

Pastor's Pondering, by Rev. Lee Anderson-Harris

I find that when standing in opposition to a faction, a person, a way of thinking, a group, and so on, that it is easy to stand in opposition to all that this person or group says or does. This kind of dualistic thinking is often the norm, but it's unfortunate. It means that eventually, you throw the baby out with the bathwater. I have learned, when I listen, that even the people I disagree with have good points, and I must allow myself to hear them. Likewise, it's not healthy to hear and see everything that the people I agree with, like, or even admire with uncritical eyes and ears. No one gets it right all the time. Our algorithms feed one-sidedness; they do not nurture complex thinking. In my attempt to break free from the bondage of either/or thinking, I have had a lot of uncomfortable moments when I agreed with someone I don't like and disagreed with someone I do.

In the current state of the nation, theology is getting mixed in with politics a lot more these days...and not because of "those liberal" or "those fundamental" (or insert your own label here) clergy who are preaching politics from the pulpit. It is coming from the White House, from political figures, and from whomever is the popular idol at the moment. This is muddying the waters of Christianity (as if those waters were ever crystal clear). So what do we stand firm on?

I know forgiveness is still a central piece in our walk with Jesus. Nonjudgment. Grace. That God loves even the people I can't stand. That God does NOT hate, not even the people I think are destroying something I cling to. That I should pray for the enemy...and not pray for them to suffer, but for them to be healed, to be close to God, to be well. This becomes easier when I remember that these people are children of God, not the anti-Christ. I know it is hard to love the way Jesus loved.

I hear this from people all the time, people who are trying to follow this example but feel like they fall short. My response to that? *The fact that you are trying makes a difference.* Yes, it really does. You (and I) are not going to get it right all the time. That's why God's grace is so important. I also know that Biblically, we are called to feed the hungry, care for the poor, the sick, the imprisoned, the oppressed, the immigrant. These mandates get complicated when we weave in politics, and when we seek ways to defend our own desires and egos with the "yeah but's". It was no different in the time of Jesus or the prophets. But they are still the basics, and don't have to be as complicated as we make them. And I confess, I need God's grace in these areas too.

It seems like this time in our nation's history is beckoning us back to the basics. The basics of our faith. The basics of citizenship and community. And when I say basic, I don't mean "easy." I mean those core things that many of us actually agree on, and that we take for granted when things are easier.

For instance, on November 3, the eve of election day, I hung an American flag and bunting on the front porch to celebrate and maybe even encourage or remind people to vote. I have never done this before. But there was something thrilling to me about voting this year. When I dropped off my ballot the morning of the 4th, there was a line at the drop box. I had never seen this in a non-presidential election year. It seems I'm not alone.

I like dwelling on big theological questions, and learning new ideas from Christian thinkers and teachers. But lately, I find myself being drawn back to some of the simplest ideas in the faith. Not to "conserve" the past without leaving room for growth, but also not "progress" so much that I forget our foundation. My faith has grown, and there are things I learned at a young age that do not fit anymore. I believe this growth is vital. But growth also means learning what to hold onto. May we all keep trying, and believe in God's grace as we do so.

Answering the Call, by Rev. Leslie Wood

While everyone's call to ordained ministry is unique, it rarely happens overnight. It is often forged out of life experiences. Some run away from the call as far and fast as they can, before finally saying "Yes, Lord, not my will but yours." Some run toward it with urgent assurance that they are on the right path, with words singing in their hearts, "For I know the plans I have for you..." Some accept the call with quiet assurance, knowing "God will direct my path."

Matthew Utley's call was, I think, a mix of the last two. He has been on the official path toward ordination since January 2023, beginning seminary less than a month after graduating from college. While his official path began then, God was clearly calling him long before that. Matthew's call was forged into awareness during his high school and college years.

Recently, Matthew has reached certain big goals and received an affirmation worth celebrating. In August he completed his Master of Divinity at Iliff School of Theology. That deserves a big congratulations in itself. It is quite an accomplishment, taking less than three full years, all while working part-time as FUMC's youth director and, for nine months this past year, as the ministerial assistant intern.

To top it off, Matthew learned last week that he is being referred by the Conference's District Committee on Ordained Ministry (DCOM) to the Board of Ordained Ministry (BOM), the next phase on the ordination track before being ordained as clergy in the UMC. It is a big deal, and he deserves congratulations, and continued prayers...for there is still a long road ahead.

While everyone's call is unique, there is one thing that is true for everyone. The journey toward ordination isn't a sprint—it's a marathon...a thoughtful, prayerful process of discernment, formation, and growth. For many, that journey begins with pursuing a Master of Divinity degree in seminary, while simultaneously connecting with and doing the work required by DCOM, which guides one through the candidacy process.

Candidacy is a time of deep discernment. During this time a ministerial candidate works with their mentor, meets with DCOM once or twice a year for an interview, undergoes a psych evaluation, attends certain training requirements and writes, and writes, and writes, and writes papers. This is a season of asking big questions—about God, about the Church, and about personal calling.

DCOM helps a candidate discern which of two primary paths to ordination he/she is being called to: as a deacon or as an elder. Deacons are called to ministries of word, service, compassion, and justice, often serving in the world beyond the church walls, though also in a local church. Elders are ordained to ministries of word, sacrament, order, and service, typically serving as pastors in local congregations.

DCOM actually serves a dual role, to both guide a candidate through the early stages of the ordination process and ascertain the candidate's fitness for ministry, spiritually, psychologically, and physically, as well as a candidate's potential for effectiveness. Once all candidacy and educational requirements are completed and fitness is ascertained, usually a two to three year process, DCOM then refers the candidate to the BOM.

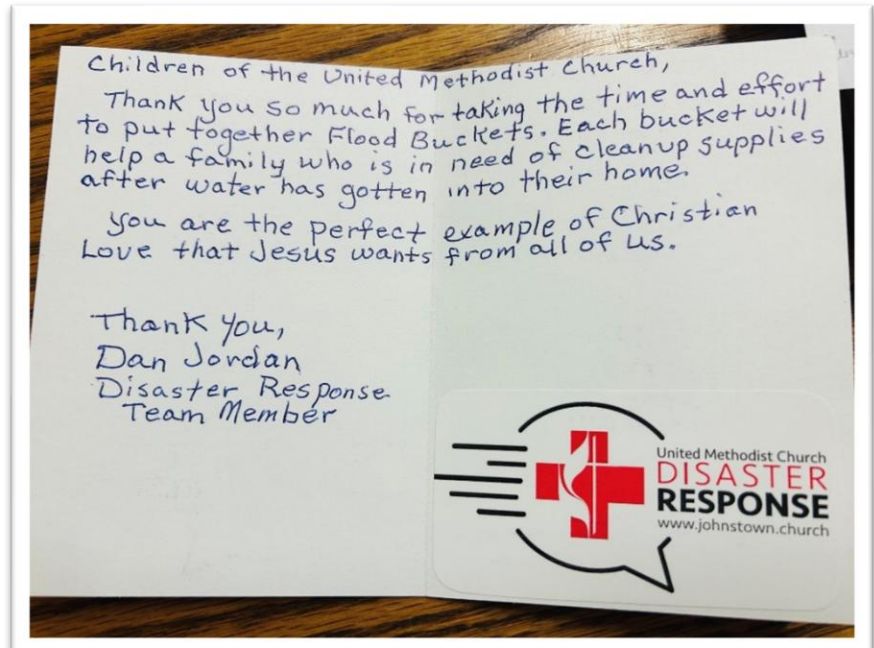
Once under the BOM's careful watch, a candidate will be commissioned as a provisional elder or deacon and begin to serve under appointment by the Bishop in a local church or extension ministry. Of course, this happens as further guidance continues with mentoring, training, writing (and writing, and writing) of papers,

and deep theological assessment until, hopefully, readiness for pastoral ministry is ascertained. Finally, this part of the journey of ministry culminates in ordination...another two to three year process.

So, when you see Matthew around the church, do congratulate him. He has worked very hard to reach this step in his journey. More importantly, he is being faithful to God's still, small voice on his life. Also, wish him well and extend prayers as he continues on this long road to ordination and a lifetime of serving God in pastoral ministry.

Lives Will Be Touched...

All ages at FUMC and TUMC contributed to a blessing for strangers impacted by disaster. In August as fires on the Western Slope raged, and Bishop Stoneking put out a message on ways to give money or supplies to disaster relief, FUMC and TUMC announced a last-minute special offering to help with these efforts. With over \$500 donated by FUMC folks and buckets donated by a TUMC member, FUMC Missions Committee was able to buy supplies to fill 6 UMCOR clean up buckets. And then the children got to work! During Sunday School, the kids learned about UMCOR and how we can help people impacted by natural disasters through UM efforts, then assembled the buckets so that they are ready to go when needed. Pastor Lee took them to the distribution center, located within Johnstown UMC. It was truly an all-church action! Here is a snapshot of the thank you card written to the children from our local Disaster Response Team:



Insights from Finance by Charlie Bouchard, Finance Committee Chair

Greetings from Finance!

“You can’t have everything. Where would you put it?”

~Ann Landers

With the report I gave at the annual church conference recently, there is not a lot to add. We are in the process of passing the budget for 2026. There is a projected deficit, but far less than last year’s projection. We are hopeful that folks will be generous in their giving wherever possible and that we can weather our financial storm. We have problems to solve - elevator replacement and heating unit repair - but we will always have problems to solve. As we enter the holiday season, it is my wish that we try to slow down and be grateful for all our blessings. Thanks to all who support FUMC Loveland with the gifts they have been given. Our goals are lofty and we need to stretch to reach them.

Respectfully submitted,
Charlie Bouchard
Chair, Finance Committee

Ignite 2025, by Matthew Utley

In October, youth from 11 churches across the conference (including four youth with FUMC) gathered at Buckhorn Camp for the annual Ignite retreat. Ignite provides youth from the Mountain Sky Conference with a weekend of worship, small groups, and spiritual renewal within the mountains that surround Buckhorn camp.

Each year Ignite has a theme. The theme this year was Play it Forward. Youth learned about the value of play within their spiritual lives. *We were created for play and play is holy.* We also discussed the power of play through taking healthy risks and healing from the many stresses our youth face today. Finally, we talked about how we can "play it forward" into our local communities by taking play home to our friends and families.



Heart Hub? Where Am I? by Joy Shaw, Facility Use Committee member

Has this been your reaction to recent references for locations in our church? Join the club! Do not be disheartened, however, because there is much purpose and excitement in the new names for our spaces!

Last winter, the Facility Use Committee (an Ad Hoc Committee of the Church Council) began the process of considering new names for areas of the church, as we also began plans for sharing our space and the functions of spaces were changing. The process was steered by guidelines for naming spaces that included considering the purpose and function of each room, incorporating our church values and encouraging the engagement of church members in naming our rooms. Input was solicited from members in early summer, feedback and ideas were compiled, and a plan was presented and approved by church council in September.

The Facility Use Committee subscribed to the premise that our building is a place of peace, harmony and love (heart). It is not just a place of worship and ministry, a place we call ours – it is a place of outreach for others to find peace, harmony and love. We are committed to using our space to bless and serve the community. Our space should be a place of witness, not proselytizing, and our naming should not be overbearingly religious in nature. As a result, each wing of our building acquired an identified purpose and theme.

The original church building, known for our beautiful sanctuary, a fellowship space below and some additional space above the sanctuary was named **“Peace Place.”** Our worship space remains with the name “Sanctuary,” but the space below is now “Serenity Center” (formerly Fellowship Hall) and the space above is now the “Comfort Canopy.” All these names reflect the original and current purpose of our church – to provide peace, serenity and comfort to all who choose to worship here.

The second addition to our church (formerly the Education Wing) is where most activity takes place during the week, with our church administration, our new leasees (Loveland Preschool,) and potential rental space. This is where the church and community come together in harmony and is therefore aptly named **“Harmony Hall.”** Using many musical terms, we have fondly named the basement level the “Grand Staff,” as this is where most of our church staff has their offices. The second floor (new home to the joyful noises of the preschool and current home to our chancel choir) has been named “Melody Meadow” and the top floor (current meeting rooms and potential rental space) has been named “High Notes.” Each room, on each floor, has its own unique name that fits the theme of the level.

The most recent addition to our church (formerly Coy Hall and the Youth Range) now houses most of our church activity, including fellowship, Sunday School, youth activities, meeting spaces and more. This is where we gather and educate. This will be a busier hub for much of our church activity, as the former education wing is repurposed. This addition is now named the **“Heart Center”** – it is where the heart and soul of our church will be most visible. You are probably already familiar with new names on the main level – the Heart Hub (formerly Coy Hall) which is flanked with “Pause Place” (East Coy Hall,) where members and outside groups are encouraged to take a break and converse. And on the other side is “Heartbeat Bay” (West Coy Hall,) where many of our church committees and other groups meet to plan and dream. Beneath the Heart Hub is the Soul Shelter (formerly the Youth Range,) where you will find classrooms and meeting spaces that accommodate our human need and desire to fuel the soul.

Change takes some time, so we expect everyone to feel a little lost as we adjust to these new names. New signage is in the works, so please be patient. Just remember, ***we are a place of peace, harmony and love*** –

use that reference to guide you through our building. Don't worry, we'll all figure it out together as we jump into new church activities and laugh our way through finding where things are. Happy exploring!

Helping Hungry Neighbors, by Rev. Lee Anderson-Harris

“Happy are those whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the Lord their God, who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them; who keeps faith forever; who executes justice for the oppressed; who gives food to the hungry.”-Psalm 146:5-7

Feeding the hungry is one of the most straightforward commandments in the Bible, echoed by Jesus's life and teachings, and practiced since the dawn of Christianity. While Christians can disagree on a lot, this is one action that is agreed on (well, until politics comes into play, at least). Therefore, I am not surprised to see so many churches and faith groups responding to the current crisis in food security, which as of this writing, is the freeze or partial freeze of SNAP benefits. Several of you have asked how FUMC can help feed hungry neighbors, and it warms my heart that so many are asking that question.

On November 4, FUMC's Missions/Social Concerns Committee met and discussed the various options. Here are two ways you can help:

- Truscott Elementary is starting a food pantry for their families and has asked FUMC to help stock it. Their families in need are looking for these items: rice (1 or 2 lb bags), canned soup, canned pinto beans, pasta, and cereal. These shelf-stable items will go a long way. You can bring these items to the church on Sundays or during office hours (M-Th 8-3, Fri 8-12) between now and Thanksgiving. Look for the Truscott collection box in Lobby Court.
- You can make a financial donation that will be given to Food Bank of Larimer County. Bring or mail a check made out to First United Methodist Church with Food Bank or FBLC in the memo. Or, donate online at fumcleveland.org, click Give & Support, and make a one-time donation with Food Bank or FBLC typed into the “write a note” section. This drive for funds is also happening now through Thanksgiving.

In addition, Food Bank of Larimer County has a variety of volunteer and donation needs. You can read their statement on the SNAP freeze [here](#). Their annual Tour de Turkey drive, which collects donations of frozen turkeys for the holidays, is happening on November 20. You can donate or volunteer, and more information can be found [here](#). And, you can multiply your financial donation on Colorado Gives Day, December 9, and that information can be found [here](#). If you are reading this in hard copy form, go to foodbanklarimer.org and find these links on their home page. You can register to volunteer by clicking the Volunteer button at the top of the page.

And don't forget about Community Kitchen! Several folks from FUMC volunteer for regular shifts there and are happy to talk to you about how to get involved. Contact me at lee@fumcleveland.com or 970-667-0876 if you would like to be connected with one of these volunteers for more information.

I am grateful to work with such a caring congregation. There are more ways to give and volunteer now that the holiday season is here. Look for more information in this newsletter and in Lobby Court. Let's continue to do Christ's work in the community!

Trunk or Treat 2025 (and beyond)! by Rev. Lee Anderson-Harris

This year's Trunk or Treat was a big success, with more families than we've seen in the past few years. Some of that success comes from the fact that Loveland Preschool joined us, bringing in more trunks and kids. Along with LPS, FUMC/Trinity/Union was also joined by LoveFirst Community Church. There were 33 trunks and, judging by the crowds (and the number of popcorn batches popped and popcorn bags handed out), over 200 people in attendance. Check out some of the pictures below, or [link here](#) to professional photos taken at the event and posted on Facebook.



There is also more marketing happening to reach new people, thanks to the efforts of Desiree Aragon, Andrea Ortega, and others. Here are numbers provided by Desiree that capture this effort; this reflects what was paid for Facebook advertising and the results:

Easter Eggstravaganza: FB ad \$30.00; viewed by 4,115 people; reached 1,830; results: 138 – going.

Trunk or Treat: FB ad \$7.53; viewed by 825 people; reached 559; results: 58 - going.

This essentially means that through these events and publicity, FUMC will be seen as a safe and welcoming environment for kids and families. The number of people attending both of these events was much higher this year. With time and attention by the whole FUMC family, we can keep providing this environment, and in even more ways!

'Tis the Season for Giving!

The Volunteer Hub...that display in Lobby Court where you can look for ways to serve in the church and the community...has gotten a "holiday overlay." Gone are the big white letters that spell Volunteer Hub. *Look instead for this sign ->*



There are a lot of ways to give and serve between now and the end of the year. Don't let this list overwhelm you! You do not need to give toward all. This centralized information hopefully helps you decide how to give of your time and resources this season.

- You have already read about the ways you can help feed those in need of food assistance in this newsletter!
- There will be a one-week donation drive to collect winter items for the unhoused in our community through the Loveland Resource Center. A specific list of needs has already been provided, and if you are cleaning out your closets or shopping, you can begin to gather these items now. The dates for this drive will be announced soon, so look for that in The Window and the Holiday Hub. Items needed include sleeping bags/pads, cots, tarps, chairs, umbrellas, waterproof duffle bags, thermal blankets, towels, fleece throws, hand warmers, plastic totes, men's and women's thermal long sleeve shirts/pants, hats, gloves, boots, coats, rain jackets/pants/ponchos, socks, and underwear.
- You'll have the opportunity to ring the bell for the Salvation Army on Saturdays at the Loveland Sam's Club, beginning November 22. A list of specific time slots will be coming soon.
- The annual Truscott Elementary Posole Dinner fundraiser is in need of volunteers to help greet guests and more. This event on December 11 is always fun (and delicious!).
- The Angel Tree gift-giving event has returned this year as a way to provide gifts for children of incarcerated parents in our community. Details are currently in The Window and at the Holiday Hub.
- The annual Christmas Baskets drive will be happening again from November 23-December 14. While these are no longer actual food baskets but grocery gift cards instead, this is still a way to bring some extra help to the food insecure during the holidays. Funds are collected here at FUMC, and the gift cards are donated to Loveland's Salvation Army to give to those in need, which includes many seniors and families in Loveland.
- And as always, you will have an opportunity to give toward the Christmas Offering, which raises funds to be distributed among three nonprofit organizations. This year's offering will be evenly distributed among ChildSafe, (childsafecolorado.org), Food Bank of Larimer County (foodbanklarimer.org), and Hurricane Melissa relief efforts in Jamaica through the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR).

The Missions/Social Concerns Committee and pastors are grateful to this faith community for the ways you keep showing up for those in need!

United Methodist Corner

In each issue, you will find a reprinted article or post connecting you to what's going on in the greater UMC. This month's article was posted October 9, 2025 on gbhem.org, the website of the UMC's General Board of Higher Education and Ministry.

General secretary outlines faith-based response to humanitarian crises unfolding amid shifting geopolitical contexts

ATLANTA — In his address to the joint boards of the General Boards of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM) and Global Ministries (GBGM), General Secretary Roland Fernandes affirmed a sacred calling to respond “for such a time as this,” referencing **Esther 4:14**. Against a backdrop of global instability, humanitarian crises and shifting political landscapes, Fernandes outlined progress on the agencies’ faith-based response in five areas of special focus: education, agriculture and food security, health, concern for migrants, and promotion of peace and justice. He also updated the boards on partner consultations, as well as agency and staff alignment work. The boards are meeting jointly on Zoom from Oct. 8-10.

Fernandes painted a sobering picture of the current global context. The 90% reduction in the U.S. foreign aid budget is leading to catastrophic consequences, with an estimated 460,000 deaths reported by mid-2025, including 317,000 children. Projections estimate 14 million deaths by 2030, due to the dismantling of USAID programs. Neither Global Ministries nor GBHEM receives U.S. federal funding.

The agencies are attempting to help bridge some of the huge gaps left by the elimination of both domestic and international funding. Actions already taken include \$9 million in grants made since last spring, many for health and food security needs in Africa. Fernandes requested that the boards set aside or reallocate additional agency funds to provide ongoing support for the five areas of special granting. The church agencies’ response to shifting U.S. and global priorities concerning human need is rooted in the biblical affirmation of the “value and worth of every individual, regardless of their background,” Fernandes said, calling that affirmation a central tenet of Methodist belief. “This is God’s work; it is sacred work,” he noted.

Areas of recent work

Fernandes highlighted some of the recent work undertaken so far in the U.S. and throughout the world – much of it with ecumenical partners – across the five focus areas:

Education: Higher Education and Ministry is working with various United Methodist-affiliated educational institutions to develop virtual convening spaces called “Holy Conversations” for college/university chaplains to focus on best practices in trying times. Work has been done to articulate the United Methodist identity of affiliated institutions. The agencies are closely monitoring federal education policy through partnerships with organizations like NAICU.

Migration: Major grants related to migration, primarily through UMCOR, have supported the work of Church World Service (CWS), and the Immigrant Law and Justice Network (ILJN). With UMCOR's support, CWS has provided critical services to recently arrived refugees and immigrants in the United States after the abrupt suspension of the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program, unprecedented delays in payment reimbursements, and the gutting of legal and social services nationwide assisting immigrants. The grant to ILJN was distributed to local affiliate offices affected by the termination of federal immigrant child legal defense contracts. ILJN is currently exploring ways to facilitate the cases of children who no longer have legal representation in immigration proceedings.

In Argentina, CAREF has received grant funds from UMCOR to continue its work supporting migrant rights amid growing challenges. CAREF reports that this support has allowed them to sustain and strengthen the work they carry out in an increasingly challenging and overwhelming context regarding the reception, integration and guarantee of rights for migrants.

Global Health: Over \$3.5 million in grants made since April have impacted more than 1 million beneficiaries. The work is being done through grants to both established and new partners in 12 countries, including two to the United States. There has been strong emphasis on maternal newborn and child health but also on HIV, malaria, tuberculosis and nutrition programming. Fernandes noted, "We see vulnerable communities – those that are least able to advocate for themselves and are most directly impacted by the cuts – being supported in crucial ways, but so much still needs to be done."

A four-year MOU is allowing Africa University, the United Methodist-related school in Zimbabwe, to restart a malaria program shut down by the loss of USAID funding and is supporting work around sustainable agriculture. Fernandes expressed his hope "that Africa University will serve as a far-reaching training ground for both health and agriculture programming, strengthening our presence and partnerships on the African continent."

Food Security and Nutrition: Since 2020, 41 Yambasu Agriculture Initiative grants totaling \$9.9 million have been awarded to 22 episcopal areas and one institution. In a new initiative concerning health, food security and nutrition, Global Health and the Yambasu Agriculture Initiative (YAI) are working together to assist vulnerable communities where pregnant women and young children are at risk or already diagnosed with malnutrition. The three pilot projects in North Katanga, Central Congo and Sierra Leone will serve communities that are also supported by UMC health facilities. YAI will work on food security and livelihoods aspects, and the Global Health unit will complement that work by training community health workers on health education, nutrition and nutritional rehabilitation. Water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) interventions are included in the projects as needed.

An MOU, with Katanga Methodist University brings together education and food security efforts in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Fernandes explained that the project goal is to enhance the school's institutional resilience: "to generate consistent income through agricultural activities, fulfilling the university's operational needs and addressing local food insecurity affecting nearby communities. Specifically, it will develop hands-on agronomy facilities, create on-campus and community employment opportunities and boost local food supply. This initiative takes a comprehensive approach to education, economic empowerment and community development in rural areas."

Peace and Justice: The Peace and Justice Program has led pilgrimages to Palestine/Israel and Korea this year and awarded grants to support peacebuilding. Fernandes condemned the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Gaza, calling it “one of the biggest tragedies of our lifetimes,” and emphasized the agencies’ commitment to justice and relief. He described the immense loss of life as genocide, saying that “the killing and suffering of civilians, especially children, is heartbreaking.” He added that the mental trauma this kind of cruelty brings to those going through it is unimaginable and noted that, though the situation in the region is complex and the history of war and hate unceasing, genocide on civilians and children cannot be the answer. UMCOR has worked with partners to bring some relief, but the impact has been minor amid so much devastation.

This Moment Matters

Recognizing the urgency of the moment, the agencies are launching a special fundraising campaign titled **“This Moment Matters,”** aiming to raise \$17 million to support new granting in the five areas of response. Monthly appeals began in June, and the campaign will enter a more public phase following the board’s endorsement. 100% of the dollars raised will go toward addressing funding gaps.

Strengthening collaboration and partnerships and agency alignment

The general secretary’s report also covered ongoing work to deepen ecumenical and educational partnerships, as well as align GBGM and GBHEM operations. He shared a summary of significant program developments over the last six months, which included regional consultations with partners in Latin America and the Philippines facilitated by both agencies and the participating partners.

A recent all-staff meeting in Atlanta marked the first in-person gathering since 2019, fostering further collaboration and shared vision. The agencies have adopted a new structural framework that emphasizes a “unified presence and integrated structure,” to optimize work and promote collaboration across programmatic and administrative units. Shared values such as diversity, equity, inclusion, peace and justice are embedded across all work.

The agencies are developing a comprehensive global education strategy, reassessing relationships with educational associations and focusing on sustainable partnerships, particularly in Africa. A new MOU between Global Ministries and missionary placement sites aims to clarify roles and strengthen partnership. The Study of Ministry Commission and Course of Study Review Committee have begun work under episcopal leadership to assess and enhance ministry formation.

GBHEM welcomed the Rev. Dr. Kent Lundy as the new director of the United Methodist Endorsing Agency (UMEA) and announced that Methodist Theological School in Ohio (MTSO) will host the Center for Integrative Pastoral Practice (CIPP).

A call to persevere

Fernandes closed with a message of hope from **Galatians 6:9**: “Let us not grow weary of doing good, for at the right time we will reap a harvest.” He encouraged board members to remain steadfast in their commitment to justice, compassion and collaborative ministry, reminding them that their work is not only strategic but sacred.

