

Executive Summary
General Church Apportionment Structure Study Group
Preliminary Draft Report -- 2/14/2010

Introduction

“It is more blessed to give than to receive.” Acts 20:35 -- **Jesus Christ**

Greetings in the name of Jesus Christ, who called us to serve our neighbors with all of who we are and with all that we possess. Jesus Christ celebrated the generosity of the widow who gave her two coins to the temple treasury, praised Zacchaeus who gave away four times what he had stolen, and Mary who washed his feet with an extravagant gift of ointment. Our goal is to create a pattern of Christian financial generosity among all United Methodists as a response for God’s marvelous generosity of all that we possess.

Summary of Four Emphases

We propose the following four actions (to be detailed in our full and final report in the summer of 2011 with legislation for implementation):

1. **Emphasize generous financial stewardship** as a top priority throughout The United Methodist Church. A renewed focus on the spiritual discipline of giving by clergy and laity, and the faithful use of all our resources, is foundational for restoring the financial health of The United Methodist Church. This may include realignment of responsibilities and budgets across the general Church.
2. **Establish “The United Methodist Fund”**, as the one and only general Church fund to support all approved general boards, agencies, councils, and other general Church designated ministries. To increase transparency, every agency and major fund supported by The United Methodist Fund will be listed with its percentage of the total.
3. **Provide organizational and financial flexibility between General Conferences.** Provide a way for the Connectional Table and the General Council on Finance and Administration between General Conferences to realign our structure and reallocate financial resources to meet the changing needs of United Methodists to serve the world.
4. **Adopt an income-based proportional giving system** as the method by which local congregations in the United States provide a small portion of financial giving to local congregations for the work of the general Church.

Assignment

Our study group was formed in response to action of the 2008 General Conference (Calendar Item 1225):

The General Council on Finance and Administration will form a study group in conjunction with the Connectional Table, to explore alternative structures for the apportioned general funds of the United Methodist Church. The GCFA is to recommend to the 2012 General Conference a structure of these funds that more nearly conforms to the missional focus of the denomination. In addition, this recommendation will include the methods by which these funds will be apportioned to the annual conferences. Representation in this study group should include, in part, jurisdictional conference, annual conference, and local church perspectives.

As we approached our task, we sought to create **a new way of aligning, apportioning, and supporting financially the general ministry of The United Methodist Church in ways that are biblical, Wesleyan, simple, affordable, transparent, and missional.**

Study Group Members

Reggie Holder (Chair, Lay man from North Alabama, member of General Council of Finance and Administration); Jim Allen (Lay man, Treasurer of the Tennessee Annual Conference); Judy Benson (Lay woman from Oklahoma, member of Connectional Table); Peter Binder (Lay man from the Annual Conference of Switzerland, France, and Northern Africa, member of the General Council on Finance and Administration); Bill Brownson (Lay man, Treasurer of the West Ohio Annual Conference); Deborah Heisley-Cato (Clergy woman from Central Pennsylvania); Andy Langford (Secretary, Clergy man from Western North Carolina, member of Connectional Table); Janice Palm (Clergy woman from Upper New York, member of General Council on Finance and Administration); Martha Scarborough (Lay woman, former Mississippi Conference Treasurer, President of the UM Foundation of Mississippi); Leah Taylor (Lay woman from Texas); Sylvester Weatherall (Clergy man from Illinois); General Council on Finance and Administration staff: John Goolsbey, Scott Brewer, and Moses Kumar.

Questions/Concerns Welcomed

As we finalize our work, we welcome comments, questions, and concerns. Please address these to our Chair, Reggie Holder, at reggie@highlandsumc.net.