



UPPER NEW YORK AREA OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

"Christ gave some apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. His purpose was to equip God's people for the work of serving and building up the body of Christ until we all reach the unity of faith and knowledge of God's Son." Ephesians 4:11-13

Dear partners in ministry,

Grace and peace from Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, be with you.

As I continue learning about the witness and ministry of United Methodists in Upper New York (UNY), I am inspired and thankful for the many ways our congregations, leaders, and disciples are making a positive difference in the communities God has called us to serve and how you are seizing new opportunities to connect with people.

At the heart of effective congregational ministry is lay and clergy *servant leadership*. I thank God for our clergy and congregations who faithfully engage in an itinerant system. Our Wesleyan itinerant system is built on Isaiah 6:8, *"I heard the Lord's voice, saying, 'Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?' Then I said, 'Here I am. Send me.'"*

Appointment Discernment Process

In The United Methodist Church, the responsibility for appointment-making is given to the resident bishop and district superintendents of the Annual Conference. All appointments are prayerfully made to continue moving forward The Church's mission of *making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world*.

While appointment-making is a sacred task that happens year-round, most appointments are made from January through April 15 and then finalized at the regular session of the Annual Conference.

As we move forward in this new season of ministry, the Appointive Cabinet has covenanted around the following values and principles which will guide our discernment process for appointment-making:

- Pursue God's vision for congregations and their communities
- Match gifts, graces, and strengths
- Acknowledge and honor our diversity
- Connectionalism and itinerancy
- Interpersonal relationships and conflict resolution
- Pursue [equity](#) in the appointment process and decisions
- Excellence, effectiveness, and fruitfulness

During the appointment discernment process, the Cabinet will pay special attention to the ethnic, cultural, and theological makeup of the congregation. The personal needs of pastors are also important to the superintendents and to me as your bishop.

Guided by the Holy Spirit, the Cabinet will base appointments on:

1. God's vision for the congregation and the missional needs/opportunities in the community, the congregation, and UNY.
2. A congregation's willingness, passion, and track record of collaborating with pastoral leadership to faithfully move forward the mission and God's vision for their community.
3. A pastor's willingness, passion, ability, and track record of engaging a congregation and the community in a fruitful collaborative ministry.

The Cabinet and I will also consider:

- The conflict level of the congregation and other sensitive issue(s) that might be impacting the congregation's health and fruitfulness.
- The congregation's ability and track record of paying Ministry Shares, pension, and health benefits. As needed, the Cabinet will "right-size" the appointment or align the congregation with another congregation to ensure long-term sustainability.

When discerning appointments, the Cabinet will prayerfully consider the following three missional-critical questions:

1. Is the potential pastor's character, personality and shepherd's heart suitable for the congregation and the community?
2. Do the potential pastor's spiritual gifts, skills, and experiences intersect with the congregation's needs, hopes, aspirations, and the community?
3. Will this appointment maximize disciple-making in the unique context of the congregation?

When the Cabinet makes appointments, we will consider full-time appointments first, then work on less than full-time appointments.

Pastors and congregations may ask for reconsideration of an introduced appointment if there are serious concerns based on missional reasons (pastor's or congregation's ability to spread personal and social holiness and lead the congregation in growing the five core ministries of worship, evangelism, faith formation, hands-on missions, and generosity). The following will not be considered: race, ethnic origin, gender, color, disability, marital status, age, or educational achievement of a pastor or congregation, as well as the location and size of a congregation. Based on the reflections and prayer by the pastor, the staff parish relations committee (SPRC), and the superintendents, the bishop will make the final decision on a request for reconsideration based on missional reasons.

You can read about the process [here](#).

Retirements

The 2023 clergy retirements will be announced by Feb. 1 on the UNY website [here](#). I thank our retirees for their faithful servant leadership over the years. This information will be updated as needed. I invite you to pray for and thank our 2023 class of retirees.

Open Churches

This year, the Cabinet will introduce a new practice to the appointment process. Starting Jan. 25, on Wednesdays, the Cabinet will post on the [UNY website](#) a list of the open churches currently being considered. Clergy who prayerfully discern that they want to be considered for one of the open churches are to let their superintendent know *exclusively* via email by Thursday at 3 p.m.

and share why you believe you would serve the congregation well. The Cabinet will prayerfully consider these requests during their discernment process.

Clergy communicating their interest in an open church,

- Must understand that requesting to be considered for an appointment is *advisory* and does not guarantee you will be appointed to the open church.
- Cannot, in any way, communicate with the members or the pastor of the open church to advocate on their behalf or indicate an interest in serving that church.
- Can be assured that their request to the Cabinet will remain confidential, will not affect their current appointment, and will not be shared with your present church's SPRC.

New Appointments

Each Wednesday, at 1 p.m., the official episcopal announcement of new appointments will be posted on the [UNY website](#). We anticipate that we will start making appointment announcements on Feb. 15.

Transition Process

The Appointive Cabinet is committed to resourcing pastors and congregations experiencing a new appointment to ensure a smooth and effective transition. Over the winter, we revised our appointment transition practices and put together a comprehensive guide and toolkit that include best practices, checklists, and ideas to help pastors and congregations experiencing an appointment change end well in the current appointment and start with enthusiasm with the new pastor. Information about the process will be posted [here](#).

As United Methodists in Upper New York, we have a unique connection built on Christ, prayer, dedication to our shared Wesleyan values, and working TOGETHER to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

On behalf of the Cabinet and myself, thank you for your service to Christ, The Church, your community, and the world.

Paz,

Héctor



Bishop Héctor A. Burgos Núñez

Resident Bishop
Upper New York Area