

## Mission in Such a Time as This

Supplementary Report of the General Board of Global Ministries to the  
2024 General Conference, Postponed from 2020

### Two Page Summary

This Supplementary Report of the General Board of Global Ministries to the 2024 General Conference, postponed from 2020, covers the years 2020 to mid-2023, providing a selection of the work of the agency in an unusual period. In 2020, just as it concluded the celebration of the 200th anniversary of the oldest predecessor of the General Board of Global Ministries,<sup>1</sup> The United Methodist Church entered “a new mission age.”<sup>2</sup> This new age would be marked by the COVID-19 pandemic and deep anxieties about the future of the denomination centered around long-festering disagreements about sexual preference and identity in the church’s life. Global Ministries and its humanitarian assistance unit, the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR), were more directly impacted by the pandemic than the debate over human sexuality, but these and other issues affected operation, income and expectations. A great deal of time and thought by directors and staff was required to project short- and long-term strategic plans, evaluate program priorities and adopt realistic budgets. Other issues included accelerated attention to creation care ministries and the eradication of racism from church and society.

We have called this season “such a time as this,” borrowing a phrase from the Book of Esther that describes a period of challenge and poignancy. Our directors assigned the agency the task of evaluating our past work and our future dreams with the help of much prayer and Bible study and the guidance of five operational touchstones: 1. Sharpened focus for all programs, including program consolidations and realignments; 2. Increased accountability among staff to deliver on achievable goals; 3. Expanded collaboration within and beyond the agency; 4. Strengthened tools for and commitment to gauging and reporting impact at all levels; and 5. Enhanced communication.

Among key outcomes of this work was a revision of the agency’s strategic plan, updated to include the period 2022-2024. Development of program goals and the means to monitor and evaluate them, described in the plan, were guided by the agency’s Office of Monitoring and Evaluation and informed by best practices in how faith-based organizations produce durable, measurable impact.

Overall, the strategic plan identifies four missional priorities in harmony with historic United Methodist mission goals and today’s commitments to justice and multiethnic participation. The four are:

- **Missionaries:** Training, commissioning, assigning and supporting missionaries in the United States and around the world have been at the heart of mission for 200 years; today we also train and connect volunteers to serve in mission.

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<sup>1</sup>See *Methodist Mission at 200: Serving Faithfully Amid the Tensions*. Edited by Thomas Kemper and David W. Scott. Nashville: Abingdon Press. 2020.

<sup>2</sup>From “Mission Theology statement,” the General Board of Global Ministries.

- **Evangelism and Church Revitalization:** Founding and nurturing new faith communities and supporting existing congregations, which seek to increase membership and expand ministries into local communities, have historic roots and contemporary implications for Global Ministries.
- **Global Health:** Methodism's focus on health as a part of mission dates to the 19th century when missionaries expanded the options for health care in underserved communities. Even earlier, John Wesley himself was a strong proponent of the church's attention to health.
- **Humanitarian Relief and Recovery:** These ministries, which include UMCOR, seek to strengthen the ability of the church and communities to respond to disasters and provide humanitarian relief, migrant services worldwide, and improved livelihoods and food security. The intentional care of creation and advancing environmental sustainability also reduces the impact of disaster.

This report is organized around these four priorities and subcategories of each. Before the sections on mission priorities, we feature five highlights that represent missional opportunities or challenges that have arisen in such a time as this. Those five are:

- **COVID-19:** The response to and impact upon Global Ministries/UMCOR – work that cut across all units.
- **War in Ukraine:** Response to the humanitarian crisis caused by the Russian invasion of its neighboring country in February 2022; with emphasis on services to displaced persons inside Ukraine and beyond its borders.
- **Agricultural Initiative in Africa:** The Yambasu Agricultural Initiative (YAI), named for the late Bishop John K. Yambasu, leader of The United Methodist Church of Sierra Leone and vice president of Global Ministries, took firm root in annual conferences across Africa, a major goal being the use of church-owned land to promote both food security and church income.
- **Africa Mission Partners Consultation:** The first such event in decades, the April 17-19, 2023, gathering in Maputo, Mozambique, provided opportunity for intense listening to the mission goals and visions of United Methodists of Africa. Representatives came from 17 countries and even more ethnic communities.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Global Ministries' commitment to accountability, stewardship and transparency includes its ongoing work evaluating programs to track and ensure their impact in responding to the needs of local communities and ministries around the world. Global Ministries has conducted more than 20 evaluations in 12 countries since 2020.

Global Ministries/UMCOR looks toward the 2024 General Conference and beyond with solid confidence in the sustaining grace of Jesus Christ. The challenges and opportunities of such a time as this – our new mission age – have taught us to rely on God's dependability and our capacity to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit.

As we look ahead, among our aspirations, we seek to sustain with strength our many missionaries and Global Mission Fellows, and we anticipate increased peace and justice ministries globally and in the U.S. We also anticipate broadening missional attention to climate and environmental matters. Additionally, we are strengthening our Missional Engagement unit to make it more visible and proactive within The United Methodist Church and interactive with Pan Methodist, ecumenical and other global partners. A range of such events are listed in the report.

The central affirmation of this report is: United Methodists can achieve all our mission goals if, in the words of the Book of Hebrews, we “hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for God who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.” (Hebrews 10:23-24 NIV).