“Now this is a story all about how my life got flipped, turned upside down...”

The opening lyrics to the theme song for the Fresh Prince of Bel-Air could easily be the opening phrase of many stories in the Bible. It was certainly true of the original Disciples as they uprooted their lives to follow Jesus. It was true of John Wesley. He spoke repeatedly about how transformational the Aldersgate experience was in his life, and how it shaped his ministry. These and countless other stories throughout the Bible, world history, and even our own lives give witness to the change that takes place when our focus and perspective are God-given, Christ-centered, and Spirit-inspired.

Jesus took conventional wisdom, religious doctrine, human ego, and cultural priorities, and turned them on their head. Like an image seen in the lens of a camera...in Christ, up is down, poor are rich, and focus is turned outward. Today, just as during the ministry of Jesus, and Wesley’s time, it can prove difficult for Jesus’ followers to maintain His focus and perspective. But what does the Lord require of us?

Micah stated it succinctly: Do justice. Love mercy. Walk humbly with God. Several hundred years later, Jesus expounded on personal holiness in his Sermon on the Mount and other parables. John Wesley followed some 1,700 years later with intentional practices for individuals, as well as expectations for faith communities, that helped generations of disciples remain true to God’s vision and Jesus’ teachings.

Throughout scripture, it is evident that Jesus was specific about the importance of money - not how much a person has, but what is done with it. Wesley broke Christian stewardship down into three simple rules:

1) Gain all you can - because when money is used for the glory of God, great things happen.
2) Save all you can - because by limiting what is spent, there is more to give.
3) Give all you can - because to Wesley, the money we have is God’s, and we are God’s trustees on Earth.

As Christians, and as United Methodists, we are called to use our financial resources in a way that is consistent with the focus and perspective of God. What we deem as necessary often fails to contribute to the concepts and practices of personal holiness required by Jesus and put into practice by Wesley.

As members of The United Methodist Church, we are called to focus our ministry to make known the teachings of Jesus for the transformation of the world.

As members of the Western PA Conference of the United Methodist Church, our five areas of focus are:

- Developing Principled Christian Leaders
- Creating New and Renewed Congregations
- Engaging in Ministry with the Poor
- Promoting Abundant Health and
- Dismantling Racism

In this Budget Narrative, the Council on Finance and Administration (CF&A) will provide an outline of how your Connectional Apportionments allow Jesus’ focus and perspective to be known in Western Pennsylvania, the United States and throughout the The proposed 2019 budget of $9,499,524 will enable our Conference to remain partnered with the Holy Spirit in opening hearts, minds and doors to the transformational power of God’s love, grace and mercy. Together we can ensure that more stories are written about lives that get flipped, turned upside down for the Glory of God.
Developing Principled Christian Leaders

Throughout Jesus’ ministry, the Disciples weren’t called to follow Jesus simply for fellowship; they were called so that Jesus could shape the lives of those who would lead his church into the future. The same is true for Christians and United Methodists around the world today. We are not called simply to make disciples, but to nurture the love, grace, and mercy of God to change the world. This cannot happen through fellowship alone; it requires a Christ-like focus on developing the faith of those who will carry Christ’s mission in the days ahead.

The Church needs leaders who are rooted in Christ. The focus cannot be solely on clergy. Laity provide an invaluable perspective that both Jesus and John Wesley relied on as the Church took shape. The early Methodist movement grew through the efforts of laity who led small groups, studied Scripture, provided outreach ministry and organized the classes and societies. Developing and nurturing strong lay leaders is an important component in making disciples for the transformation of the world.

Your Connectional Apportionment dollars make this first Area of Focus a reality in our local churches in this region and around the world across social, economic, or age-related boundaries. In Western PA, the Office of Clergy Excellence has launched Communities of Practice - an ongoing support network of peer learning groups. The Communities of Practice are small groups sharing best practices in ministry, and offering encouragement and accountability. Our leaders are engaging our congregations in new ways with renewed vitality through resources provided by your apportionments.

Your apportionment funds also support our Youth Ministry Team as they engage in ministry, leadership development, mission, and through opportunities like Spark, Uth4Missions, and a variety of training opportunities. Through these countless teenagers have committed their lives to Christ for the first time, made a re-commitment to Christ-like living, put God’s love in action, and grown in Christ-like leadership and fellowship. Your giving allows our Youth Ministry Team to help others experience God’s grace and love, but the impact of your stewardship doesn’t stop there...

Christ envisioned a world transformed. As United Methodists we share that vision, and through our connectional system support leadership development to help make disciples throughout the world. With global partnerships, the Western PA Conference works with our brothers and sisters in Christ to tackle the issues of today while preparing for the opportunities of tomorrow. Your connectional apportionments help to open hearts and minds for God to break down cultural barriers, inform our sense of global justice, and deepen awareness of Christ’s active presence around the world. As people see the global church in action, they are inspired to return and share their witness at home. This witness is vital in our efforts to develop principled Christian leaders.

Christ changed our narrative. His ministry transformed hearts and minds to receive God’s love and grace. His sacrifice destroyed the power of death; his resurrection made everlasting life a reality. As Christians, it is our call to bear witness to the one who transforms lives. Through our connectional giving, we are able to ensure that Christ-like leadership continues for generations to come - sharing his perspective around the world.
Creating New and Renewed Congregations

When Jesus began his ministry, he sought out those who would follow him. He didn’t wait for them to come to him. Following in this tradition, John Wesley went into the towns and fields to witness. He found people where they were, spending time with prisoners, the working-class poor, and the marginalized. Wesley said, “The world is my parish.” Today through our connectional ministries, we are able to meet people where they are and provide opportunities for worship, study, fellowship, mission, and faith development. Your Connectional Apportionments support these ministries.

Your giving, through camp scholarships, enabled 10 Congolese refugees to attend sports camp at Wesley Woods. Their week started poorly, but through the movement of the Holy Spirit, the shared camping experiences broke down walls of culture, race, and faith. At the end of the week, five of the 10 campers made first-time professions of faith in Jesus Christ. Having these refugees at camp helped inform change in the community to more accurately reflect the Body of Christ. Not only were the refugees’ lives changed, but other campers lives were changed by living in community with others whose upbringing and worldview are different. Our camping programs meet people where they are and allow them to be immersed in intentional Christian community that helps to ignite and sustain a passionate spiritual connection with Christ.

Our Disability Concerns Committee helps local churches to meet people where they are and include people of varying abilities in their ministries. Our Conference’s camps, Olmsted Manor, IT/Website infrastructure, At the Lake Ministries, and Eastbrook Mission Barn recently underwent audits that have helped improve access for all people. Your giving also helps increase awareness and advocate for those living with disabilities. An overwhelming number of individuals affected by disability do not belong to a church, have left church because of exclusion, or face issues of accessibility within their churches. You help create new places for new people while also enabling church revitalization through inclusion and accessibility.

Several new faith communities have been launched with the help of our Parish and Community Development Team working with our director of Congregational Development and Revitalization. One of these is The Cove Art Center at Greenstone United Methodist Church. Teens in the area gather after-school and collaborate with an artist in residence and local artists to learn, explore and create art in a variety of forms. They also spend time in active recreation. Some have committed to meeting regularly to explore what it means to live a Christ-like life. This forum engages unchurched teens where they are and provides faith renewal opportunities for the artists and other community members. Your apportionment dollars help to make this possible.

In Western Pennsylvania, newer ministries provide access for individuals across cultural, racial, socio-economic and faith boundaries to be in community with each other and with Christ. The vitality of our congregations increases as we engage new people in new ministries while providing areas for life-long believers to be renewed and revitalized in their faith. Jesus emphasized creating space for spiritual growth and commitment. Our many committees that encourage and equip new and renewed congregations are continuing this life-giving tradition.
United Methodists seek to improve the quality of life and opportunities for all God’s people. As John Wesley did, we also seek to change conditions that are unjust, alienating and disempowering. The Church engages in ministries to eradicate poverty by partnering with and empowering those in need. Our emphasis is “with” – not only standing with those who are living in poverty, but listening to understand their needs and aspirations, and integrating them into the life of the church and enabling them to do ministry themselves. It also means addressing the causes of poverty and responding in ways that lift up individuals and communities. United Methodists believe in a side-by-side approach, rather than top-down charity, in striving to find long-term solutions to change the systems that perpetuate poverty. Your apportionment giving is making great strides in this area.

Your apportionment giving has helped fan the flames of a program that takes Christ outside the church walls and into the community. The SPARK ministry at Greensburg First UMC builds relationships with residents of a nearby shelter and others experiencing homelessness. It has helped parents purchase Christmas gifts for their children, get together to wrap them while their children enjoy a Christmas party with a reading of the Christmas story, hot chocolate, cookies, and simple crafts. SPARK also provides small cosmetic bags filled with a daily planner, pen, toiletries, and information about the assistance available in the area.

SPARK’s moving ministry for families in transition offers vouchers for free furniture from local thrift shops as well as manpower, equipment, and a pick-up truck for moving and delivery of items. SPARK shares their bounty by providing emergency food, haircuts, prescription co-pays, loans for phone bills, past due rent and storage fees, as well as a night in a local motel when other housing is unavailable. This program has also helped people with the cost of securing their birth certificate, driver’s license, or photo ID needed to secure housing and other necessities. The SPARK team never forgets the importance of being in relationship and ministry WITH the poor. Team members go to the shelter every Saturday to invite those staying there to their Saturday night worship service. Several residents attend on Saturday night, and more come on Sunday morning.

SPARK’s approach to engaging in ministry with the poor is consistent with the focus and perspective of Jesus Christ, and our Connectional Apportionment system is foundational in providing the resources that help make this possible. Grants offered through our Conference Poverty Team from your apportionment dollars helps to fund such efforts in many churches and agencies. To help other congregations move from dispensing charity to engaging in ministry with the poor, our the Poverty Team organized The Many Faces of Poverty - an event designed to expand understanding of being in ministry WITH those who are struggling to survive and connect with God in community. The Rev. Brian Combs, the founding pastor of Haywood Street Congregation housed in an old Asheville, NC church at the intersection between luxury condos, the homeless shelter and public housing, explained the many ways the individuals from all sorts of circumstances are involved in leadership and serving through the faith community. Mary Ellen Kris, who leads the denomination’s Ministry With Initiative, and local ministry leaders and individuals offered insight into aspects of poverty and provided ideas for action. As we head into 2019, the Poverty Team is working to encourage and provide resources to help more local churches engage with the poor in their communities.

Christ ministry touched people of all economic circumstances. John Wesley battled unceasingly for those who were marginalized in his time, and laid the foundation for how Christians today - and especially United Methodists - can utilize the bountiful resources God has provided to be in ministry WITH and serve all people.
As United Methodists, we are committed to creating abundant health for all - a global connection striving for mental, physical, and spiritual well-being. Knowing that poverty and health are intertwined, we have been a key player in fighting killer diseases around the globe. We are committed to eradicating disease, providing clean water, and access to treatment for all.

One exciting ministry promoting abundant health in Western is the Erie United Methodist Alliance’s (EUMA) Healthcare for the Homeless Partnership (HC4HP). EUMA has teamed up with the Faith Community Nurses of Northwest PA and other area medical facilities to provide integrated healthcare and social services to those in need. This outreach program reaches clients who may not receive services otherwise by going directly to where they are - on the streets, at drop-in centers, shelters, and soup kitchens.

Healthcare for the Homeless Partnership provides direct care, including nursing assessments, first aid, and foot care; wholistic healthcare, education, and promotion; advocacy and referrals, and the Wellness Connection Drop-In Clinic. In addition to primary care, the Clinic offers behavioral health, wellness opportunities, homeless housing assessments and referrals, case management, and more. It seeks to address the gaps and barriers that exist within existing healthcare and social service systems.

In too many cases, a person’s health is inextricably linked with their level of poverty. This creates a cycle that is difficult to break and can be cost-prohibitive to overcome. Rooted in God’s love and care, EUMA provides life-changing opportunities for those who live at the margins of homelessness to become vital members of our communities. They are working to make homelessness rare, brief, and non-recurring in Northwest PA. Through their temporary and permanent housing programs, medical outreach, supportive services, and other poverty assistance, EUMA is helping those who are homeless (or at risk of becoming homeless), one heart at a time. Your apportionment dollars help to support these life-changing ministries.

Grants provided through apportioned giving also have helped to support a variety of feeding programs in Western PA through churches and agencies and partnerships. These help to ensure that children get healthy food to support their growth in body, mind and spirit. One such program is UM Church Union’s Summer Feeding Program for children operated at several local church sites in the Pittsburgh region.

We have seen the results of Jesus’ ability to heal those who came searching for him. With a simple touch, he healed the lame, cured the sick, and made the blind to see. As a global denomination, we have tackled diseases like Malaria and AIDS. The death rate in Africa from malaria has been cut in half because of your efforts and your giving. We have opportunities to utilize our resources to extend hope to all people, offering them a path to wholeness, joy and abundant life in Christ. He came so that we may have life, and have it abundantly. Thank you for your contributions that help enable our healing ministries to happen.
The Western Pennsylvania Conference of The United Methodist Church is committed to creating a culture of inclusiveness for people of all races and ethnic backgrounds. The Office of Diversity Development and Inclusion supports congregations, clergy, the Cabinet, and Conference staff in the work of diversity, anti-racism, and inclusion by working with the Anti-Racism Team, Ethnic Local Church Concerns Team, and the General Commission on Religion and Race (GCORR).

In an effort to help our local churches and Conference become more inclusive and dismantle the systems that contribute to racism, the Office of Diversity Development and Inclusion provides worship resources, assessment tools, reading materials, small group study opportunities, and options for children and youth. Your apportionment dollars help provide these valuable resources so that local churches are able to better understand how to look at the heart of a person rather than their outward appearance.

This work and efforts of our Anti-Racism Team in providing training events, materials and support for local congregations are made possibly by your apportionment giving. The Team plans to host training for new and existing members, provide training modules for district events and local congregations, and sponsor a Conference-wide Anti-Racism event. It will also partner with other allies for a retreat in the coming months.

Many resources are created and offered by our denomination’s General Commission on Religion and Race (GCORR), The Commission on Communications and Discipleship Ministries which are funded in part by apportioned giving.

A series of videos produced by GCORR called Vital Conversations can be viewed by individuals or used by small groups in churches to increase understanding and spark discussion. There are study guides available. Not only can they offer insight into those of different backgrounds, but they help build community within a group. They have been used in some local churches in Western Pennsylvania and by at least one district leadership group. A vast array of other resources for conversation and action are available at GCORR.org and on the Conference website wpaumc.org.

Worship resources - prayers and litanies, gospel lessons, and handouts – available from the Discipleship Ministries Worship website can be used in local churches. Resources for Churchwide observances of special Sundays, such as Native American Ministries Sunday, are available at UMCGiving.org.

In every aspect of his ministry, Jesus focused on the heart of those he came in contact with. The Western Pennsylvania Conference has chosen Dismantling Racism as its Fifth Area of Focus to follow Jesus’ lead in seeing beyond cultural or individual bias and prejudice, in order to reveal the heart of God in each person.
WORLD SERVICE FUND
This vital fund is the financial lifeline to a long list of Christ’s mission and ministry throughout the denomination. Your giving helps to build new churches, prepare clergy and lay leaders, facilitate cooperation and dialogue with other faith traditions through inter-denominational and ecumenical work, express the church’s commitment to God’s reign through advocacy for peace and justice, and much more.

MINISTERIAL EDUCATION FUND
At the heart of preparing people for making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world, the thirteen United Methodist seminaries help students discover their calling through challenging curriculum. This fund enables the church to increase financial support for the recruitment and education of ordained and diaconal ministers and to equip annual conferences to meet increased demands.

AFRICA UNIVERSITY FUND
As a first, and fully accredited United Methodist-related educational institution, the university offers bachelors and masters degree programs in six very important areas of learning: Agriculture and natural resources; education; health sciences; humanities and social sciences; management and administration; and theology.

BLACK COLLEGE FUND
The historically Black colleges and universities of the United Methodist Church offer a values-centered learning environment that encourages leadership development, self-esteem building, and spiritual growth. They are responsible for educating some of the world’s most effective and popular leaders - including clergy, college professors and presidents, general agency staff, legislators and community leaders. These schools and their graduates have a rich legacy of service and are a source of great pride.

EPISCOPAL FUND
Bishops are an integral part of the spiritual and administrative leadership of the United Methodist Church. They are elected and consecrated to speak to the church and from the church. This fund pays for bishops’ salaries, office and travel expenses, and pension and health coverage.

INTERDENOMINATIONAL COOPERATION FUND
This fund enables United Methodists to have a presence and a voice in the activities of the several national and worldwide ecumenical organizations; including the World Council of Churches, the World Methodist Council, Churches Uniting in Christ, and others. The fund provides the UMC’s share of the basic budgets of these organizations.

GENERAL ADMINISTRATION FUND
The General Administration Fund provides for the expenses of the sessions of the General Conference, the Judicial Council, special commissions and committees constituted by the General Conference, and other administrative agencies and activities recommended for inclusion in the budget by the General Council of Finance and Administration, and approved by the General Conference.

JURISDICTIONAL FUND
The Jurisdictional Fund supports the collective ministries of the conferences in the northeastern United States, including Western Pennsylvania. Our sister conferences in the Northeast Jurisdiction are New England, Upper New York, New York, Susquehanna, Eastern PA, Greater New Jersey, Peninsula - Delaware, Baltimore/Washington, and West Virginia. The fund covers our apportionment dollars to the jurisdiction.
**FY 2019 Proposed Budget**

Total Proposed Budget: $9,499,524.00 ($213,000 lower than approved 2018 budget)
Base Percentage: 13.35% (2.2% lower than approved 2018 budget)

- **United Methodist Connection:** $2,453,045
- **Nurture Ministries:** $1,223,152
- **Outreach Ministries:** $626,200
- **Witness Ministries:** $513,484
- **Connectional Leadership Support Teams:** $571,700
- **Connectional Ministry Support:** $4,111,943

District Superintendent/Cabinet Expenses: $1,877,000
Bishop’s Leadership Initiatives: $0 (Being funding with alternative sources in 2019)
Conference Center: $2,234,943