer

LITURGISTS FOR FEBRUARY

5 - Nick Krueger
12 - Nick Krueger
19 - Shayla Boyer
26 - Shayla Boyer

ACOLYTES FOR FEBRUARY

5 - Maddy & Dalton Krueger
12 - Riley and Ethan Bohl
19 - Braxton and Gracen Grimes
26 - Joel and Braedee Weatherman

GREETERS

5 - Kuder Family
12 - Dale and Colette Henderson
19 & 26 - Bruce and Gretchen Cleveland

NURSERY HELPERS FOR FEBRUARY

5 - Barb Kibler and Becky McDuffee
12 - Angie Darrow and Becky McDuffee
19 - Tamala Lott and Becky McDuffee
26 - Kristi & Paul Ocker and Becky McDuffee

ADULT SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASS

The Adult Sunday School Class meets every Sunday morning at 9:00 a.m. Following are the lessons that will be discussed in February.

5 - Re-Created to Live in Harmony
12 - New Birth Brings Freedom
19 - Freedom in Christ
26 - Christ Creates Holy Living

UNITED METHODIST WOMEN

The UMW meet at 7:00 p.m. on the third Tuesday of each month.

February 21 at 7:00 p.m. is the UMW monthly meeting in the Wesley Room. All women are invited.

MONTHLY DINNER...

....will be a Pot Luck Dinner on 2-19-17. Those with last names starting with A-M are asked to bring a main dish and side dish. Those with last names starting with N-Z bring a main dish and dessert. This is also the Sunday the Anderson Family will be joining us with their musical ministry.



THE ANDERSON FAMILY

Minneapolis First United Methodist Church Administrative Council Meeting January 11, 2017

The Administrative Council of the First United Methodist Church of Minneapolis met for their regular scheduled monthly meeting on Wednesday, January 11, 2017 at 7:00 p.m. In attendance were: Pastor Kennedy Mukwindidza; Dale Henderson, Gary Kay, Tamala Lott, Patti Bertrand, Colette Henderson, Deb Nichols, Tammy Krueger, Blythe Atwell, Rosalee Tibbits, Barb Kibler and Joan Miles

Pastor Kennedy Mukwindidza opened the meeting with devotion and prayer.

The December minutes were approved by Tammy Krueger and seconded by Colette Henderson. All Ayes.

The meeting started with discussion about encouraging small groups to meet. We need to try: 1) To get to know each other better, and 2) Having the small groups to reach out to others.

The PPR, Finance, Trustees and Nominations Committees are urged to meet three times a year. They will reflect on what they did in 2016 and previous years. Between the first two meetings series of activities should be discussed and what activities they want to do. Adjustments need to be made to goals. The final meeting will be close to September at which time we need to prepare for Charge Conference. A celebration for activities at church. At each meeting we need to invite the Holy Spirit to join us, reflect on a scripture, pray and discuss issues at hand. Pastor Kennedy Mukwindidza will be available to help.

Patti Bertrand made a correction to the Treasurer's Report. The correction was that 80.14% of M&M's have been paid for 2016.

Gary Kay reported on behalf of the Trustee's saying a General Contractor was called regarding a humidifier to use to be more efficient for the church than the small one we are using. The contractor has a lot of work to do this winter season and will get back with Gary with an estimate as to what needs to be done about the humidifier.

Lay Leader, Gary Kay reported our church family needs to generate more revenue. Each committee can determine what the church needs to do to generate an interest to increase our attendance to church and learn people's interests and incorporate those interests in church activities. Gary mentioned what would help generate more income is if each person attending church who cannot afford tithing could donate one dollar to the regular offering.

The Missions Committee will set up a table for Super Bowl Sunday on February 5. There are two church camps for the children to attend and they will start promoting the camps. Soup is needed for the food bank.

The Outreach Committee will be feeding the FCA Group at the High School on January 25.

The Outreach Committee reported the meals they provide for FCA at the High School will be "Cheap and Cheerful". Examples of donations would be hot dogs, chips, brownies, fruit, veggies and money,

The local newspaper, "The Messenger" has started a Religious Section with times that churches start and events that are happening at churches in Ottawa County. Ministers may also write articles to be published. The charge for churches to publish their church services is three lines for \$15.00/mo. and six lines for \$30.00/mo. There is no charge for coming attractions and Minister's write-ups. The Committee decided to use three lines and re-evaluate the ad after six months. Tammy Krueger made the motion to use the three lines per month and the motion was seconded by Rosalee Tibbits. Motion carried.

The next meeting will be held on February 8, 2017 at 7:00 p.m. in the Wesley Room.

The meeting was adjourned with prayer by Pastor Kennedy Mukwindidza.

Respectfully Submitted by
Joan Miles, Recording Secretary

Valentine's Day and Love

by Sharla Guenther

Valentine's Day is a special day of the year. There are parties, chocolates, cards, and candy with "Be Mine" written on them. Other than all of that, where does Valentine's Day come from?

There are several stories about a priest named Valentine who performed secret marriages when an emperor ordered that no young men should be married because they would be better soldiers in the war.

Another story is about a man named Valentine who fell in love with a girl while he was in jail. Just before he died he wrote her a love letter and signed it, "From your Valentine".

I don't know if these stories are true or not, I guess it doesn't really matter. I think the important part is: that we know what love is and know where it came from.

The Bible tells us that love is from God and that God is love. The neat thing about God's love is that it's not a feeling to Him, he can't fall out of love with us. He loves us even when we're not loveable and when we're grumpy or doing bad things. He loves all of us no matter what.

The tricky part is loving others like God loves us. God's love is much different than the mushy kissy stuff that you see on TV or all around you. It's not bad to be mushy with your family but sometimes it's harder to show other people how you love them. We can't just go around kissing everyone to show them our love!

There is a special kind of love we can have for others, it's called agape love. This doesn't have to be mushy love, just see people as God would see them. Pretend for a day that you have special glasses on and that everyone you see you love just because God loves them, like the way you love a mom or dad, brother or sister.

I'm sure you'll run into somebody you don't think deserves your love or you just don't want to love at all, but God loves them and if we love God we are supposed to love them too.

Who exactly are we supposed to love?

- *Love God
- *Love yourself
- *Love your family
- *Love your friends
- *Love your neighbors
- *Love your enemies

What are some ways that we can love God? It's not as hard as you think. How do you show others

you love them? We talk to them, try to get to know them better, listen to them, and sometimes we do things for them. We can do all these things for God. We might not be able to touch Him but we can pray to God, read the Bible and learn about him, obey Him and do the things he asks us to do. We are also supposed to love ourselves. This doesn't mean that we should think we're better than everybody else. We get this from a Bible verse that says do for others as you would want them to do for you. This means we should take care of ourselves. Things like looking before we cross the street, eating our vegetables, and getting a good sleep at night are ways we can do that. Remember that if you're a Christian the Spirit of God lives inside us and he wants us to treat ourselves with respect.

Loving our family is hopefully pretty easy. Even though we get mad at our parents sometimes because they don't let us do something, we still love them. Just remember that you are part of a family and nothing will ever change that. You should always be able to depend on each other and they'll be the ones to tell you the truth before anyone else.

Loving our friends should be easy because we pick the people we want to be friends with. The thing is, sometimes when we disagree with our friends we think we don't have to be their friend anymore, but God's love would ask us to forgive them and try to work things out.

Do you know who your neighbors are? Neighbors aren't just the people who live next to you but are everyone you might run into. I don't want to encourage you to run up to strangers but think about helping others with love. By helping an elderly lady who needs help with her groceries, returning a wallet found on the street, or even praying for people on the news that are in trouble are just a few ways to love a neighbor.

I hope you don't have any enemies but there will always be someone that you don't get along with or believes the opposite of what you believe. There are many, many people that don't believe in God and that purposely do things that hurt him and God still loves them. Loving people that bully us or our friends seems impossible, but it's not with God's help. By asking for God's help we will be able to love our enemies easier when we just can't do it on our own.

Learning to love like God takes a long time and takes God's help. It's easier to love than to hate, so have lots of fun learning to love God and everyone around you!

JOIN US FOR MOVIE NIGHT AND
SNACKS ON 2-26-17 at 7:00 p.m.
Movie is "WOODLAWN"



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1 District FCCLA meeting	2	3	4
5 Communion Super Bowl Sunday	6	7	8 7:00 p.m. Ad Council & Committee's Mtg.	9	10	11
12 – Boy Scout Sunday	13	14	15	16	17	18
19 Special Worship Service w/The Anderson Family Pot Luck Dinner following svc.	20 President's Day 5:00 pm Pre-School Board Mtg.	21 7:00 p.m. UMW Meeting In Wesley Room	22	23	24	25
26 7:00 P.M. Movie Night with snacks at church: Movie is "Woodlawn"	27	28 9:30 – Noon Clergy Peer Group	March 1 Ash Wednesday FFA Meeting 8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.			

GET HEALTHY WITH LIFE'S SIMPLE 7 *(This simple, seven-step list has been developed to help you improve your heart health)*

1. Get Active If you get at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity each day (like brisk walking), five times per week, you can almost guarantee yourself a healthier and more satisfying life while lowering your risks for heart disease, stroke and diabetes. Children need 60 minutes of exercise a day - every day.

2. Control Cholesterol Your liver and your body's cells make about 75% of the cholesterol in your blood. The other 25% comes from your food. The American Heart Association recommends the following: Eat healthy foods that are low in cholesterol, trans fats and saturated fats. A diet high in fiber also helps keep cholesterol levels controlled. Schedule a cholesterol screening and stay current on your health check-ups. Get active. When you exercise, you increase your body's ability to make good cholesterol. Maintain a healthy weight.

3. Eat Better A healthy diet is one of your best weapons for fighting cardiovascular disease. When you eat a heart-healthy diet (foods low in saturated and trans fat, cholesterol, sodium and added sugars, and foods high in whole grain fiber, lean protein and a variety of colorful fruits and vegetables) you improve your chances for staying healthy!

4. Manage Blood Pressure High blood pressure is the single most significant risk factor for heart disease. When your blood pressure stays within healthy ranges, you reduce the strain on your heart, arteries, and kidneys which keeps you healthier longer. Good news! High blood pressure is manageable. Whether your blood pressure is high or normal (normal is less than 120 mm Hg systolic AND less than 80 MM Hg diastolic or <120/80) the lifestyle modifications listed here may reduce your blood pressure without the use of prescription medications:

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eating a heart-healthy diet, which includes reducing sodium; enjoying regular physical activity and maintaining a healthy weight; managing stress; limiting alcohol; avoiding tobacco smoke.

5 Lose Weight If you have too much fat - especially if a lot of it is at your waist - you're a higher risk for such health problems as high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol and diabetes. And you're not alone! More than 2/3 of our American adult population is overweight, statistics are especially concerning since obesity is now recognized as a major, independent risk factor for heart disease.

6. Reduce Blood Sugar If your fasting blood sugar level is below 100, you are in the healthy range. If not, your results could indicate diabetes, or pre-diabetes. Lowered blood sugar helps protect your vital organs. When you reduce excessive sugars, you are giving yourself the best chance for a healthy life. The American Heart Association considers diabetes one of the six major controllable risk factors for cardiovascular disease.

7. Stop Smoking Smoking damages your entire circulatory system, and increases your risk for coronary heart disease, hardened arteries, aneurysm and blood clots. Like a line of tumbling dominoes, one risk creates another. Blood clots and hardened arteries increase your risks for heart attack, stroke and peripheral artery disease. Smoking can also reduce your good cholesterol (HDL) and your lung capacity, making it harder to get the physical activity you need for better health.

Learn How To Live A Healthier Life By Logging On To www.heart.org

Happy Heart Cookies

2 eggs

1 cup brown sugar

1 cup white sugar

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup oil (canola)

1 tsp vanilla

2 cups flour

1 tsp. baking powder (cont. pg 9)

(Cont. from page 4)

1 tsp. baking soda $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. salt

2 cups old fashioned oats

1 cup chopped walnuts

1 cup mini chocolate chips

1. Beat together the eggs, sugars, oil and vanilla.

2. Mix the flour, baking powder, baking soda and salt together and add to sugar mixture

3. Stir in the oats, nuts and chocolate chips. (mixture will be thick)

4. Bake at 350° for 8 - 10 minutes. (Do not over bake.)

(Submitted by Colette Henderson)

HEALTHY CONGREGATION COMMITTEE

We want to share with you some things we have done or are doing as a Healthy Congregation Committee. We purchased two First Aid kits that we thought would fulfill the needs of the congregation. One is located on a shelf in the foyer near the office. The other is in the kitchen near the window. We will check them periodically to see if anything needs replenished or replaced. We also have made sure that we provide fresh vegetables and/or fruit for the FCA meals. We are also providing some healthy recipes in the church newsletter periodically. For February, since it is heart month, we are providing some health tips for a healthy heart, and also some healthy heart recipes. We will provide heart healthy food/snacks during coffee hour on Sunday, February 5th. We would appreciate you letting us know if you try any of the recipes, and if you like them. We are also open to you sharing your favorite healthy recipes with us. We are also open to any ideas you might have that would make our congregation healthier physically, spiritually, mentally, and socially.

Pam Feldt, Kristi Ocker and Barb Kibler

HEALTHY RECIPES

Lot fat, Heart Healthy, BLUEBERRY-YOGURT MUFFINS

2 C. flour

1 t. baking powder

1 t. baking soda

$\frac{1}{4}$ t. soda

$\frac{1}{3}$ C. sugar

1 egg, slightly beaten

$\frac{1}{4}$ C. unsweetened orange juice

2 T vegetable or Canola oil

1 t. vanilla

1 (8 oz) carton vanilla or blueberry low-fat yogurt

1 C fresh or frozen blueberries, thawed.

Combine first five ingredients in a bowl; make a well in center of mixture.

Combine egg and next four ingredients and add to dry mixture. Stir just until dry ingredients are moist. Gently fold in blueberries, Spoon batter evenly into 12 muffin cups coated with cooking spray. Sprinkle 1 T. sugar over muffins (optional). Bake at 400 degrees for approx. 18 mins. Remove immediately, cool on wire rack.

MORNING GLORY MUFFINS (healthy version)

1 $\frac{1}{2}$ C all purpose flour

$\frac{1}{2}$ C whole wheat flour

1 $\frac{1}{4}$ C sugar

1 T. cinnamon

2 t. baking powder

$\frac{1}{2}$ t. baking soda

$\frac{1}{2}$ t. salt

2 C grated carrots

1 apple, cored, peeled, chopped

1 C raisins (optional)

1 egg

2 egg whites

$\frac{1}{4}$ C apple butter

$\frac{1}{4}$ C vegetable or canola oil

2t. vanilla

2 T. chopped nuts

2T toasted wheat germ (optional)

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Lightly oil or spray with cooking spray 18 muffin cups. In a bowl, whisk together eggs, egg whites, apple butter, oil and vanilla. In a large bowl, stir together flours, sugar, cinnamon, baking powder, baking soda and salt. Stir in carrots, apples and raisins. Stir in apple butter mixture until just moistened. Spoon the batter into prepared muffin cups, filling them about $\frac{3}{4}$ full. In a small bowl, combine nuts and wheat germ; sprinkle over the muffin tops. Bake at 375 degrees for 15 to 20 minutes, or until the tops are golden and spring back when lightly pressed.

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THANK YOU!

The Outreach Committee again asked this congregation for help in preparing and serving a meal to the MJSHS FCA (Fellowship of Christian Athletes) group. Six members of the congregation served the food to approximately 80 MJSHS students. A special thank you to Dale Henderson for grilling 100+ hot dogs!! The menu included Chili Cheese Dogs, chips, cupcakes and cookies donated by the congregation. Previous cash donations were used to purchase the hot dogs and buns. Carrots, celery, bananas and oranges were purchased with money provided by our own Healthy Congregation Committee. We feel that by serving these meals we are reaching out to the youth of this community. Thank you to each and every one of you!

Outreach/Fellowship Co-chairpersons,
Deb Nichols and Tammy Krueger

THANK YOU FROM KATHLEEN WEDEL!

Please accept my sincere and heartfelt thanks to my church family and community for all your prayers, calls and kind thoughts during my four month recuperation. I am hoping to be back in the very near future! Kathleen



The game is over, but following are the results of Super Bowl Sunday here at church!

NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS: 15 CANS OF SOUP and \$63.24 IN DONATIONS
ATLANTA FALCONS: 21 CANS OF SOUP and \$54.63!!!! HOWEVER YOU LOOK AT IT -----YEAH FOR UMC!!!!

OUR CARING YOUTH

Below is a picture of the 11 youth who made "Milk Jug Snowmen and delivered them to Long Term Care at ICHC, Good Sam's and home bound church members on Sunday, Jan. 22. A special thanks to the adults who made this mission possible for the youth!



Kneeling: Breckin Dean Weatherman and Braxton Grimes. Three girls standing in second row: Jaylee Abell, Gracen Grimes & Braedee Weatherman. Back row: Dalton Krueger, Joel Abell, Maddy Krueger, Jordan Peck, Rachel Kuder & Conner Peck



MAKING A DIFFERENCE!

Donations are always welcome for the Salina Rescue Mission for men and the Ashby House for women and children. Both places need clothing and toiletries. The donation boxes are in the hallway south of the Church office.

Bishop announces structural changes to allow for stronger emphasis on mission field

Bishop Ruben Saenz Jr. has announced a change in district superintendent appointments, with goals of fostering more peer-to-peer collaboration among clergy, empowering the laity to more fully participate in the sharing of the Wesleyan witness, and focusing ministry squarely on the mission field for each congregation.

The moves are meant to help the more than 1,000 Great Plains Conference churches innovate to focus on the mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world by leveraging the connectional strengths of the United Methodist Church within our geographic boundaries. The opportunity for a shift in the structure of superintendents arose in part as the result of the retirement announcements for the Rev. Kay Alnor and the Rev. Jim Akins, superintendents in the Great West and Hays districts, respectively. Bishop Saenz has appointed the Rev. Cindy Karges, Gateway District superintendent, and the Rev. Eldon Davis, Elkhorn Valley District superintendent, to provide leadership to the Great West District. The Rev. Don Hasty, Dodge City District superintendent; the Rev. Dee Williamston, Salina District superintendent; and the Rev. Dennis Livingston, Hutchinson District superintendent, will provide leadership to the Hays District. The five district superintendents will oversee disciplinary processes and other responsibilities.

Alnor will retire June 30 after seven years of innovative and strategic development of a mutual-ministry model as a district superintendent. The model addresses the opportunities and challenges of the large western Nebraska region. Under her leadership elders, local pastors, deacons, certified lay ministers and lay leaders organize themselves into regional networks to encourage each other, share best practices and coordinate missional strategies. Numerous

lay persons indigenous to the region have been trained as Certified Lay Ministers. These CLMs provide effective pastoral leadership for smaller, rural congregations and help ensure that the Wesleyan witness of making disciples that proclaim Christ, serve others and seek justice continues in vital and sustainable ways in western Nebraska.

The structural changes will build on the efforts in the Great West District.

"The lay and clergy makeup of the United Methodist Church have been given many gifts," said Bob Cox, lay member of the Hays District Superintendency Committee. "Each of us has unique qualities which can be used to make a difference. The change in administrative structure of the districts leads to an opportunity to examine, re-examine and use those talents. The changes ahead offer an opportunity to help what we do well now be even better. We are called to participate. We are called to activity in our churches, in our communities and with our sister churches and communities."

Expected Benefits

Dennis Livingston, the Hutchinson DS, said the mission-based, peer-to-peer model should deepen and multiply points of connection among clergy and congregations. He said the shift has the ability to transform the culture of the Great Plains so United Methodists in the region view the conference territory more as a cascade of connected mission fields and not siloed congregations spread across two states. "Clergy will be connected in new ways that spread ministry and responsibility outward to other clergy and laity," Livingston said. "Also exciting is that there is actually a plan taking shape, and the appointive cabinet has jumped fully on board. While we haven't worked out the details – and there are many of those – we are seeing our way through the fog enough that we are ready to push forward."

Davis, the Elkhorn Valley DS, said this shift to a mission field focused model hearkens to the churches recorded in Acts 2:42-47 and Acts 4:32-35

They met in people's homes. They shared resources. They took care of widows and orphans," Davis said. "This really is what the church is all about."

Davis said the peer-to-peer component of sharing best practices and providing encouragement will allow the conference to tap into the experts the church already has.

"When I worked in the mental health field, when things would happen locally, the thinking was we needed an expert to come in. And you had to be from at least 120 miles away to be an 'expert.' But we often already had the expert there," he said. "In this case we already have the expertise in our communities. And we already have the Holy Spirit working with us." Karges said one of the most exciting aspects of the mission-field model is the opportunity for churches to provide greater focus on the context of their ministries within their particular area while still recognizing the individuality of pastors.

"This combination provides an opportunity to better support churches and their pastors for fruitful ministry," Karges said. "We know that as great as a particular program or approach is there is no 'one size fits all.'"

Karges said using district superintendents and pastors strategically will provide churches with better resources to engage their mission fields in ways that best suit their particular situations. "Tailoring structure and resources – material and human – allows us to not only maintain but strengthen our Wesleyan witness in communities of all sizes," she said.

Learning Together

What this new model looks like in each community will depend on the needs of the mission field. Timing and strategy of when to roll out similar models to other districts will depend on a number of factors. Regardless, Bishop Saenz said pastors and laity will work together to enhance current ministries or launch new ones – each dependent on the context of the needs of their constituents and each focused on making disciples of Jesus Christ.

"We will do so by organizing ourselves for

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missional movement rather than institutional maintenance," Bishop Saenz said. "We will foster and support peer-to-peer learning platforms, and church-to-church learning platforms will help us harness and accelerate the expansion of our Wesleyan witness throughout the Great Plains."

Such a movement cannot be initiated by clergy alone, said Akins, the current Hays DS who has led conversations with clergy and lay leadership in the Hays District to reimagine ways to be a United Methodist witness and start a movement led by the ministry of baptized laity empowered by clergy.

"The true ministry of the church is not and should not be clergy-centered," Akins said. "As we move to a mission-field focus in our appointments, laity will be led by clergy to step up in preaching, teaching, pastoral care, mission work and evangelism."

Hasty agreed, citing the biblical principle of equipping the saints – or lay people – for ministry.

"This shift to a mission-field model excites me because it gives us the opportunity to help the church and lay people engage their mission fields more so than we have in the past," Hasty said. "I think this will bring us into alignment with the purpose and vision of the conference, and we'll be very intentional about making disciples."

Williamston, Salina DS, said the shift will help the Great Plains Conference innovate by sharing ideas and by using the gifts and graces of United Methodists to foster a movement.

"I'm excited because I see this as an adventure, and we're all on the journey together," she said. "It may not be perfect at first, but God will lead us and equip us as we go."

"We will be at the ground floor with this model," Williamston continued. "We will experiment with new things as we work together. In many

ways, this is taking us back to our Methodist roots."

Gains for Current Districts

All five superintendents who will help provide leadership in the Great West and Hays districts said they believed their added supervisory responsibilities will benefit their current districts as well.

"This will help us be more intentional about listening to one another," Hasty said. "Working on a team of three in the Hays District will give me an opportunity to learn and reflect on what I do in the Dodge City District. That will make my ministry deeper and richer there through collaboration and the sharing of ideas." Those ideas then will be shared with other congregations in the conference so pastors and laity can discern how best to fulfill needs in their communities by understanding how similar issues have been addressed elsewhere.

"One of the most enjoyable and hopeful aspects of my time in the Gateway District has been to see and hear about the great ways United Methodists are serving," Karges said. "Our churches are vital to our communities. I look forward to hearing and seeing how United Methodists in the Great West District are living out God's call and claim upon their lives in their communities."

"We all have something to share," Karges continued. "I believe as we move forward we will find ourselves inspired by the stories we share and hopeful about our future as God's people called United Methodists in the Great Plains Conference."

The Rev. Mike Rose, senior pastor at First United Methodist Church in Hays, Kansas, and chair of the Hays District Superintendency Committee, quoted Isaiah 43:18-19a: "Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See I am doing a new thing!"

"God is doing a new thing in the Hays District," Rose said, "and my prayer is that we will see all the Hays District United Methodist Churches thrive."

Strength in Connection

Bishop Saenz said the connectional structure of the United Methodist Church provides this opportunity to start a renewed ministry

movement.

"The United Methodist Church has a good name, or brand, in our communities because of our ministries of healing, education, civic engagement, compassion, mercy and justice," Bishop Saenz said. "We also have a horizontal and vertical connectional system that allows us to harness and concentrate our strengths and resources for greater collective impact for the transformation of lives, communities and the world. Above all that, we have gifted and talented laity with a wealth of knowledge, life experience, successful vocational careers and a love for Christ that compels them to serve God and their neighbors with joy."

Bishop Saenz said even with the denomination's strengths, this kind of missional movement in the Great Plains would not be possible without the gifts, graces and baptismal calling of laity.

"I have faith in the leadership capacity of our clergy to lead our congregations into the mission field to create pathways for people to encounter Christ and grow in the love of God, to proclaim Christ's redemptive grace, to serve others – especially the poor – and to seek justice," Bishop Saenz said. "I believe our Wesleyan theology and heritage – along with the power of the Holy Spirit – provide us with an opportunity to make a difference in the lives of thousands of people across the Great Plains Conference. Adelante! (Forward!)"

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