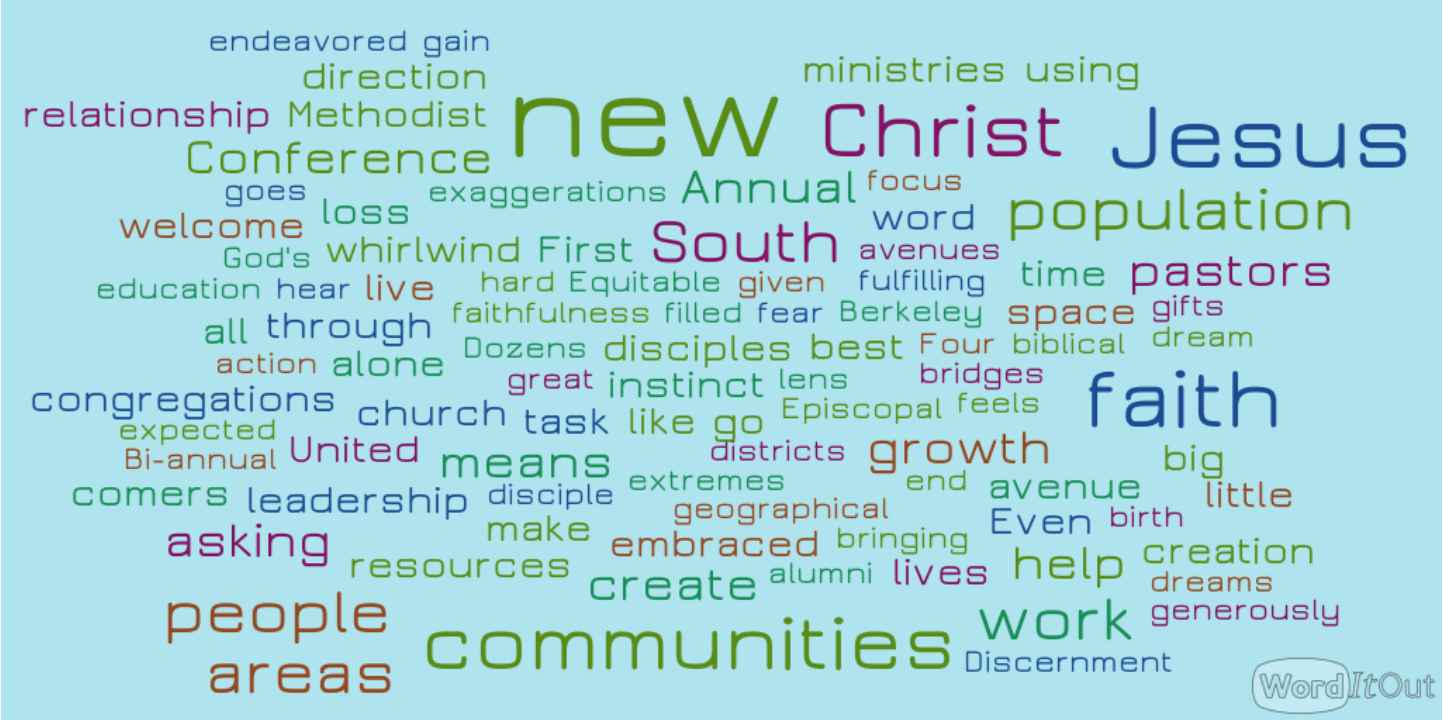


This year's report differs from year's past and attempts to address two expressed needs from annual conference participants: first, the need for information about available resources and initiatives; and second, the need for engagement after a morning agenda with much listening. (1)

So to honor both needs, the Director's Report will be furnished in two methods: first, in a very brief report here on the floor; and second, with that same report annotated with links and deeper information that will be available in a hard copy at the Congregational Development table and posted on the South Carolina Annual Conference webpage at www.umcsc.org in the Congregational Development section. (2)

Because I am a visual and experimental person with more than a small amount of ADD, I used a Word Cloud App in the making of this report. It's a helpful tool for me because the visual confirmation of the words most frequently used in the document keeps me honest in focusing message of my communication. (3) For any unfamiliar with this visual - a Word Cloud is created by inputting a text into the application which then creates the cloud by noting the frequency of words. In most Word Clouds, the larger the print of the word; the more times it has been used in the text. I leave to you to identify the main themes as I share this report.



The work of Congregational Development is complicated in that it requires attention to existing faith communities and their changing opportunities (4) while keeping primary focus on the preparations for new birth in Jesus Christ through establishment of new faith communities. Four years ago here in South Carolina, we simplified the task by saying that we would create "New Places for New People" so that in new and existing faith communities bridges would appear for bring people closer to Jesus Christ. Bishop Holston asked for fifty new situations in the quadrennium that would include new worship services, satellite campuses, mission faith communities, revitalization projects, stand-alone new church starts, Hispanic ministry focuses and other projects endorsed by the Cabinet and Congregational Development. (5)

We have embraced two particular avenues for fulfilling the United Methodist mission of "Making disciples of Jesus Christ, for the transformation of the World".

- First, we have endeavored to provide pastors and laity with education and support for using their best gifts in service to Christ's work. (6) In 2015, six districts offered team training in "Reaching New People" - dozens of participants were expected and hundreds registered creating the wonderful question, "How big a space do you need to direct faith communities in disciple creation?" and the wonderful answer, "A big space." (7)

Bi-annual Leadership Discernment Academies have given almost a hundred clergy the opportunity to gain knowledge of leadership strengths and leadership growth areas. The first class of thirty - six had a 90+% of participants creating a new ministry, worship service or vision process for moving their congregations forward. (8)

- The second avenue is the work of resourcing existing faith communities. Talk about this part of the work of Congregational Development has the ability to awaken and excite South Carolina United Methodists. We live in a time of great transition. Existing congregations and their pastors are caught in winds of change that often feel less like the breath of Holy Spirit and more like chaos of whirlwind - and it is hard to hear God's voice in the a whirlwind of anxiety, loss and confusion. Coaching can help. (9) The leading of a Superintendent or Congregational Specialist can help. (10) Resources from Congregational Development can help. You do not have to go forward alone.

There is a third avenue, it is not so much embraced as viewed from a safe distance with hearts sometimes fearful, sometimes longing. And that is the creation of new faith communities. In some areas of Charleston and Berkley counties, eighty percent of the population in the next five years in some areas is projected to be newcomer. (11) Further information says that seven out of ten of these newcomers have no relationship with now and in some cases never with any faith community. These geographical areas are the most exaggerated of population growth in South Carolina but they are not alone in showing population growth - of around eleven percent (12) or population transfer - once only a migration of rural to urban areas; we now see urban areas moving very quickly into rural areas. (13)

We have moved into a time of biblical hospitality. These newcomers are literally strangers in a new land. Our biblical direction is clear with instructions that in Book of Discipline speak - we are after all a people of two books - do not say should but say shall. We shall find favor with God in finding ways to welcome and bring newcomers into Jesus' churches and our lives. (14)

It goes against much of our instinctive responses. For Congregational Development: it means asking existing faith communities to let go of the fear of competition or scarcity and to embrace the possibility of partnership and plenty⁽¹⁵⁾- one of most exciting Holy Spirit breezes blowing across South Carolina is the strengthening interest in creating new starts through multiplication of existing congregations/or several sites for one congregation, an idea that four years ago seemed to have little appeal has now moved to the front of many pastors ideas as how to reach new people ⁽¹⁶⁾; it means asking for a pooling of resources - as 904 of your congregations did in 2015 with apportionment line item payment so that "together we can do more" ⁽¹⁷⁾; it means asking new church start pastors and laity teams to literally "hit the streets" to find, welcome and disciple newcomers ⁽¹⁸⁾; and it means asking newcomers to trust their new found desire for holy conversation with Jesus to these strangers who claim a direction from him and finally it means asking people who do not yet know Jesus to trust this Loving God who has broken into their lives.

And since it goes against our instincts, we shall have to learn to trust the instincts of Jesus Christ. He would not ask us to do it if it were not of His Kingdom. So it must be done.

The work of Congregational Development is in the end that simple. Jesus Christ asks us and we say yes in whatever circumstances. We thank our Annual Conference partners: Bishop Holston, the Cabinet⁽¹⁹⁾, The Commission on Equitable Compensation ⁽²⁰⁾, Conference Connectional and District Connectional Ministries, District Committees on Congregational Development who for many of you are the face of this mission ministry and all others who move across silo lines to share the work. Most particularly we thank the local churches of the South Carolina Annual Conference who provide prayer and apportionment support, commitment and energy so that dreams and visions rooted in the work of Jesus Christ are possible.

Respectfully Submitted; Sara A. White, Director of Congregational Development SC Annual Conference

1. See Annual Conference Evaluations years 2013-2015
2. The report can be found by entering the webpage; clicking on Congregational Development under Offices and clicking on 2016 Director's Report.
3. The Word Cloud used is in the report on the webpage.
4. This work is accomplished through: 1. The monies collected from apportionments that are designated for Existing Churches, one quarter of the collected funds (after set expenses) delivered through annual grant applications; Grant applications can be received by calling the Office of Congregational Development @ 803-786-9486 ext. 305 and making the request to Laura Hill who will mail the application (not available through email) and notify the Superintendent so that help can come from the Superintendent's Office and the District Committee on Congregational Development. 2. Monies collected from each district for the Congregational Development Line Item are pro-rated for return to the district source - twenty cents of every dollar collected returns to the District and is available through application to the District Committee on Congregational Development. 3. Coaching available through the Office of Congregational Development with Superintendents endorsement of request and available funds. 4. Designation of an existing church as a Revitalization Project through Congregational Development which for a two year period provides Equitable Compensation support, funding from Congregational Development and support through Congregational Development offerings - designations are through the endorsement of local church, superintendent and Office of Congregational Development. 5. MissionInsite the free demographic service of the annual conference that provides information about population, community trends and preferences and other items - Free Registration is available with instructions on the Congregational Development page of the website.
By far the greatest predictor of success is involvement of superintendent, district committee and excitement of local congregation.
5. Congregational Development participated in thirty-three "New Places for New People" and with extended funding added an additional twenty-two obligations. The breakdown of these is seven stand-alone New Starts, ten revitalization situations, nine new worship services in existing churches, four new satellite congregations, three Hispanic ministries and two mission communities. These numbers do not reflect a complete accounting of all projects instituted by districts.
6. A contract with Griffith Coaching allows for participation in all their offerings and makes their expertise available. Scholarships are also given as funding is available for the School of Congregational Development and other offerings through PathOne - the church planting arm of the General Church - and the General Church Board of Discipleship. Scholarships are arranged with the agreement of the superintendent and Office of Congregational Development.
7. These training events were sponsored by the district Committees on Congregational Development with training provided by Griffith Coaching. Registration was charged with participants begin teams comprised of laity and clergy of the participating churches. Both laity and clergy are needed because studies have shown that only with involvement of both can the work be successfully accomplished.
8. Participants in the Leadership Discernment Academy are selected by superintendent identification or identification of the Bishop's office or the Office of Congregational Development. They are invited with Bishop Holston's approval. Participants use an instrument called the DISC profile which identifies not personality but leadership and problem solving preference; instruction is then given as to how best to use this preference in four identified church settings. Participants learn what they need to be the best leader in particular situations and where they will have to ask for help in successful leadership. Continuing Education credits are given with the agreement of participant to share their profile and a Reflection Paper with the superintendent and Office of Congregational Development. Participants also attend three additional overnight trainings in the following year.
9. See #4.3 above.
10. Congregational Specialists operate in assigned districts or across district lines in cooperation. The Conference website or your District Office has information about contacting your District Specialist for assistance.
11. This information is from development offices in Charleston and Berkeley counties, MissionInsite demographic reports and reports of the Lewis Center for Church Leadership from Wesley Seminary.
12. The State newspaper, Sunday May 28, 2016.
13. Areas of fastest population growth are along the Low Country coast, the I-85 Corridor where the Inland Port has galvanized growth, along Low Country I-26, York County along I-77 and Indian Land, areas to the North and West of Richland and Lexington counties.
14. For reference: Exodus 2:22; Leviticus 19:10; Deuteronomy 10:19; Matthew 25: 35; Ephesians 2: 19; Hebrews 11: 13.
15. It's hard to accept but studies show that a new successful faith community energizes and contributes to growth in all surrounding faith communities. There is a dose of new energy, some healthy competition, a sharpening of focus and awareness of need for intentional ministry. For instance providing persons to "seed" a new congregation for either a short six months or a longer two year time frame injects into the first faith community the evangelistic knowledge and excitement of a new faith community as well as the variances in organization and practice that appear much clearer in contrasting situations established in different decades and circumstances.

16. Multi-Site Campus congregations are a way for healthy DNA to be shared along with other resources. South Carolina will host a Multi-Site Conference on November 16-18, 2016
17. Nine hundred and four congregations of the South Carolina Annual Conference contributed to the Congregational Development Line Item in 2015. Eight hundred and seventeen of them paid one hundred percent. These funds are the funds available for distribution in 2016. Congregational Development is funded not upon a budget figure but instead creates budget using figures from year before collected funds.
18. New Church Start pastors are trained to invite persons into relationship through small groups, Bible study and other disciple creating mission. In addition, they are asked to invite persons with investment in them to invest in their ministry. They are asked to identify and form relationships with community leaders and community needs. Here in South Carolina we fund New Church Starts with apportionment dollars from the Line Items of Congregational Development and Equitable Compensation, contributions from District 20% funds and other district funds and monies released from Conference Trustees as allowed by the Book of Discipline. Our funding formula allows for the Line Item to be distributed in the following way:
- 20% District Funds taken from total gathered
 - Fixed Costs of Salaries, benefits, rent and operation expenses along with funds for education and resourcing
 - 50% Remaining Funds to New Church Starts
 - 25% Remaining Funds to Existing Church
 - 25% Remaining Funds to Land Acquisition.
19. The identifying of projects for Congregational Development begins with the superintendents who identify possible projects and work with District Committees to fulfill the requirements for moving into funding and start dates. The Cabinet then works with Congregational Development to prioritize the projects and move them toward start dates.
20. The Commission on Equitable Compensation provides compensation support for pastors who are leading New Church Starts and Revitalization projects of minimum salary - with augmentation through Congregational Development - travel, and one half of benefit costs.