



GLOBAL METHODIST CHURCH UPPER MIDWEST CONFERENCE NEWSLETTER

Early Edition

July 2025

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From Sinai to the Upper Room:

A New Vision for Consultative Appointments

by Rev. James Parks, Upper Midwest Conference Superintendent



We had a wonderful time at Annual Conference 2025. It was great to see everyone and I hope you met a few more people who are serving alongside you in the Upper Midwest. We had 8 people ordained as elders into the Conference. We elected our 2026 General Conference Delegation. We learned and grew in many breakout sessions. And we worshipped and prayed together for the ancient paths and the right way to go.

Thank you to everyone who made this Annual Conference possible. All of the work of our teams and committees. Especially our Sessions Committee that poured in months of planning and preparation, with days of selfless service. Thank you.

My one regret was not having more time to chat with more people.

I did want to share a portion of my message from Friday night, that I hope the whole conference can engage in our consultative process of appointments. We are entering a season of cultural transformation in how we approach pastoral appointments. The vision is to shift from an Old Testament model—where a select few discern on behalf of the many—to a Pentecost model, where the whole body of Christ is actively listening to the same Holy Spirit. We're moving from Mount Sinai to the Upper Room.

This change invites every church and every pastor to seek God's direction with open hands and hearts, not merely asking, "What do I want?" but instead praying, "Holy Spirit, where are You leading?" Consultation in this new framework means consulting with the Spirit—not just being consulted by others.

We acknowledge that this shift won't happen overnight. It's a deep change, requiring trust, humility, and growth in spiritual discernment. There will be times when the pastor we want is not the one we need, and when the church we prefer may not be the one we're called to serve. But when pastors, churches, and cabinets all listen deeply—even from different perspectives—we believe the Holy Spirit will make the right path clear.

We are longing for appointments not decided by preference, but by prayerful, Spirit-led discernment. Imagine churches saying, "We've been praying and we believe God is leading us to a pastor from Korea or South Africa." Imagine pastors saying, "This church needs someone else to lead them in this season."

Even Jesus stood at a crossroads in Gethsemane. He prayed, "Not my will, but yours be done." That's our model.

This journey will take time, patience, and shared learning. But if we walk together, rooted in prayer and open to the Spirit, we will find our way. Together, let's make space for God to speak clearly in our consultative appointment process—and let's respond with faith, humility, and courage.



[Are We Becoming Global Methodists?](#)

I'm hearing lots of conversations about "becoming Global Methodist." What new priorities and practices has your church adopted to "seed a new future"?

Those of us who came from the UMC brought some baggage with us (*c'mon now – be honest!*). We came from 55 years of "Big Tent" philosophy – in which people could believe anything—and often did. Methodists were known for nothing in particular, with minimal expectations for church membership. We were the "vanilla denomination."

[Jethro Update: Are We Becoming Global Methodists? by Rev. Michael McInnis, cont.](#)

This mindset created a vacuum – for both good and bad theology and habits to take root. The reality? Whether good or bad, these things weren't "Wesleyan/Methodist."

We'd forgotten Wesleyan theology and forsaken Methodist practice.

Wesleyan theology says:

Justification = Initial salvation: What God *does for us* through his Son.

Sanctification = Ongoing salvation: What God *does in us* by his Spirit.

We believe we are fully justified and forgiven only through the merit of Jesus' death and resurrection. It is not, and never will be, based on any merit of our own. The *price* of sin has been cancelled. But the *power* of sin over us is also defeated; we can live a holy Christian life in which we do not continue to sin! This victorious life becomes our most powerful witness to a broken, lost, dying world! When your life is truly changed, people notice!

Methodist practice is: Our "walk" has structure—a *method*—practicing the "means of grace" particularly through small groups (Wesley called them "classes and bands"). They are the vehicles for delivering God's grace into our lives, bringing sanctification. Without them—without a *method* for growth—we will not see much spiritual progress, missing out on God's promised blessings.

None of this will happen without *renewed commitment* and *intentional effort* from pastors and church leaders. If the GMC is going to recover Wesleyan theology and Methodist practice, it will happen as we replace old habits with historic, identifiable Christian disciplines in the Methodist tradition.

Our denominational leaders are committed to this new (old!) mission. I and other "Jethros" (retired pastors) in the Upper Midwest Conference are committed to praying for and supporting pastors and churches as they recover these practices.

Your district's Jethro would love an opportunity to speak with your church leaders and share resources that can equip you for transformational change and a fruitful Global Methodist future. Your district presiding elder can connect you with one of us.

– Michael McInnis



[Using Prayers in the Bible is Powerful!](#)

Over the years, I have learned to use Scripture while praying; it is powerful because it describes God much more clearly, richly, and profoundly than I could ever express. At times, it also explains and represents my situation and the condition of my heart better than I could. It helps me be honest before God, rekindles my love for God, and teaches me how to pray. Furthermore, it is God's word; Jesus and God's people in the Bible used the Scripture in their prayers. I will share a couple of prayers with the hope that the prayer blesses you and empowers your faith as they do for me.

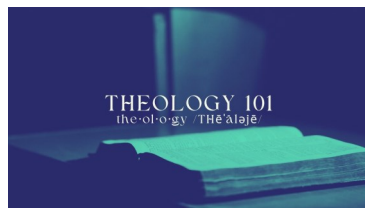
Ephesians 1:17-19 is Paul's prayer for spiritual wisdom. This prayer encourages us to seek profound knowledge of God and His purpose. We can pray like this: "God, the glorious Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, give me spiritual wisdom and insight so that I might grow in Your knowledge. God, I pray that my heart will be flooded with Your light so that I can understand the confident hope You have given to those You called—Your holy people who are Your rich and glorious inheritance. I also pray that all my family, my church members, and all who believe You as Lord will always understand the incredible greatness of Your power. In Jesus' name, I pray."

Another example is Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane (**Matthew 26:39**): "My Father! If it is possible, let this cup of suffering be taken away from me. Yet I want your will to be done, not mine." This profound prayer of Jesus humbly expresses His willingness to surrender to God's will in a most helpless and vulnerable situation. This prayer encourages/empowers us to surrender our plans/desires even when we know we will face challenges and hardship. You may have prayed the same prayer as Jesus and have testimonies to tell others of God's greatness and faithfulness. Knowing there is an incomparable difference between Jesus' call and mine, I prayed the same prayer when I was called to Pastor, when God asked me to go to Israel for 3 years, visit North Korea, etc. Through it all, I have His amazing stories to tell who God is.

Lastly, recite the Lord's Prayer when/if you cannot pray because you are so low or feel helpless. This prayer covers adoration, submission to God's will, seeking daily provision, forgiveness, and deliverance from evil. It is simple yet extensive. I have heard testimonies from praying the Lord's Prayer, a timeless guide for seeking and approaching God in prayer.

May God richly bless you and experience Him and His power when you pray using His Word. Amen.

— Rev. Dr. Christina Sung



Keeping Our Tempers

Rev. Dr. Travis Stevick • Grace Methodist Church, Marcus, IA

[YouTube.com/tstevick1](https://www.youtube.com/tstevick1) Email Questions or Topics to: pastortravis@marcusgrace.com

John Wesley, the father of the Methodist movement, is often described as being a champion of "Free will," of the ability to choose God or sin. That is a bit of a simplification. It is definitely true in the sense that he absolutely rejected any kind of predestination that cuts some people off without even an opportunity to turn to God, but that is because he believed that God gave prevenient (or preventing) grace to every person.

However, Wesley's biggest concern had to do with developing what he called holy tempers. That word "temper" doesn't get used all the time today, except when we talk about someone losing their temper. In Wesley's day, the term usually means something like "one's abiding disposition." He didn't use these terms, but he was mostly interested in what we might call "character formation."

One of the things we are trying to do within the Global Methodist Church is reclaim what it means to be a Methodist. Specifically, we want to be clear about what it means to be both Methodist and evangelical. This focus on holy tempers is a place where the Wesleyan/Methodist tradition has something to offer the larger evangelical world.

Most American evangelicalism is focused on the moment where someone makes a decision for Jesus. Clearly, this is important. We cannot follow Christ without coming to him. However, a decision for Christ that stops there, that does not continue into a life lived for him, every day, is something far short of how the New Testament describes the Christian life.

What Wesley taught relentlessly is that any faith that is real must also be alive, and a living faith cannot help but transform the life of the believer. In teaching Wesleyan theology to pastors in training, I compare the moment of “justification” or coming to Christ in the first place, to a birth certificate. It is important. We definitely need what it signifies, which is the new birth. However, the reason why we care that someone was born was not that we are obsessed with births, but that we care that they are alive. It might also be compared to a marriage certificate. I care that I have a marriage certificate and I am grateful for what it signifies, but I care far less about the certificate than I do about the marriage itself.

If you ask someone if they are married and the only thing they can point to is that they have a copy of their marriage certificate, you would wonder how important their marriage actually is. If someone has a certificate proclaiming they are married but they live their life as if they were not married, what good is the certificate? At that point, the fact that there is a certificate actually stands in judgement over the person’s life because they ought to know better and they ought to live differently.

The great insight of Methodism is that God doesn’t just want us to be born again, He wants us to live as those who belong to Him, which means that our lives, through the power of the Holy Spirit, begin to look more and more like the life of Christ. It isn’t about saying certain things. It isn’t even about doing certain things. It is about becoming a certain kind of person, someone whose life is “hid with Christ in God” (Colossians 3:3).

How are you not just choosing God once, but cultivating holy tempers, a life of holiness?
– Rev. Dr. Travis Stevick

UPPER MIDWEST ANNOUNCEMENTS

2025 Annual Conference Recap

This year’s Annual Conference meeting in Sioux City, IA was a great opportunity to learn, be inspired, and connect with people all over our region. Below are some highlights from our time together.

Offerings

During this year’s Annual Conference, three different offerings were collected to support important missions: **Blessman International** – These funds will go toward providing Emergency Meals for Children in South Africa. We raised **\$2,140.00** for this cause.

Faith Community Church – A new church plant in Rapid City, SD received **\$694.00** in support. **Brightside Café’s “Feeding it Forward”** – This initiative provides meals for those in need in Sioux City. Thanks to your generosity, **\$588.00** was raised. *(See picture on next page)*

Thank you to everyone who gave so generously to bless others in these impactful ways!



Did you miss Annual Conference?

Videos of the different worship services from our 2025 Annual Conference are available on our YouTube channel and our Website. Feel free to share these with others from your local church who would like to be informed and inspired. GO TO: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCeIUq0W7V_b9fGnG_MEMo0w

Welcome Our Newly Ordained Elders



*L to R: Ross Reinhiller, James Parks, Mary Howell, Tony Coffman,
Paul Kimball, Alisa Parde, Mike Hader
Tommy Suh, Angie Vertz, Rodney Heilbrun, Bishop Mark Webb*

Upper Midwest Delegation to 2026 General Conference



At Annual Conference we elected our delegation for the 2026 General Conference, August 30-September 5, 2026 in Johannesburg, South Africa. We have 5 delegates of each clergy and laity. We also have 1 alternate and 6 reserves of each who are a part of the delegation. (Alternates will travel with the group, and reserves will not.) This group will represent the Upper Midwest Conference. Please keep these individuals and this group in your prayers as they learn, discuss, and discern God's guidance.

If you have questions or want to reach out to the delegation you can email them at GCDelegates@uppermidwestgmc.org.

- **Clergy:** James Parks (Chair), Zach Kingery, Jonathan Lee, Travis Stevick and Luann Bengé
- Clergy Alternate: Rey Colon
- Clergy Reserves (In Order): Corey Jenkins, Sedar Shako, Darla Hadrick, Michael McInnis, Angie Vertz, Juwle Nagbe
- **Laity:** Matthew Kearns (Vice-Chair), Daniel Evans, Becky Hereen (Secretary), Norma Morrison and Andrea Schadel
- Laity Alternate: Lynn Rohrer
- Laity Reserves (In Order): Darcy Rubenking, Dave Mendyk, Dayle Wiley, Clarence Mittleider, Rebecca Nixon and Jamal Boma

To learn more about General Conference you can visit [the Global Methodist Church website](https://globalmethodist.org/2026-general-conference-v2/). <https://globalmethodist.org/2026-general-conference-v2/>



2025 Upper Midwest Conference Mission Trip

One of our priorities for 2025 is to Grow Global. As followers of Christ, our faith is not just personal—it's deeply communal. Growing Global means serving not only those in our towns, cities, and counties but also our brothers and sisters across the globe. As a conference, we've decided to focus our global efforts on partnering with the church in South Africa.

We're thrilled about our first mission trip opportunity through the Upper Midwest Conference partnership with South Africa. From November 6-18, 2025, we'll send a team to South Africa in collaboration with Blessman International.

Please pray for discernment and for the team to be blessed as they connect with and serve the people of South Africa.

If you're interested in joining the team, you can:

Learn more about joining Blessmann International on a mission trip here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cqzEAT6WFgE>

Sign up here: <https://blessmaninternational.servicereef.com/events/blessman-international/open-8>

Application deadline is August 9, 2025



Missed the presentation at Annual Conference or want to share the information with others?

Go to the following address:

chrome-extension://efaidnbmninnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://mcusercontent.com/64124f1d5b1170491dea9f3cf/files/658e5010-fe50-1a2d-e99d-aa91968f15d3/ChurchWebsites101.pdf

Upper Midwest Conference Adjustments

We continue to evaluate adjustments to be made to help us be effective as a conference. We want to celebrate three presiding elders who finished serving in that role at the end of June: Corey Jenkins, David Odell and Val Reinhiller. They have served well! New appointments to the cabinet will be Rey Colon and Jeff Kelley. The reason for only two additions is because we are reducing our districts by one. The Montana-Wyoming District will be divided and connected to other districts. Montana will connect with North Dakota West. Wyoming will connect to South Dakota West. The other adjustment being made to districts is the naming of the Nebraska districts. They were numbered, but the cabinet thought direction names help people know where the district is. So, the new names are Nebraska West, North Central, South Central, and East. Please continue to pray for your presiding elders as many of them serve their local church and the conference in this vital ministry.



Certified Lay Ministry (CLM) Program 2025 Summer/Fall Session

Laity have long been the stronghold of Methodism and essential to the Wesleyan movement.

John Wesley recognized early the gifts of the laity and called them out raising up new leaders as exhorters, class leaders, and lay preachers. Today Certified Lay Ministers serve in a variety of capacities such as providing pulpit supply, conducting public worship, providing congregational care, serving as church administrator, leading small groups, assisting in program leadership, serving as a lay leader, developing new faith communities and even serving in lead pastoral leadership under the supervision of a clergy person.

The Global Methodist Church also recognizes the importance of a lay led movement. Therefore, the Global Methodist Church has made certified lay ministry a priority in its foundational stages of ministry and provided this vital leadership path for lay people.

Another 6 months have passed, and the Upper Midwest Conference will be hosting the next session of training for the Certified Lay Ministry (CLM) program. This program is for professing members (for at least 2 years) who are in lay leadership with their church, leading a church as a lay person, or are called to further their calling to join in said leadership. This session will run from July - December 2025. You will learn more about your calling, understanding the church, Bible study, mission and evangelism, and more! Each class is 1 day and may include pre-work or homework after the conclusion of the class. Upon completion of the coursework and other requirements, you would be commissioned as a CLM at the 2026 Upper Midwest Annual Conference.

You'll find more information about the program and the registration form here:

<https://www.uppermidwestgmc.org/certified-lay-ministry>

If you have any further questions, please reach out the CLM Committee here: certifiedlayministry@uppermidwestgmc.org

GLOBAL METHODIST ANNOUNCEMENTS



General Conference 2026

With great joy and gratitude, we are thrilled to announce that the

2026 General Conference of the Global Methodist Church

will be held in Johannesburg, South Africa,

from August 30 – September 5, 2026!

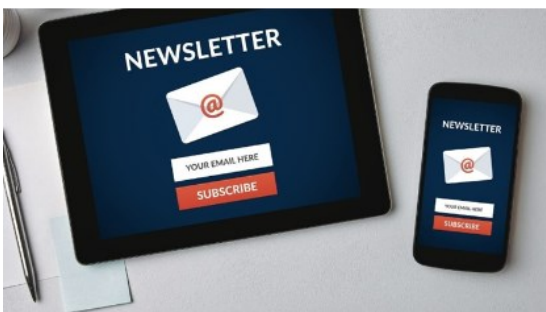
This marks the first time our denomination's General Conference will take place on the African continent—a powerful and visible expression of our identity as a truly global movement.

GO TO THE GENERAL CONFERENCE 2026 WEB PAGE:

<https://globalmethodist.org/2026-general-conference-v2/>

MORE INFORMATION

Be the First to Know!



Sign up for our Upper Midwest Newsletter

<https://www.uppermidwestgmc.org/newsletter>

****Note:** The Deadline for Newsletter Articles/Info is the 20th of the Month.



Global Methodist Church "Across the Globe Newsletter"

<https://globalmethodist.org/connect/>

Don't miss out on the latest updates, inspiration, and more—delivered straight to your inbox. Sign up now!



September 17-19, 2025

New Room Conference

September 25 -27, 2025

Nebraska GMC Gathering

September 22 -26, 2025

Bishop Webb visits the Upper Midwest

November 6-18, 2025

Mission Trip to South Africa

Upper Midwest Prayer Opportunities



The Upper Midwest Conference

Daily Noon Prayer

Can you imagine what would happen in the spiritual realm if we prayed the same prayer together at noon daily?

Join Us and Let's Find Out!

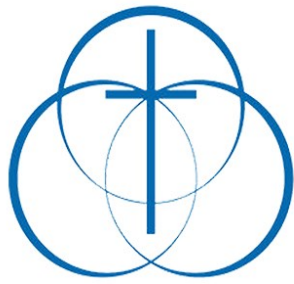
<https://www.uppermidwestgmc.org/prayer>

Scheduled Zoom Prayer Meetings

Please click the button below and let us know that you would like to join and we will send you the link.

**Monthly on the 3rd Tuesday
at 7:00 PM (CST)**

prayer@uppermidwestgmc.org



GLOBAL METHODIST CHURCH UPPER MIDWEST CONFERENCE

Lovingly walk alongside laity and clergy as they make disciples of Jesus Christ who worship passionately, love extravagantly and witness boldly.

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