

**The North Georgia Conference**

# **VISION BLUEPRINT**

**2012 - 2016**





## DISCIPLES

Every congregation is in the disciple-making business. From Jesus' commandment at the end of the Book of Matthew to "Go and make disciples," the church across the generations has been actively engaged in creating opportunities and environments where the living Christ can be encountered and lives can be transformed. Disciple-making, therefore, is both the work of the individual and the faith community. Disciple-making does not end with a "heart warming" experience or even a gradual growth in understanding over time, rather disciple-making is a life-long work of relationship building with God and neighbor.

John Wesley understood human nature. He knew that without an organized and defined plan of spiritual growth, it wouldn't happen. Wesley also understood that even a person with good intentions would not be able to sustain spiritual practices without someone with whom to share the journey. And he knew that those in leadership positions needed others in order to hear and discern God's will. The history of the Wesleyan Movement reminds us that when individual spiritual journeys are lived in concert with others in faithful, accountable community, faith grows and others notice. Questions will be asked, stories of God's faithfulness will be shared, and invitations to experience the hospitality of worship and mission will be offered. Disciple-making happens!

We are part of the United Methodist church, and our disciple-making takes on unique form and shape as we introduce others to the Wesleyan way of living and growing in faith. That means something. As individuals and congregations we need to know our denominational story. In this day and time, the unique understanding of God's grace and love that defines who we are as United Methodists is a message that needs to be heard.

- **Encouraging spiritual practices and disciplines**
- **Teaching the United Methodist Way of Christian Living**
- **Cultivating intentional winsome, and effective evangelistic witness**

**As an individual:** How are you planning to grow in your relationship with God over the next six months? Over the next year? What holy habits are you practicing on a regular basis? How United Methodist are you?

### Some ideas you can try:

- Stop. Listen for God every day.
- Read through the Bible in one year. Check [www.bibleyear.com](http://www.bibleyear.com) or [www.ngumc.org/readthebibleinayear](http://www.ngumc.org/readthebibleinayear) for a plan.
- Read Richard Foster's book, *Celebration of Disciplines* with Study Guide to learn more about spiritual disciplines and their practice.
- Watch the CEF NGUMC You Tube page, "Embracing the Wesleyan Way," by Kim Reindl, April 1, 2014. <http://youtu.be/P440mgpixg>
- Watch selected "Chuck Knows Church" topics [www.chuckknowschurch.com](http://www.chuckknowschurch.com)
- Participate in a group that studies one of these suggested resources: (available at [www.cokesbury.com](http://www.cokesbury.com))
  - *A Disciple's Path* by James Harnish
  - *The Wesleyan Way* by Scott Jones
  - *Being United Methodist* by J. Ellsworth Kalas





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**As a congregational leader or pastor:** Where do you make time to listen for God's leading? How are you continually preparing yourself to lead? What are your spiritual practices and how do they feed you? How does the structure of the UMC assist your spiritual leadership?

**Some ideas you can try:**

- Preach a sermon series on spiritual disciplines
- Contact the Connectional Ministries office for suggestions for small group studies and resources.
- Invite a workshop leader to create an opportunity for those in your congregation to learn more.
- Form a small group. Share your spiritual journeys and covenant to practice together.
- Create a committee, team, or staff agenda that begins with scripture and prayer.
- Once a year, take your committee/ leadership team on a retreat.
- Make time for vision to emerge. Ministry is not a list of things to check off.
- Find ways to celebrate what the UMC accomplishes together
- Participate in a group that studies one of these suggested resources: (available at [www.cokesbury.com](http://www.cokesbury.com))
  - *A Disciple's Path* by James Harnish
  - *The Wesleyan Way* by Scott Jones
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## LEADERS

The long term health of any movement or organization is dependent on that group's ability to continually identify and cultivate new leaders. The United Methodist church is no exception. Remembering the history of our denomination's early growth may prove to be a guide for us into the future. As a frontier church with few ordained clergy available to order and direct congregational life, lay men and women rose to the challenge of teaching, preaching, and nurturing the individuals and families who came to worship and learn together each week. Without their gifts, the fledgling Methodist movement would not have survived in America. Those same kinds of leaders are in our pews today.

Each congregation is charged with identifying those with leadership gifts and offering ways to cultivate and grow those individuals into those who will lead our congregations into God's future. Today there are two distinct aspects to that leader identification. Every congregation is charged with developing lay servant leaders who will offer their gifts to the ministries of their congregations. Every congregation is also charged with helping persons discern whether God might be calling them into set apart ministry as elders, deacons, local pastors, or as professional staff in specific ministry areas.

Leadership development begins with the very young people in our midst and those in our communities. Our congregations are aging. No longer are children, youth, and young adults automatically looking to the church for activities and nurture. However, younger generations are characterized by a desire to be involved with groups and organizations that make a real difference in the world. Congregations who are actively engaged in their communities and in ministry with each other are ideal places for people of every age to serve, and grow in their leadership capabilities. These same congregations are not bogged down in unnecessary structure but have creative structures that enable leader growth, congregational vitality and missional excellence. These congregations encourage lay and clergy partnerships and seek out other congregations in order to tackle ministries that may be "too big" to do alone. There is power and excitement when multiple congregations engage in ministry together. Leadership is shared and collaborative relationships encourage significant impact in neighborhoods and communities that offer the tangible grace and love of Jesus Christ.

- **Invigorating ministries with children, youth, camps and campuses**
- **Recruiting fresh lay leadership**
- **Identifying the most effective candidates for clergy needs of the conference**
- **Seeking staff and leader efficiency**

**As an individual:** Where are you using your gifts and talents for God in your church and your community? Where are you connecting what you are learning as you practice your discipleship through prayer and study to the needs of others? How can you encourage a young person in faith and discipleship?

### Some ideas you can try:

- Take an on line spiritual gifts assessment to see where you are uniquely gifted to serve. [www.ministrymatters.com](http://www.ministrymatters.com) is one place to look.
- Having discovered your spiritual gifts, offer your name to the Lay Nominating Committee in your congregation
- Participate in a small group designed to explore leadership in the church. Here are a few suggestions (available at [www.cokesbury.com](http://www.cokesbury.com))
  - *Leadership from the Heart: Learning to Lead with Love and Skill* by Cartmill and Gentile
  - *The Power of Servant Leadership* by R. Greenleaf
  - *Spiritual Leadership in the Small Membership Church* by David Canada
- Is God calling you into set apart ministry? Speak with your pastor and begin exploring how God could use you,
- Practice watching for those who are servant leaders – and may not know it! How can you be an encourager?
- Listen to the stories that young people have to tell
- Be a mentor: To a third grader who has just received a bible; to a middle schooler who is going through the confirmation process; to a college student who is away from home and needs to know that someone is listening.



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**As a congregational leader or pastor:** How can your church cultivate an environment from which the next generation of church leaders and pastors grows? How can you engage your neighborhood in new and creative ways that will provide opportunities to grow leaders as well as meet the needs of your neighbors across the generations?

**Some ideas you can try:**

- Offer ongoing opportunities to discover spiritual gifts [www.ministrymatters.com](http://www.ministrymatters.com) will provide an easy to use assessment and a printable results page.
- Create a relationship with the children at the nearest school. Do they need tutoring? A safe place to come before or after school?
- Vacation Bible School is a great way to engage children with your congregation, but it can lead to more than one week of fun and excitement. How will you follow up with those children who do not have a church home?
- Where is your nearest college? How can you provide a taste of “home” for those students?
- Could your church host a Grow Day Camp? You would be providing a camping experience right on your front lawn for children who otherwise will never have one. [www.campglisson.org](http://www.campglisson.org)
- Youth understand technology far better than those older. How can they use their gifts to help with your church website, technology during worship, or with individuals who need some tech tutoring?
- Offer “internships” or opportunities to “shadow” those already serving as leaders
- Create intentional mentoring relationship between the generations.
- Provide encouraging opportunities for young people to lead in worship, be on committees, to participate in special ministry efforts.
- Plan a leadership retreat to explore the effectiveness of the current structure – Imagine – if you were a brand new congregation, what kind of structure would you need to be a vital congregation?
- Explore how each church committee might creatively partner with other committees
- Identify those with the gifts to lead in a collaborative structure





## SMALL GROUPS

We are a connectional church bound together to the world in fellowship and ministry. Too often we act as if we are individual congregations. The practice of gathering in small groups today is both an individual and a congregational opportunity for spiritual growth, worship, and mission. Early Methodism required that congregations, with laity and clergy side by side, work together to ensure their survival in hostile and unsettled territory. Today, people attending a particular United Methodist church may drive by several others on the way to their familiar parking lot. Research has shown that denominational loyalty is no longer the deciding factor when an individual or family join a congregation. This fact along with other factors such as generational tendencies to look for specific ministry programs, styles of worship, or particular preachers has precipitated the drastic decline in mainline church membership over several decades.

The Wesley brothers understood the “method” of meeting in small groups. In particular, John Wesley knew that leaders who did not participate in small groups for accountability and support would flounder under the burden of leadership. They would rely too heavily on their own talents and forget the strength found in partnering with other clergy and laity in the company of the Holy Spirit. Recapturing the spirit of connectionalism today will require intentional efforts from clergy and laity alike. Imagine small groups of clergy and laity leaders sharing their spiritual journeys together. Imagine congregations gathering regularly in sub-district groupings. Shared opportunities such as these for prayer, study, mission and worship together is a start to rethinking how we are to serve our communities and world together as ambassadors for Christ.

- **Creating small groups of leaders for spiritual formation**
- **Creating sub-district groups of congregations for mutual support**
- **Strengthening lay and clergy partnerships**

**As an individual:** Are you in a small group? Where are you participating with other laity and clergy? How can participating in small groups encourage your leadership as an active lay member of your congregation?

### **Some ideas you can try:**

- Where is the greatest need in your community? How can you use your gifts to meet this need?
  - Summer feeding programs for children; such as Smart Lunch, Smart Kid
  - Reading and Math help throughout the summer
  - Recreational opportunities on a church campus
  - Music and drama camp
- Participate in a planned partnership with other clergy and laity. Learn something new together.
- Be part of a small group with other laity and clergy. Grow spiritually together.
- Make space in your schedule to meet together. Everyone is busy. Partnerships require effort and compromise.
- Make use of technology so that everyone has access to important content





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## John Wesley knew that leaders who did not participate in small groups for accountability and support would flounder under the burden of leadership.

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**As a congregational leader or pastor:** Are you in a small group? Where are you encouraging laity to use their leadership skills in ministry? What leaders in your congregation are you intentionally mentoring?

**Some ideas you can try:**

- Where is the greatest need in your community? What can you do in partnership with other UM congregations to meet this need?
- Summer feeding programs for children; such as Smart Lunch, Smart Kid
- Reading and Math help throughout the summer
- Recreational opportunities on a church campus
- Music and drama camp
- Job retraining program
- Create a small group where clergy and lay leaders grow spiritually together.
- Make space in your schedule to meet together. Everyone is busy. Partnerships require effort and compromise.
- Make use of technology so that everyone has access to important content.
- Participate in a planned partnership with other clergy and laity. Learn something new together.







## MISSION AND WITNESS

Engaging the world as disciples of Jesus Christ is in our Methodist DNA. When John Wesley declared “The world is my parish,” the challenge of meaningfully meeting the world with the Good News of the Gospel was set. Our history is full of people who took this challenge seriously and made a way for the light of Christ to shine in dark times and places. Wesley could never have imagined the 24/7 world of today, but the challenge remains the same. How do we meet the needs of our global parish and reflect the diversity of our communities?

The United Methodist Church is present and at work locally and throughout the world. Through our General Boards and Agencies, their global initiatives and the work of countless individuals in ministries with those in need, United Methodists are involved in social justice ministries that seek to make a difference in the safety, health and welfare of all.

The North Georgia conference is present and at work in our local communities and throughout the world. In 2013, North Georgia’s congregations were introduced to seven global Bridges of Mission. These seven countries are places where people and churches can engage in ministry through prayer, encouragement, financial support, mission trips, and other creative connecting points. Each Bridge needs at least 50 congregations to keep the bridge support strong and viable. In addition. There are two Bridges here at home where, without a visa or passport, ministry to those in need is being done daily by local congregations and districts.

Engaging in local and global mission shrinks our world. We build relationships with those who look, sound, live, and work very differently than we do. As those relationships grow, we realize the commonality of our humanness. We laugh, cry, dance and sing. We hug our babies and share the same joys and fears for their futures. Our congregational vitality is strengthened when we embrace the possibilities of growing in faith and mission with all God’s people.

- **Building mission and ministry bridges**
- **Engaging local and global social involvement**
- **Embracing our diversity**
- **Increasing the number of vital congregations**

**As an individual:** What makes you cry? Where are your deepest passions stirred on behalf of the least, the last and the lost? How can you build a bridge from your heart to your neighbor’s? How does your work in local and global mission create a sense of vitality in your congregation?

### **Some ideas you can try:**

- Encourage your small group to serve together
- Which Bridge interests you? How can you use your gifts to support this Bridge?
  - East Africa –  
tonya.lawrence@ngumc.net
  - El Salvador –  
carol.cook@ngumc.net
  - Bahamas –  
sam.halverson@ngumc.net
  - Portugal –  
dana.everhart@ngumc.net
  - Russia – mselleck@ngumc.org
  - Israel (pending) –  
mselleck@ngumc.org
  - The Philippines –  
herzon.andone@ngumc.net
  - Action Ministries –  
jmoeller@actionministries.net
  - World Methodist Evangelism –  
info@worldmethodist.org
- Connect with those already working in your community
  - Interfaith Children’s Movement
  - Georgia Interfaith Power and Light
  - End Mass Incarceration Team
  - Pan-Methodist Commission on Children and Poverty
  - Imagine No Malaria
  - AIDS Global Fund
  - Family Promise



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### **As a congregational leader or**

**pastor:** Where is the rubber meeting the road in your congregation? How connected is your congregation to your neighborhood, your larger community, to the world? How can you encourage bridge building? How can working in the local and global mission fields encourage congregational vitality?

### **Some ideas you can try:**

- Choose a Bridge to support as a congregation
  - East Africa –  
will.zant@ngumc.net
  - El Salvador –  
carol.cook@ngumc.net
  - Bahamas –  
sam.halverson@ngumc.net
  - Portugal –  
dana.everhart@ngumc.net

- Russia –  
mselleck@ngumc.org
- Israel (pending) –  
mselleck@ngumc.org
- The Philippines –  
herzon.andone@ngumc.net
- Action Ministries –  
jmoeller@actionministries.net
- World Methodist Evangelism –  
info@world-methodist.org

- Create a Great Day of Service, where your congregation can engage in ministry across your community
- Sign up for MissionInsite, a demographics program that provides churches with instant access to community information.  
[www.ngumc.org/missioninsite](http://www.ngumc.org/missioninsite)  
demographics.

- Encourage connecting with those already working in your community

- Interfaith Children's Movement
- Georgia Interfaith Power and Light
- End Mass Incarceration Team
- Pan-Methodist Commission on Children and Poverty
- Imagine No Malaria
- AIDS Global Fund
- Family Promise

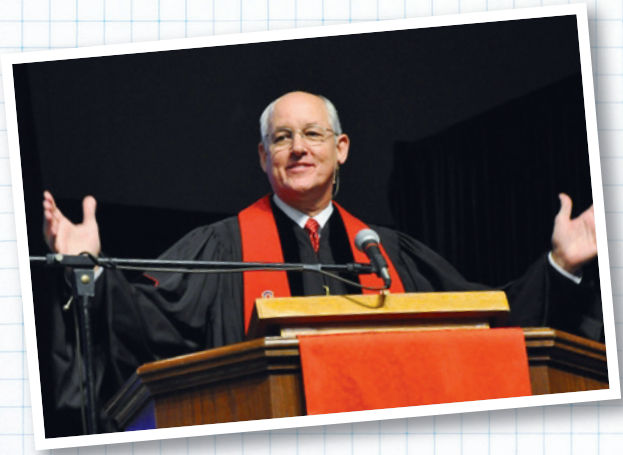




# THE BISHOP'S PRIORITIES

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1. Renew our historic emphasis on spiritual practices and disciplines through prayer and fasting, meditation and study, solitude, and worship.
2. Increase the number of and participation in groups for the development of spiritual leaders through the creation core groups of spiritual renewal and more time for group discernment practices
3. Teach the United Methodist Way of Christian living to our communities with intentional steps toward teaching and learning our Wesleyan heritage, including:
  - Connectionalism and apportioned giving
  - Teaching the world as our parish
  - 3 General Rules: do no harm, do good, stay in love with God
    - Quadrilateral approach
    - Social and personal holiness
    - Warm hearts and educated minds
    - Evangelical witnessing
    - Holy conferencing
    - Episcopal polity with a superintended itinerancy
    - Lay and clergy partnerships
4. Invigorate ministries with those under age 25: Children, Youth and Young Adults, Camps and Retreats, Campus.
5. Recruit new lay leadership by intentionally working at identifying new leadership, purposefully develop supporting programs and experiences that train and support new and emerging leadership.
6. Identify effective candidates to meet the evolving clergy needs of the conference by actively supporting the development and depth of our clergy throughout his or her life in ministry and seeking out candidates who can become full time servants of God in vital and effective ways.
7. Seek ways to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of staff and leaders. Study the possibilities of redesigning leadership teams and responsibilities. Continue recruiting the exceptional talent in our congregations that are willing to serve with excellence. Intentionally train the “next” leadership wave.
8. Connect to a dynamic sub-group of congregations within each district for the purpose of shared encouragement, support, and ideas in ministry. Participate with District plans to share the weight of responsibility and creativity in small groups. Engage in various means of accountability that energize and motivate. Share efforts and ideas with other small groups throughout the other Districts in Conference
9. Strengthen lay and clergy partnerships. Implement more training where laity and clergy learn together. Celebrate our shared ministries. Tell stories of what works.
10. Embrace our ethnicity. Measure ethnic attendance in worship. Identify ethnic attendance in small groups and celebrate trends of effectiveness in reaching and sending among ethnic groups
11. Increase the number of Vital Congregations in every language and ethnic group. Work to establish internal systems that help measure effectiveness of disciple building for your congregation. Use metrics to enrich our questions and our understanding of ministry.
12. Cultivate winsome, intentional, and evangelistic Christian witness. Plan faithful approaches to reach new persons who can profess faith in Christ for the first time.
13. Build more mission and ministry bridges to Bahamas, El Salvador, Moscow, Portugal, East Africa, Philippines, Action Ministries and World Methodist Evangelism.
14. Engage in solutions for 2 or 3 significant areas of local and global social involvement: Human trafficking, feeding programs, Imagine No Malaria, stewardship of the earth, eliminating the death penalty in Georgia.







**Get started or go deeper today!**  
**Visit [www.ngumc.org/blueprint](http://www.ngumc.org/blueprint) for more ideas and resources.**