



2025-2026

STRATEGIC PLAN



GLOBAL MINISTRIES

General Board of Global Ministries

THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

UMCOR

United Methodist Committee on Relief



To our friends and partners:

As The United Methodist Church's worldwide mission and development agency, Global Ministries connects the church in mission through mission engagement and the sending of missionaries. Global Ministries also works to alleviate human suffering through its global health work and the relief and development work of the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR), which is an integral part of Global Ministries.

Global Ministries is pleased to present here its 2025–2026 Strategic Plan. This plan emphasizes Global Ministries' programmatic work in two main areas:

- **Connecting the Church in Mission**, which includes programs in mission engagement and missionary service.
- **Alleviating Human Suffering**, which includes programs in health and humanitarian relief and recovery.

This plan identifies top areas of strategic focus for Global Ministries in 2025–2026 in these two areas and in the area of administrative and organizational support for mission programming. This strategic plan summarizes the agency's work in these various areas, identifies salient elements of the organizational context and indicates how Global Ministries will address them as it moves forward in its focus on joining in God's mission.

The 2025–2026 Strategic Plan incorporates key insights, information and evaluation processes from the 2022–2024 Strategic Plan. The current plan, however, reflects changed circumstances in the agency, denomination and world and includes updates to previously identified program work. It reflects the conviction that the agency is in a new mission age, in which evolving contexts in the church and world require it to continue to innovate so that it can remain effective in carrying out its work.

A series of consultations in 2023 with church leaders, mission partners, missionaries, agency colleagues and Global Ministries staff helped identify current priorities for the agency and its mission partners. These priorities are reflected in this plan, which includes specific pieces of feedback from the consultations at appropriate places.

While it is common in The United Methodist Church to engage in quadrennial planning processes that cover a four-year period, this strategic plan is transitional and anticipates further changes in the agency and the church after 2026. Strategic planning is always an on-going process.

In mission,

Roland Fernandes
General Secretary



Global Ministries' Purpose:

“There shall be a General Board of Global Ministries, the purpose of which is found within the expression of the total mission of the Church. It is a missional instrument of The United Methodist Church, its annual conferences, missionary conferences, and local congregations in the context of a global setting.” (The United Methodist Church’s Book of Discipline)

Global Ministries' Vision:

The vision of Global Ministries is a worldwide Church – including The United Methodist Church, its conferences, congregations, agencies and ecumenical partners – working together in God’s mission.

Global Ministries' Historic Mission Goals:

- Make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.
- Strengthen, develop and renew Christian congregations and communities.
- Alleviate human suffering.
- Seek justice, freedom and peace.



As Global Ministries lives out its purpose and pursues its vision through its historic mission goals, it is guided by four theological affirmations and five touchstones for refining its work.

Theological affirmations:

- Mission is God's mission. Mission does not belong to Global Ministries alone; it is the work of the entire church, a shared responsibility and privilege of all. Global Ministries connects the church in mission, engaging broadly with annual conferences, congregations and ecumenical and other partners.
- God's mission is holistic. God's mission includes many dimensions of care — spiritual, physical, social, emotional, ecological and so on. Interconnections among various forms of mission, relief and development work lead to better and more effective mission.
- Mutual partnerships are necessary for mission. The United Methodist Church is a connectional church. Global Ministries works with church leaders throughout The United Methodist Church and its ecumenical partners to create relationships marked by mutuality, respect and celebrating the gifts of all.
- God's mission redeems all creation for God's intended purpose. Global Ministries recognizes that mission activities in this present world are wholly dependent on the sustainability of God's creation. Sound mission practices alleviate suffering in the present while supporting the future flourishing of God's creation.

Five Touchstones:

- Sharpening our focus: Strategic planning emphasizes changes made by each program that result in a renewed focus on program strategies.
- Greater accountability: Strategic planning emphasizes changes regarding how each program is working to ensure that its strategy involves accountable decision making.
- Intentional collaboration: Strategic planning emphasizes ways that each program incorporates perspectives of others and, where mutually beneficial, directly integrates programming with others.
- Impact of work: Strategic planning emphasizes robust monitoring mechanisms and evaluation processes that support learning and efficiency while maximizing impact.
- Effective communication: Strategic planning emphasizes the ways that each program ensures robust and constructive lines of communication with others in the agency and with external audiences.



Connecting the Church in Mission

Because mission is God’s mission and mission requires mutual partnerships, Global Ministries recognizes that mission is not the work of one agency but of the entire church. As Swiss theologian Emil Brunner said, “The church exists by mission as a fire exists by burning.” Global Ministries is part of the connectional structures of The United Methodist Church that connect conferences, churches and members throughout the world in partnership as together they engage in God’s mission.

Areas of Work

MISSION ENGAGEMENT

Missional Connections seeks to understand the missional priorities of partners in the global regions and to create and sustain relationships with those partners, focused on missional effectiveness and coordinated with and linked to the UMC connection and its assets, including Global Ministries’ sectoral specialists.

Multiethnic Ministries works to strengthen racial/ethnic congregations and low socioeconomic communities in the U.S. and assists populations on the margins in response to practices, systems, laws and resources that systemically and unjustly limit their value and success in society. Three racial/ethnic national plans of the UMC enjoy a supportive place within Global Ministries: the Asian American Language Ministry, the Korean Ministry Plan and the Pacific Islander National Plan.

Mission Initiatives, launched in global regions having no previous Methodist presence, nurture emerging faith communities, enable their work of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world and support their goals for becoming an autonomous church or joining the UMC connectional system.

Leadership Development and Scholarships provides resources and opportunities for individuals and mission partners—from graduate to undergraduate to vocational training levels—with increasing focus on aligning the training or academic studies of the individual recipient(s) with their community’s missional priorities.



MISSIONARIES

Global Missionaries are missionaries serving in cross-contextual mission, usually in extended assignments of three or more years, outside their home settings. The Global Missionaries program focuses on discerning and understanding the local context and how that context should shape effective local mission activities. At the same time, for the missionaries themselves, the program works to ensure that places of assignment represent meaningful opportunities in response to each missionary's unique, personal call to serve.

Global Mission Fellows (GMFs) are young adults from around the world, ages 20–30, in mission for two years outside their home communities.

United States Missionaries include Church and Community Workers (CCWs) and Racial Ethnic Plan (REP) Missionaries. In their assigned communities in the U.S., CCWs lead programs and projects that take the church into the community and vice versa. REP Missionaries support U.S. annual conferences in alignment with strategies and programs of the national plans as approved by the General Conference.

Mission Volunteers are individuals or couples, ages 18 and up, who seek deep mission relationship around the world. They serve in self-funded assignments of two months to two years.

Context of the Work

The face of Christianity—and The United Methodist Church—is changing around the world. The number of Christians, including the number of United Methodists, is growing across the continent of Africa at the same time that the church has lost members in historic Christian heartlands such as the United States and Europe. More than half of United Methodists now live outside the United States, mostly in Africa. The United Methodist Church is moving toward greater regionalization of its work.

This religious change comes amid a broader economic, social and political context. Stubborn economic inequalities across regions persist, with Western countries possessing significantly more wealth. Populations in the developed world are aging, while in the developing world, the average age remains young. There has been an increase in nationalism, conflict, violence and division around the world. These forces have both increased forced migration and reduced welcome for immigrants and restricted access and travel to some countries, including visa restrictions for potential missionaries. Every place in the world, in the air, on land and at sea, is changing as the climate changes.

These demographic changes and financial, political and environmental realities within and around the church raise questions: How can different regions of the church connect with one another across nations, cultures and landscapes? How can partnerships recognize the contributions, financial and otherwise, of all partners to mission? How can Christians be the church together across generations? How can the church witness to the worldwide body of Christ and practice its connectionalism interculturally?



Strategies for the Work

Listen and respond to partner requests through mutual, collaborative processes.

As part of its belief in mutual partnerships, Global Ministries seeks to understand the missional priorities and contextual realities of its partners, including United Methodist conferences and episcopal areas, affiliated autonomous Methodist churches and other ecumenical and faith-based partners. A major take-away from consultations held in 2023 with mission partners in Africa and the U.S. and with missionaries was that partners value Global Ministries as a partner and want to continue partnerships of mutuality, respect, collaboration and coordination. Such partnerships require listening to the other and taking seriously their hopes and aspirations for mission participation as partners together develop action plans that are aligned with the strategic goals of all partners involved.

The Guiding Principles of Missionary Service Consultation held in 2023 affirmed, in particular, relationships with partners who host missionaries as places of assignment. Consultation participants stressed the tripartite partnership among Global Ministries, missionaries and places of assignment and called for greater involvement of host partners in the missionary process, from placement site selection through missionary recruitment and training to supervision of work at the placement site. Such involvement requires more communication among partners, including formal agreements among partners on responsibilities and mutual expectations. Global Ministries will pursue these ideas as we strengthen relationships with missionary placement sites, in alignment with partners' priorities.

Closer alignment with the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM) will be an important means by which Global Ministries fosters better relationships with external partners, especially globally. This alignment will allow for a unified presence and integrated structure between the two agencies, which will significantly benefit partner relationships. It also fits within a larger vision of increased communication, intentional collaboration and strategic integration across units within Global Ministries, including between those staff tasked with strengthening regional relationships and those staff tasked with overseeing programmatic work in various health and development sectors. By developing systems of regular consultation within Global Ministries and with GBHEM, staff will ensure a coordinated, unified approach to responding to partner requests.





Develop resources and training to better equip the church for participation in God's mission.

A major takeaway from consultations in 2023 with mission partners in Africa and the U.S. was partners' desire for more mission training and leadership development resources. Such a desire recognizes that human resources are the church's greatest resource, as African partners named. In conversation with partners, Global Ministries will continue to identify and create resources and trainings to increase the capacity of episcopal areas, annual conferences, local congregations and mission partners to engage in God's mission. Global Ministries will pay special attention to resources in areas of express interest to partners, including anti-racism, cultural diversity and theology and spirituality of mission.

The Guiding Principles for Missionary Service Consultation identified training as a key component of supporting missionaries in their service to the church and the world. That consultation affirmed the move, already underway, to an extended model of training that begins before missionaries arrive in their place of assignment and continues during service. The consultation also affirmed the role of placement sites in training, the continued importance of language learning, intercultural approaches and decolonial theologies in missionary training, while naming possibilities for further ecumenical collaboration in missionary training. Global Ministries will incorporate this input as it continues to enhance and refine its approach to missionary training and on-going missionary support.

Objectives

- Listen and respond to mission partners' needs and priorities and facilitate development of mission strategies with them, informed by Global Ministries' priorities as well. Encourage and support partner-led, innovative mission ministries and asset-based long-term development.
- Establish missionary placements that directly address partner needs and global concerns; recruit new missionaries accordingly. Strengthen partnerships with places of assignment through regular and clear communication around roles and expectations.
- Support growth of leadership capacities in all the UMC global regions, including vocational and professional leadership training for churches (members and mission staff) in the U.S. and globally. Help strengthen partners' financial and institutional capacities to engage in racial, ethnic, environmental and social justice ministries.
- Support missionaries by strengthening missionary training and providing continuing education and quality support and accompaniment by staff during missionaries' time of service.



Alleviating Human Suffering

God's mission is holistic, encompassing the spiritual and the physical. United Methodists believe we are called to actively demonstrate love for our neighbors in tangible ways, as Jesus taught in Matthew 25. Global Ministries, including UMCOR, draws on its experience and expertise in various sectors of health and humanitarian work to partner with episcopal areas, annual conferences and other faith-based and nongovernmental organizations to address sources of human suffering around the world. This commitment extends beyond immediate relief to long-term recovery and sustainable development, offering holistic, rights-based support to individuals and communities, consistent with both Christian values and core humanitarian standards.

Areas of Work

GLOBAL HEALTH

Health Systems Strengthening seeks to address health care service and supply deficiencies in low- and middle-income countries, especially in Africa, which result in limited care and often lead to increased morbidity and mortality rates.

Maternal, Newborn and Child Health provides support services, including prenatal, obstetric and postnatal care, at UMC health facilities in low- to middle-income countries, especially in Africa, where morbidity and mortality rates are highest owing to isolation, poverty and limited services.

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) supports strengthened capacity and access to WASH services at UMC health facilities and community-based projects. Anti-malarial, anti-HIV and nutrition work cut across these three programs. The agency's global health work also includes Deaf Ministries, Ministries with Persons with Disabilities and Congregational Health Ministries.



HUMANITARIAN RELIEF AND RECOVERY

Disaster Response provides support to households and communities experiencing significant negative impacts of natural disasters and crises. Disaster Response seeks to help the church and communities prepare, respond to and recover from disasters. The agency is active in ecumenical and other disaster-related consortia bodies and maintains a national material supplies ministry in the U.S.

Global Migration seeks to improve the well-being of migrants, asylees and refugees in places of transition and their new destinations through programs that provide assistance and accompaniment and encourage advocacy for migrants' rights.

Environmental Sustainability seeks to address challenges facing God's creation by incorporating creation care into the mission, ministries, training programs, operations and administration of Global Ministries and its partners, including conferences and churches.

Yambasu Agriculture Initiative (YAI) promotes agriculture and agribusiness development for African UMC episcopal areas and their respective local communities. The agency supports additional food security and livelihood work outside of the YAI.

Context of the Work

Many sources of human suffering, such as wars and natural disasters, are age-old. Yet the context of work in alleviating human suffering continues to evolve. After a period of relative peace in the 1990s and early 2000s, the number of violent conflicts has increased worldwide in recent years. The number of migrants and refugees has also risen significantly, as have negative reactions to migrants in host countries. Increased restrictions also apply to the flow of aid money and workers. Climate change and environmental degradation are driving more frequent and more destructive natural disasters around the world. The impacts of climate change highlight the importance of internal environmental sustainability work.

These factors mean that the work of Global Ministries and UMCOR in alleviating human suffering has never been more needed. Therefore, effective programs that deliver tangible results are critical. In the broader health, relief and development sectors, there has been increased attention in recent decades to program assessment and effectiveness, as well as growing consensus around shared professional standards and communal targets, such as the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Global Compact on Migration (GCM).

These contextual factors highlight important questions facing relief and development work: How can agencies respond to increasing demand for their services, especially when budgets do not increase at the same rate? How can agencies be most effective and efficient in the use of their resources, including by partnering with other agencies? How do agencies prioritize the projects they take on so that they may make the best use of their resources, networks and expertise?



Strategies for the Work

Develop holistic, integrated approaches to alleviating human suffering.

Global Ministries understands mission holistically and recognizes that work in one of the various sectors of development often reinforces and supports work in the other sectors. Work in all sectors contributes to overall goals of alleviating human suffering and promoting long-term well-being, peace and justice for program beneficiaries. This framing aligns with views expressed by partners at the Africa Mission Partners Consultation in 2023 about the holistic nature of mission. Therefore, Global Ministries will identify and capitalize on areas of intersection between its various sectoral activities, with staff across sectors contributing their expertise and resources to commonly agreed-upon projects.

Integrated approaches are important with partners as well as within the agency. As identified above, listening and responding to partner requests through mutual, collaborative processes is an important strategy for engaging mission partners around the world. This broad strategy also applies to work in alleviating human suffering. Therefore, Global Ministries will ensure regular communication and intentional collaboration between Mission Engagement staff responsible for partner relationships and staff in the various sectors of development work – Global Health, Disaster Response, Migration, Environmental Sustainability and Agriculture. Global Ministries will take seriously the strategic priorities of partners, especially those within the UMC, in its work of alleviating human suffering.

Collaborate with external partners in implementing effective interventions.

Global Ministries believes that mutual partnerships are necessary for mission. Therefore, effective interventions to alleviate human suffering require identifying and drawing on partner assets and expanding partner capacities. Participants at the Africa Mission Partners Consultation in 2023 called for greater recognition of non-monetary assets and contributions from partners and expressed a desire to increase their capacity for mission toward long-term self-sufficiency. UMCOR and Global Health have a long history of working to increase the capacities of annual conferences, local project leaders and other partners on the ground, and Global Ministries will continue to support the growth and development of our mission partners as they live into their calling to participate in God's mission.

Supporting the work of our partners in this way requires systems that balance accessibility, trust and mutual accountability. Therefore, Global Ministries will continue to develop transparent policies and procedures around granting and partnership assistance that affirm proper reporting and sharing from all partners for the sake of trust building. At the same time, Global Ministries will practice flexible systems when situations demand rapid responses for effective intervention, especially with established partners. Moreover, Global Ministries will trust partners' understandings of local contexts while continuing to uphold core humanitarian standards and UMCOR's core value of providing humanitarian assistance "without distinction of race, color or creed."

Objectives

- Strengthen the impact of UMC health systems by helping them improve system governance and clinic assets integral to health care quality, such as water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) facilities. Help strengthen their nutritional rehabilitation, food security and livelihoods programming for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health. Provide professional training for health boards and health workers.
- Assist U.S. annual conferences in growing their disaster ministries and disaster-preparedness activities, aid in quickening their response to disasters and bolster their abilities to establish effective survivor-centered recovery programs. Among international disaster-response partners, provide increased training for Disaster Management Offices and other UMC partners to help enhance their local autonomy and impact.
- Partner with migration-focused organizations toward greater capacity for supporting migrants and their rights. Further strengthen the network of UMC, UN and ecumenical organizations working in global migration.
- Improve awareness of and capacity for UMC communities, including churches, health facilities and educational institutions to pursue environmental justice projects and sustainability practices. Introduce and implement interventions within Global Ministries that contribute to greenhouse gas reduction, and track/document progress toward overall net-zero emissions.
- Assist UMC episcopal areas in Africa to move toward financial self-sufficiency and increased food sustainability by utilizing episcopal area land holdings to generate new revenue streams through the Yambasu Agriculture Initiative.





Creating a Sustainable Organizational Future

Global Ministries remains focused on the impact of its relational and programmatic work. As the agency's Five Touchstones express, Global Ministries recognizes that attention to agency systems, processes and support structures allows it to have the greatest and best impact in that relational and programmatic work. Global Ministries strives to be a strong, healthy and adaptable organization, not for its own sake, but for the sake of God's mission.

Areas of Work

The Office of the General Secretary includes the General Secretary, who works with the agency's Board of Directors, its Senior Leadership Team and its staff teams to carry forward the work of the agency. The Office of the General Secretary also includes the following areas:

- Human Resources
- Monitoring and Evaluation
- Peace and Justice Ministry
- Theology and Strategic Planning
- Travel and Meeting Planning

Fund Development includes fundraising, encompassing direct mail, donor relations, stewardship and planned giving. It also includes supervision of The Advance on behalf of the church as a whole.

Finance includes accounting, cash management, financial reporting, overseas operations and shared services.

Communications includes digital engagement, advertising and promotion and media services.

Operations includes property maintenance, legal and insurance matters and information technology.

Context of the Work

Funding models for agencies in The United Methodist Church are shifting. Direct giving to support the mission and ministry of agencies is increasingly important as denominational apportionments are declining significantly due to General Conference action, though they remain a key source of support. The need to continue to deliver strong impacts amid changes in funding highlights the importance of organizational



efficiencies, which can often best be achieved by strong intra-agency partnerships. Global Ministries' alignment with GBHEM is producing both programmatic and operational benefits. Responding to the ever-changing contexts of Global Ministries' work—in the agency, the church and the world—requires on-going flexibility, learning and adaptation.

This organizational context prompts questions: How can the agency best communicate the value of its work to donors and other stakeholders? How can work be shared in new and creative ways across church agencies? What functions that Global Ministries performed on behalf of the church in decades past can now be conducted by annual conferences and congregations, either on their own or in partnership with Global Ministries? What functions are no longer necessary? How can the agency support its staff, stakeholders and partners as together they transform their work amid the evolutions of a new mission age?

Strategies for the Work

Strengthen financial capacities for mission.

Over the next two years, Global Ministries will give sustained and renewed focus to its fundraising efforts. This will include restructuring its fund development department with increased attention to major gifts, end of life giving, stewardship and the launch of a significant fundraising campaign designed to raise \$17 million over 18 months. These efforts will strengthen connections with donors at all points in the giving cycle.

Global Ministries will reexamine The Advance, The United Methodist Church's vehicle for designated giving by churches and individuals to mission projects around the world. It will ensure that The Advance continues to function as a safe and effective means for stewarding donors' mission generosity in a way that has the most impact on partner projects.



Increase intra-agency partnerships supporting organizational efficiencies.

In addition to its programmatic impact, alignment with the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry will allow Global Ministries to achieve greater operational efficiencies and effectiveness in its administrative work, especially in areas such as information technology, data management and granting processes. At the same time, increased partnerships with United Methodist Communications and other denominational agencies will yield further benefits in areas such as communications, information technology, human resources, finance and other back-of-house operations.

Build a flexible, adaptive organizational culture.

The next two years will continue to bring significant shifts to the agency and its contexts, requiring continuous adaptation to new circumstances as Global Ministries positions itself for denominational, financial, and other realities in 2026 and beyond. Through continuous staff learning and development, rigorous monitoring and evaluation and on-going theological reflection and strategic planning, Global Ministries will create a culture that allows the organization to learn, change and grow as it continues to deliver high-quality services in an ever-changing world.

Objectives

- Launch an eighteen-month, \$17,000,000 fundraising campaign to fortify and expand our existing mission programs that are already making a profound impact.
- Implement aligned and integrated systems, processes and IT platforms across Global Ministries and the General Board of Higher Education and Ministries.
- Identify areas for increased collaboration among United Methodist agencies and reach tangible agreements with other agencies in these areas.
- Establish systems for regular reflection on and revision of Global Ministries' programs.

