

United Methodist Rural Advocates <chele101953@gmail.com>

Having trouble viewing this email? [Click here](#)



National United Methodist Rural Advocates

February 2017 In This Issue:

[NEW BOARD](#)

[RANDY WALL](#)

[A MERGER](#)

[GBHEM](#)

[NETworX](#)

[PRAYERS](#)

[IGNITE! UPDATE](#)

[SHARE YOUR STORIES](#)

[MEMBERSHIP](#)



**WE ARE ...
THE UNITED
METHODIST
RURAL ADVOCATES**

You would not ignore a community more than seven times larger than New York City. Yet the

**A New
Quadrennium**

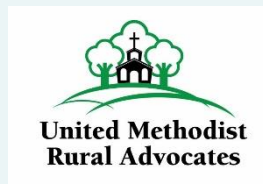
Meet the Board Of Directors

Position	Name	Conference/ Jurisdiction
----------	------	--------------------------

rural population in the United States, with over 60 million people, is often overlooked because they are not all living in the same area.

Whether your church is urban or rural church, large or small, the UMRA invites you to join our association of clergy and laity in reaching out to meet the needs of people from rural communities, their churches and their pastors.

We provide advocacy at General Conference and Annual Conferences to affect rule changes that enable churches to better minister in their communities, provide educational opportunities for the leaders of rural churches to better serve their church bodies, and support church leaders in personal growth and ministry.



OFFICERS

Chair - Randy Wall
- RandyLWall@aol.com

Vice Chair - Alan Bolte
pastor@umcgrmn.org

Secretary - Sue Grace
smgrlg51@yahoo.com

Spiritual Dir - Peggy Jeffries
peggyx15@yahoo.com

Chairperson - Randy L Wall
(West NC/SEJ)
Vice Chair - Alan Bolte
(Minn/NCJ)
Secretary - Sue Grace (W
Ohio/NCJ)
Treasurer - Judy Hill (Rocky
Mt/Western)
Comm Dir - Michele
Holloway (O-I/Western)
Advocacy Dir - Mollie Stewart
(MS/SEJ)
Membership - Carl Ellis (Great
Plains/SCJ)
Spiritual Dir - Peggy Jeffries
(MO/SCJ)
Imm Past Chair - Roger Grace
(W Ohio/NCJ)
At-Large Members:
Laura Byrch (WNC/SEJ)
John Gilmore (Louisiana/SCJ)
Debbie Ketcham - Event
Coordinator (W Ohio/NCJ)
R. Alan Rice - NetWorX USA -
Exec. Dir.(WNC/SEJ)
David Ruesink - Ecumenical
Orrinda Stockton (Cal-
Nv/Western)
Erie Stuckett (MS/SEJ)
Sara Wrona (WPa/NEJ)

From the Chair

Our clothes dryer at our home was not working correctly. The dryer door would not stay shut. While I recall days in my life when we did not have a clothes dryer at our house, today there are no

Comm Dir - Michele
Holloway
[oo.com](mailto:michele.holloway@yahoo.com)

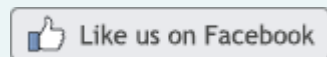
michele.holloway@yahoo.com

Advocacy Dir - Mollie Stewart
gulfsideum@att.net

Membership - Carl Ellis
ckellis70@gmail.com

Treasurer - Judy
Hill
judyh@plai.nstel.com

Visit our webpage @
<http://www.umruraladvocates.org/>



clothes lines at our house or in our neighborhood. The problem with the dryer was a small, but important one: the small door latch had broken off. After discovering that the dryer was no longer under warranty, we discovered on the internet not only a company that sold a dryer latch kit for under \$5 but also a video that showed how to fix the problem. In a couple of days, the dryer latch kit arrived at our home and the problem was fixed in a matter of minutes.

That experience has had me thinking in recent days about the importance of little things. The performance of that clothes dryer was dependent on a dryer latch that cost a retail price of less than \$5 and took less than 5 minutes to install. I believe that the effectiveness of our Christian witness as a church and individuals is also dependent on little things. It costs no money to share a smile, a warm welcome, or to make a phone call. It costs little money to send a card to a friend or stranger who is sick and needs encouragement, or to prepare a plate of cookies for a new neighbor. Yet, what a big effect those little things can have on the friend or stranger at our church, in our neighborhood, or in our workplace.

The apostle Paul uses the human body as a metaphor to make a point about the importance of little things in the body of Christ, the Church. If you have ever had a toothache or a splinter in a finger, you know

well that little things can have a big effect. In I Corinthians 12, the apostle Paul puts it this way:

¹⁴ For the body does not consist of only one part, but of many. ¹⁵ If the foot says, "Since I'm not a hand, I'm not part of the body," that does not make it any less a part of the body, does it? ¹⁶ And if the ear says, "Since I'm not an eye, I'm not part of the body," that does not make it any less a part of the body, does it? ¹⁷ If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? ¹⁸ But now God has arranged the parts, every one of them, in the body according to his plan. ¹⁹ Now if all of it were one part, there wouldn't be a body, would there? ²⁰ So there are many parts, but one body.

Many of the churches in our rural communities are also churches of small membership. As little things can have a big impact on people, so I believe that rural churches and churches of small membership can have a big impact on the communities where they are located when people focus not so much on the little they can do but focus on the great things God can do through them. I invite you to join me and the United Methodist Rural Advocates in living out that truth.

Randy L. Wall

A Church Merger in Minnesota

Wells, Grace Merge to Create First Rural Multi-site by Christa Meland

Don Nickel has been a member of Grace UMC in Kiester for more than three decades. He loves his church, but in recent years, he's seen it shrink in size as members have increased in years.

"We were a hospice church and if we didn't do something, we knew we'd be closing in a few years," he said, adding that worship attendance was below 20 and the average age of members was above 70.

So in fall 2015, when Rev. Paul Woolverton from nearby Wells UMC heard that Grace UMC was struggling, he asked both congregations, "What if we were to work together?"

Nickel and other members of Grace UMC were intrigued and figured they had nothing to lose-and members of Wells UMC, which averages about 100 in worship attendance, were interested too. Wells was one of the first churches that went through the Healthy Church Initiative, and through it, members had come to see the importance of trying new things.

The two congregations spent 2016 exploring what it would look like to become a multi-site church (one church, two campuses), and late last year, they both voted unanimously in favor of combining. There are several urban multi-site churches within the Minnesota Conference, but this is the first one in a rural setting. After the vote, Wells and Grace renamed themselves "Open Doors United Methodist Church," and they have embraced a new energy and momentum. Each week, Woolverton preaches at both campuses, which have combined their finances and worked to create a shared mission and vision.

"This offers a whole new opportunity for what it means to be a missional church in a rural area-to come alongside and partner with another congregation toward vitality," said Woolverton. "We're talking about resurrection and new life across the board."

Nickel said Grace UMC's mindset has shifted since the congregations began working together. It revived Sunday School after a 25-year absence and brought back an adult faith-formation class. Members no longer have to sing along to a CD in worship-Woolverton not only preaches each week but also accompanies them on the keyboard.

"We have more life," said Nickel, adding that Woolverton has emphasized the importance of evangelism, and the church has begun to embrace that concept. "We know we have a good message to share and we want to get young people coming to church again." Already, there is a young family with children that's started attending worship.

Exploring and discerning

During the year the two congregations spent exploring a merger, Woolverton used the liturgical seasons to guide the two churches' discernment. For example, during Epiphany, there were opportunities for members of Wells and Grace to get to know one another and to pray about how the light of Christ was guiding them forward. During Lent, each congregation reflected on past ministries and spent time discerning how a merger might help it fulfill the ministries to which it is being called in the future.

The churches also started to work together in ministry and share best practices. In the summer, they partnered to offer Vacation Bible School in both of their communities-particularly significant for Grace, which hadn't had VBS for many years. They also created a float promoting both churches, and members of both congregations rode on it in three separate parades. They had an all-church picnic gathering one Sunday in the summer after a joint worship service. And in the fall, the youth director from Wells worked with Grace to host an event and scavenger hunt to reach out to children in the community.

Meanwhile, several members of both congregations began serving on a joint merger team. They contacted a lawyer to provide advice about how a combination might legally work, and they asked Centennial UMC in Roseville to share its approach to a second site that it recently launched. A regular newsletter was mailed to people in both congregations to keep them posted on the merger team's progress and to share fellowship opportunities at both Wells and Grace. These actions set the stage for the successful merger vote.

A missional opportunity

Woolverton was thrilled to see the churches' partnership solidified and looks forward to a future filled with hope and possibility.

"What I kept thinking about was: We can't afford to lose our presence in our communities across the rural landscape," he said. "There was a missional opportunity with so many families to reach out to in Kiester."

That made it an easy decision to help the churches think about joining forces.

"My call is to rural ministry and also to help people find opportunity in areas where they might not otherwise see it," said Woolverton. "You lean in to

however the Holy Spirit guides-that's what I'm committed to. If I'm on target with what the Lord is calling, I'm running to keep up. We're in it together. Together, we are the church and God calls us into the mission field. So let's do it."



Article was initially published by the Minnesota Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church. It is reprinted here with permission.

FROM GENERAL BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Regarding Course of Study

Many of our rural and small town and country churches are served by Licensed Local Pastors, Certified Lay Ministers, and Lay Assigned. Below is the information from the GBHEM guidelines for Course of Study Registrars. It's not quite as clear-cut as we might hope. Maybe you'll find this interesting.



COURSE OF STUDY REGISTRAR GUIDELINES

- Students may request a copy of their COS transcript by emailing Pamela Frost at cosregistrar@gbhem.org.

The student's full name and Annual Conference must be included in the email.

2. Enrollment forms for each COS School course must contain both the DS and Local Pastor Registrar (or other BOM representative) approval for each student for each course. Both approvals are required and must be recorded at the school for future reference. Each school may determine the best method for obtaining approvals. Schools must be able to produce both approvals in writing if requested
3. If a Full-Time Local Pastor submits an enrollment form to an Extension School, the school must verify that the student has completed the proper approval process to attend an Extension School. This includes written approval from: The DS, LPR, and the Director of the Extension School they want to attend, the Director of the Regional School that the Extension School reports to, and from the Assistant General Secretary at GBHEM.
4. Only when a student has received all approvals in writing are they permitted to attend an Extension School. If a school does not have the approvals on file, please contact Pamela Frost at cosregistrar@gbhem.org to find out if GBHEM has copies of the approvals. If a Local Pastor wishes to take more than four courses in one year, they must complete the proper approval process. This includes written approval from: The DS, LPR, the Director of the Regional School (an Extension School if appropriate) and from the Assistant General Secretary at GBHEM. Only when a student has received all of approvals in writing are they permitted to enroll in more than four courses. If a school does not have the approvals on file, please contact Pamela Frost at cosregistrar@gbhem.org to find out if GBHEM has copies of the approvals.
5. Effective January 1, 2017, if a student enrolls in more than four (4) courses per calendar year without receiving ALL approvals listed above, any courses taken over four (4) will not be recognized on their transcript and will not be counted towards completion of the Basic Course of Study. If you are unsure if all approvals have been received, please email Pamela Frost at cosregistrar@gbhem.org.

NETworX INFORMATION

Submitted by Debbie S. Rice, Ph.D., MSW
Director of NETworX USA

NETworX-Securing Well-being Together

NETworX is a Wesleyan informed faith-based ministry with the poor, recognized by the 2016 General Conference and now operating 17 sites in four states in the USA. Due to the advocacy of the National UMRA Board, during the 2016 General Conference, a resolution passed stating:

Therefore, be it resolved that General Conference encourages bishops, annual conferences, and agencies to support local groups of United Methodist

congregations to work or be in ministry with the poor and to consider NETworX initiatives.

NETworX takes a unique approach to measurably reducing poverty by approaching the challenge holistically. The strategy is not well-doing for others but rather creating well-being together. In NETworX, individuals and communities work together, choosing to build relationships across class and race lines through education and love of neighbor as well as love of self. The NETworX curriculum helps participants change the way they look at and experience poverty. Traditional definitions of poverty that focus on the lack of material and financial resources are challenged. Training classes include education around issues of self-awareness, holistic poverty, resources, the role of trauma, and community change. Relationships built over time are central and are supported by trained paraprofessionals. Because the level of transformation desired takes place over time, participants are asked to dedicate 18 - 36 months to training and relationship building. Curricula are available in secular and faith-infused versions. The secular curriculum has also been translated into Spanish. Finally, a children's curriculum, NETworX Kids, is designed for school-age children.

Measurable outcomes, measured at six-month intervals throughout NETworX participation, include:

Increase in income to at or above 200% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines,
Decrease in use of public assistance,
Decrease in revolving debt from credit cards, rent-to-own, or predatory lending,
Increase in assets,
Increase in safe, supportive, and nurturing relationships, and
Increase in perception of overall quality of life.

Nationally, NETworX USA is the steward of the initiative with RFD CDC serving as the lead agency. RFD CDC is a WNCC UMC Annual Conference-affiliated ministry and 501.c.3 non-profit corporation. NETworX USA is engaged in a collaborative effort to broaden the reach of the NETworX initiative. In California and Nevada, the Cal/NV UM Conference is providing regional leadership. In NC and PA, RFD CDC provides regional leadership. The Great Plains Annual Conference recently provided seed monies for NETworX initiatives within that conference. During late 2016 and 2017, expansion efforts focus on Great Plains, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, and Texas Conferences. During 2017, plans are in place to reach out internationally.

If you are interested in hearing more, contact Alan Rice, a member of the UMRA Executive Committee at 336-239-1526 or visit www.NETworXUSA.org

PRAYERS

by Peggy Jeffries

I have been a Disney fan for as long as I can remember. We lived in Southern California from late 1956 through 1968, the golden years of Disneyland. I was an honorary Mouseketeer, saw all the movies, and knew all the songs. About 20 years ago we were able to take our kids to Disney World, and promised them we'd do it again. We're finally able to keep that promise this April, which means my brain is fully in Disney preparation mode. The other day I was having a bad day, and kept thinking of Eeyore. Eeyore is the perpetually sad donkey friend of Winnie The Pooh. I was thinking that I felt like Eeyore that day, but the more I thought about it there was something I needed to do to fully embrace Eeyore. You see, Eeyore may be perpetually sad, but at the end of all his sads comes a happy. Sort of like the silver lining in the clouds. Eeyore is master of the silver lining. For instance, he loves rainy days because rainy days mean rainbows. He never expects good things, so when good things happen, like his friends remembering his birthday, he is always pleasantly surprised.



It reminded me of the times in Paul's letters when he admonishes people to give thanks in all things, or to praise God even in the midst of troubles. When things are going wrong, or are not going right, we tend to get into a spiral of despair. The worse things are the worse we feel, and the worse we feel the worse things get, and the worse things get...you get the idea. But if we can take a step back and find even one little thing that is praiseworthy, or for which we can give thanks it begins to turn our thought-process around. Even if our thanks is only that whatever happened wasn't worse it helps us to put things into perspective. Even if our praise is just to claim that God is with us in our difficulties it helps us to no longer feel we are facing the troubles alone. Sometimes all we can do is thank God that we're still able to put one foot in front of the other, but it is enough.

Loving God, it is easy for us to sing your praises when we are on the mountaintops of our lives. It is much more difficult when we are deep in despair. We cannot sing the songs of Zion when our lyres are hung on the willows and we feel we will never emerge from the depths of our misery. But it is precisely in those times we most need to sing your praises, even if it is a quiet and tentative song. Fill us with your Spirit in all things so that we might have the courage and strength to give you thanks, whether in good times or in bad....Amen.

Lay Academy

The **Foundations for Ministry** online course helps Certified Lay Ministers, first time pastors, and District Superintendent Assignment persons develop best practices for serving the local church in sermon writing, developing relationships with their congregation, building mission and vision.

This course is a blend of academic learning with practical on the job training. It allows the student to learn through both academic and hands on experience.

This class is also appropriate for pastors moving to new congregations.

The course focuses on a different aspect of ministry each month with all work and discussion forums taking place online, including monthly meetings.

Class dates: August 14, 2017 - May 12, 2018

Registration deadline: August 7, 2017

For more information: Visit the [LARCM](#) web site or [contact us](#).

IGNITE! INITIATIVE

Help Us Reach Our Goal

from Rev. Peggy Paige, Vice President UMRA

Our goal for our Ignite! Initiative:
\$75,000

Estimated pledge to date: \$54,465

Gifts received to date: \$36,367



We would like to thank everyone who has participated to date and would invite those who have not to consider a gift this Advent/Christmas.

It is easy to give by visiting our website: www.umruraladvocates.org (IGNITE).

We are seeking gifts to support and train rural ministry leaders and churches by:

- 1) Hosting Webinars and podcast
- 2) Providing scholarships to rural trainings, consultations & conferences

- 3) Connecting rural ministry leaders
- 4) Offering seed grants for new Program Development

For more information and how you can donate, go to: www.umruraladvocates.org/ignite.

Or you may make a check out to West Ohio Council on Development with Memo: UMRA Ignite! and mail it to:

Ignite! Initiative
West Ohio Conference
Council on Development
32 Wesley Blvd.
Worthington, OH 43085

SHARE YOUR STORIES

We Want To Hear From You

Are there ministries and outreach in your churches that you want others to know about? We celebrate the truth that rural/town and country churches are vital and active within their communities and we want to share that information around the country. Do you have a story of joy or hope that you would like to have shared here? There are others who could greatly benefit from what has worked for you and even what hasn't worked but that has allowed you to grow. Send stories to Michele Holloway at chele101953@gmail.com and your stories will be published in upcoming editions of this eCommunication.

This newsletter is published every other month: February, April, June, August, October, and December. Please send all submissions to the above email address no later than the 25th of the month prior to publication.

UMRA MEMBERSHIP

Memberships are available in the following categories:

Limited Income (What you can afford.)
Student \$10.00
Basic One-Year \$30.00
Church One-Year \$40.00

Two Easy Steps to Membership

1. Please fill out membership form:

<http://form.jotform.us/form/51087588857170A>

2. Pay Membership Dues through [PayPal](#)

For more information or membership, contact:

Email: ckellis70@gmail.com

Carl Ellis

590 120th Street

Fort Scott, KS 66701 785-445-2595

A Note from Carl K. Ellis

Membership Secretary

Five Reasons to Join UMRA

5. Network and collaborate with other rural groups and agencies around issues of concern for the rural church and rural places.

4. Utilize technologies which will help us build relationships, share information and resources, and connect rural leaders.

3. Discover and learn about sustainable, effective, replicable, generative ministries.

2. Be part of an organization which creates and advocates for General Conference legislation that has had a positive effect on the rural church; such as NOW (Nurture, Outreach, Witness) leadership format, development of "Born Again in Every Place," and the Certified Lay Minister. An Organization which will continue to create and advocate for General Conference legislation that may affect ministry in town and churches and their communities.

1. Together we can make a difference as we advocate for the work of Jesus Christ in rural and town and country communities.

UMRA membership provides not only voice and vote in the organization, but also includes a subscription to the UMRA E NEWSLETTER.

Michele Holloway, Editor

chele101953@gmail.com

971.225.8402

Advocating for the work of Jesus Christ in rural communities.