



CHURCH DEVELOPMENT

God Is moving!

In 1 Samuel 3, it says, “In those days the word of the Lord was rare; there were not many visions.” The Lord goes on to say, “See, I am about to do something in Israel that will make the ears of everyone who hears about it tingle.” As our Church Development team has been listening to our Conference churches, we are very aware that God is doing something, churches are having visions, and members have a real desire for their ears to tingle with words from God.

EARS TINGLING. First, Church Development joined forces with Leadership Development and the Board of Laity to encourage our Conference churches to practice listening prayer. Sue Nilson Kibbey, Director of the Bishop Bruce Ough Innovation Center at United Theological Seminary, calls this type of prayer “breakthrough prayer.” She shared this practice this past October 26-27 with clergy and laity and again Feb. 4 and May 6th. The practice simply encourages a church to add to its existing prayer life a simple prayer, asking God to breakthrough and reveal God’s will. Not only do members regularly pray this prayer, but they also intentionally listen and then share what they are hearing God say so that their church can follow God’s leading.

The response to this focus on breakthrough prayer has been amazing! Clearly our churches are longing to have their ears tingle with a word from God because so many have taken up this practice. At the Feb. 4th training alone, persons from 120 Indiana UM churches participated! Altogether there were about 400 people in attendance! Since then, reports have been coming in of answered breakthrough prayers. This coming fall, there will be more opportunities for training and participation. Our hope is that the practice of breakthrough prayer will become a part of all our churches’ cultures, so that the churches will be even more Holy Spirit led, going where the Spirit is calling them, going with the Spirit’s power!

VISIONS. Church Development’s vision is to resource leaders to create faith communities that multiply and make disciples of Jesus Christ to change the world. We are 100% focused on helping Indiana Conference churches carry out this mission and helping our conference reach its Wildly Important Goal that all churches will be engaged in missional transformation by the year 2024.

In this weary season of disaffiliations, God is still moving, and churches are still having visions. In fact, it feels as though there is a burst of new energy in our Conference, especially around starting new faith communities. This year, Church Development is holding listening sessions, listening to church leaders’ dreams of new Fresh Expressions, new worship services, and new churches. These listening sessions are a part of Church Development’s **Multiply Indiana UMC** effort that was launched last fall. A part of that effort is a dream of establishing at least 25 new faith communities in 2023 and into 2024.

Already we are seeing new congregations emerging. We have a **Hispanic congregation** forming in Warsaw and a new church called **Noel UMC** being launched in Santa Claus. A **Haitian church** in Evansville has asked to become a United Methodist Church because they want to be a part of who we are as United Methodists—our theology, our polity, and our hospitality for all persons. Last fall, **St. Lukes UMC** in Indianapolis launched a thriving congregation called St. Lukes Midtown in the former Broad Ripple UMC’s building. **Gobin Memorial UMC** in Greencastle is helping establish a college student faith community that meets in DePauw University’s student center. **Valparaiso First**

1 UMC is getting ready to launch a Messy Church. Faith UMC in Fort Wayne has launched a dinner
2 church. And the list goes on and on!

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4 Although Church Development hasn't really had much to do with many of these efforts, they are a
5 sign that God is instilling a vision for multiplication in many, many of our churches and leaders. So
6 far, there are over twenty Conference leaders scheduled to share their dream this spring and
7 summer at Church Development's listening sessions. Furthermore, Conference Superintendents
8 are in conversation with Church Development about launching new faith communities in our UM
9 "deserts" that resulted from disaffiliated former UM churches. God is truly on the move in the
10 Indiana Conference! Let us praise God and continue to pray that we might help reach and disciple
11 some of the **four million unchurched** people of Indiana.

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13 **DEVELOPING MULTIPLYING LEADERS.** Just as Eli was developing Samuel in 1 Samuel 3,
14 Church Development is focused on developing multiplying leaders. To that end, we are providing
15 specialized training and coaching for the churches launching new faith communities. We also took
16 a group of leaders to the Exponential Conference in Florida, which is likely the world's largest
17 gathering of church multipliers. Most of these sixteen leaders will continue to have regular
18 gatherings throughout the year for encouragement and training around multiplication.

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20 **MULTIPLYING DISCIPLE MAKERS.** The United Methodist Church's mission is to make
21 disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. The irony is that Church Development
22 has found that most of our churches don't know how to intentionally do this. So, Church
23 Development is completing a three-year pilot project with Disciples Made out of Kansas City to see
24 if an ordinary UM church in Indiana can develop disciple makers to the third and fourth generation.
25 That is disciples who make disciples who go on to make disciples who make disciples (like in 2
26 Timothy 2:2).

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28 Two of the leaders that have participated in this three-year cohort are Rev. Devin Cook and Rev.
29 Mark Ellcessor. Rev. Cook at Dyer UMC has helped his church launch six disciple-making groups,
30 led by eight different individuals. Rev. Mark Ellcessor at Fishers UMC has helped his church launch
31 ten groups led by nine individuals. Both churches are experiencing disciple making to the third and
32 fourth generations and they don't see the movement ending any time soon.

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34 The good news is that the process they're using called Followers Made is free, simple, and
35 replicable. The bad news is this type of disciple making doesn't seem to resonate with the ethos of
36 our Conference. Although another group of leaders from six different churches are getting ready
37 to launch groups, the number of churches participating has been disappointing. Joel Troxell, from
38 Leadership Development, and Ed Fenstermacher, from Church Development, are working on what
39 we do with that.

40 **OTHER KEY DEVELOPMENTS...**

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42 • In the past twelve months, Church Development has given \$127,000 in grants for the
43 purpose of starting new faith communities. It also has given \$17,400 to four districts to
44 make micro grants to churches for missional outreach.
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46 • Last August, Church Development held a gathering of nearly 80 people. This invitation-only
47 event brought together all the key leaders who have been helping facilitate a multiplication
48 movement. We launched Multiply Indiana UMC and have been coached by Rev. Brad
49 Aycock from the West Ohio Conference.

- 1 • We are just rolling out a new way of resourcing our existing churches called Flourish to
2 Multiply and have recruited a team of Missional Field Representatives to work directly with
3 churches. Our Flourish to Multiply effort provides churches with support in six key areas. A
4 church assessment and specific resources are available on our Conference’s new website
5 for each of these areas. They can be found in the “Church Health and Multiplication”
6 section.
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- 8 • Finally, we wish to thank Jennifer Hudson who left our Church Development staff in March
9 after serving for a number of years. She significantly helped us do our work and will be
10 missed. We wish her God’s blessings in her new endeavors.
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12 **So, what will you do?**

13 Are your ears tingling after hearing all of this amazing news? Are you beginning to sense God’s
14 vision for multiplication in your church setting? Let’s talk! We encourage you to take up the practice
15 of breakthrough prayer if your church hasn’t already done so. (Read Kibbey’s book entitled, *Open*
16 *Road: The Adventure of a Breakthrough Prayer*.) Our Conference has a bright future. So, let’s
17 embrace that future by praying forward, no turning back.
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19 **Church Development Staff**

- 20 • Doug Anderson, Randy Anderson, Ed Fenstermacher, Brenda Gross, Sergio Reyes
21

22 **2022-2023 Church Development Committee**

- 23 • Cindy Schrader (chair), Kurt Freeman, Barbara Holcomb, Kendall Macri, Dr. Marion Miller,
24 William Nickrand, John Russell, Ondina Schrunder, Tiffany Tolbert