

## CHURCH DEVELOPMENT



### Church Development of the United Methodist Churches of Indiana

Bishop Bob Farr, Resident Bishop of the Missouri Conference, shared a presentation at a recent Indiana Conference gathering co-sponsored by Church Development, where he said, “The church is in the fourth quarter, we’re losing the game, and time is running out.” The answer? We need to re-fall in love with Jesus and to intentionally develop life-giving relationships with persons outside our churches. We need to become 21<sup>st</sup> Century missionaries intentionally reaching outside our church walls to the growing percentage of the population uninterested in church.

Church Development (CD) is committed to helping Indiana United Methodist Churches do just that. There are many resources available on the Conference’s revamped [website](#) that we encourage you to use. Over the past year, CD has done the following:

**Breakthrough Prayer.** We are convinced that a key way of addressing Bishop Farr’s concerns is for our churches to be more fully led and empowered by the Holy Spirit. To that end, CD has offered training in the practice of Breakthrough Prayer, led by Sue Nilson Kibbey and co-sponsored with Leadership Development. This practice helps a church intentionally take a listening stance, praying that God would breakthrough and show the church its next steps.

Over 350 people participated in Breakthrough Prayer training in 2023, and we celebrate the many stories that have resulted. CD will be offering more opportunities in 2024 for churches to grow in this practice of listening prayer.

**Life-giving Relationships.** Bishop Farr spoke of the importance of developing life-giving relationships especially with persons outside our church walls. CD is committed to helping churches do just that. Over this past year it has provided the following:

- A “Moving the Mission Forward Guide” to help churches discern how God is calling them to engage with their communities.
- Moving the Mission Forward Cohorts to help the leaders of the churches lead.
- Training, coaches, and grants to help churches create faith communities (e.g. Fresh Expressions), where the love of Christ is experienced, especially for persons outside the churches’ walls.

**Multiplication.** Jesus was all about multiplication and evangelism. In the Gospels we see him first send out the twelve disciples and later the seventy-two. In the Book of Acts, his final words speak of us being his witnesses to Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the ends of the earth. This clearly depicts a movement of Christ’s Good News and love flowing out to an ever-increasing number of people.

CD has focused for years on helping the Indiana Conference experience a multiplication movement—multiplying its leaders, disciples who make disciples, and an increased number of new faith communities. This

1 past year we have sensed a growing desire for such a movement among our districts and churches. In order  
2 to help, CD has done the following:

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- 4 • Encouraged churches to use Followers Made, which is an intentional discipling experience that leads  
5 to third and fourth generation disciple making. We've had another four churches start using it in the  
6 past year.
- 7 • Listened to the multiplication dreams of over twenty church leaders and helped these dreams of new  
8 faith communities become a reality.
- 9 • Had a team of over twenty persons (including three Superintendents) participate in the first national  
10 Fresh Expressions training gathering for the UM Church. Many left inspired to launch additional faith  
11 communities for the unreached.
- 12 • Provided Fresh Expressions training for nearly a dozen churches, most of whom have gone on to  
13 launch dinner churches, Messy Churches, and Fresh Expressions around common interests.
- 14 • Awarded \$286,037 in grants and financial gifts to support the start of new faith communities.

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16 In addition, at Annual Conference CD will be celebrating the 25-plus UM congregations that have launched  
17 new faith communities since the beginning of last year. They will be honored at a dinner with Bishop Trimble,  
18 and there is a booklet being created to capture some of their stories so that all of us can celebrate and be  
19 inspired to follow their lead.

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21 **Innovation.** Bishop Farr made it clear in his presentation that we must be willing to try things that may fail.  
22 We must be innovative. To that end, CD and the Conference Superintendents have supported a number of  
23 out-of-the box efforts, including:

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- 25 • Using the "wild church" model where people gather to worship in nature. One such effort is being  
26 launched at a former UM church camp in Battleground, IN.
- 27 • Starting a project on the Purdue University campus called Ubuntu International Community, led by  
28 Rev. Wellington Chiomadzi, that is focused on building community for mainly families of graduate  
29 students from Africa.
- 30 • Supporting Do What Is Good, led by Rev. Bethany Scott, a ministry where local UMCs come  
31 together working with their rural communities to help bring about renewal and vitality in their towns.
- 32 • Providing \$140,134, from the Groat Fund, to help develop rural ministries in the conference.
- 33 • Supporting Rev. Tracey Leslie, Associate Director of Innovation, Engagement and Development, in  
34 her work with Lighthouse Churches and other innovative efforts.

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36 **Diversity.** CD longs to help the church described at Pentecost and later in the Book of Revelation become  
37 a reality in Indiana—a church that includes all people and where all have equality. To do that we are  
38 convinced we will have to intentionally confront our own biases and racist tendencies. To address this CD  
39 has done the following:

- 40 • Had its members complete the Intercultural Development Inventory.
- 41 • Spent time discussing implicit bias, led by a trained facilitator.
- 42 • Invested in helping eight predominately Black congregations go through Strengthening the Black  
43 Church for the 21st Century's Maximum Impact Cohort.

- Celebrated a new Hispanic congregation in Warsaw and a Korean congregation meeting in Fishers and worked with potential Haitian congregations.

**Looking Ahead.** In 2024, CD has set a goal of helping churches and districts start at least 25 new faith communities. We encourage every church with a multiplication dream to share it with us, so that we—with God’s help—can help make it a reality. Listening sessions will be offered following Annual Conference.

Church Development is also encouraging church leaders to attend the Messy Church National Training in Chicago, April 18-20, as well as the School of Congregational Development, sponsored by our denomination’s Path 1, which will also be held in the Chicago area, August 4-7. To register go to: <https://na.eventscloud.com/scd2024>.

Church Development will be offering free monthly online “Learning Clinics” on various topics. It will also be offering two in-person Fresh Expressions training events this year, one May 4 at Plymouth First UMC (North District), and one September 14 at Edwardsville UMC (South District). The training includes follow-up coaching and micro-grants.



To register for either of the Fresh Expressions trainings, scan this QR code.

### **CD Team Changes**

- Rev. Shannon Stringer is director of the CD team, replacing Rev. Larry Whitehead last October.
- We wish to thank Brenda Gross, who retired at the end of 2023 for her years of faithful and effective service and celebrate Kaitlyn Kilgo joining the team to take Brenda’s place.
- We also celebrate Rev. Trish Johnsen joining the team. She is a Fresh Expressions and Messy Church specialist.
- The team, additionally, has been working closely with Rev. Tracey Leslie, Associate Director of Innovation, Engagement, and Development.

**Final Thought...** We believe we have to go slow to go fast. Yes, we may be in the fourth quarter and time is running out, but a church doesn’t have to hurry and do a lot of things all at once. It simply has to do something! CD can help a church figure out what that something should be. Please contact us. We want to help! And remember with God all things are possible... (Matt. 9:26)

### **Church Development Staff**

- Doug Anderson, Randy Anderson, Ed Fenstermacher, Trish Johnsen, Kaitlyn Kilgo, Sergio Reyes, Shannon Stringer (Director)

1 **2023-2024 Church Development Committee**

- 2 • Ron Branson, Kurt Freeman, Barbara Holcomb, Heather Hilbert, Dr. Marion Miller, William  
3 Nickrand, John Russell, Cindy Schrader (chair), Ondina Schrunder, Bonnie Zickgraf