

Bishop Candidate Bio

Todd H. Fetters

Spouse: Lisa Fetters.

Church Membership: College Park Church (Huntington, Ind.).

Year of Ordination: 1991.

Educational Background

1989: Huntington University, BA in Bible and Religion.

1991: Huntington University Graduate School of Christian Ministries, Masters in Christian Ministries.

2005: Masters of Arts in Religion, Evangelical Seminary (Myerstown, Pa.).

Ministry Experience

May 1988—July 1989: associate pastor of Lake View United Brethren in Christ (Camden, Mich.).

July 1989—January 1995: senior pastor of Lake View United Brethren in Christ (Camden, Mich.).

January 1995—February 2013: senior pastor of Devonshire United Brethren in Christ (Harrisburg, Pa.).

February 2013—August 2015: National Ministries Director, UB National Office (Huntington, Ind.).

August 2015—July 2017: Interim Bishop, Church of the United Brethren in Christ, USA.

July 2017—Present: Bishop, Church of the United Brethren in Christ, USA.

Describe your conversion experience and journey of faith.

My journey of faith began shortly after I was born. When I was six weeks old, my parents stood before their congregation and consecrated me to the Lord. They dedicated themselves to raise me, along with my two older brothers, in the Spirit and example of Christ—“...Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man” (Luke 2:52).

I grew up in a Christian home. My brothers and I were introduced to Jesus through our parents’ witness, their reading and memorization of Scripture, the offering of prayers, and their unwavering commitment to the Church. Together, they were invested in ministry. My father was a United Brethren in Christ pastor until 1972, when he became dean of the Huntington University Graduate School of Christian Ministries (retired in 1997). Mom was a strong partner for my father, investing her talents in equipping pastors’ wives and serving as an editor for their shared writing projects. I had a front row seat, at an early age, to hear about Jesus, know who he is, and see what he does.

However, faith must become personal. Given my parents’ faith, my journey to Jesus came quite naturally, without a great deal of drama. I accepted Jesus as a “Friend” of the family. I surrendered my heart to Jesus in 1973 and publicly confessed him as “Lord” when I was baptized the following year. College Park United Brethren in Christ was my home church. It was a great church, filled with faithful people who encouraged my spiritual growth, engaged me in conversation, prayed with and for me, and when necessary, corrected me. These life-giving relationships undergirded what I learned in Sunday school, vacation Bible school, Bible quizzing, and my junior/senior high youth groups.

My wife, Lisa, is an important part of my ongoing journey of faith. We met in college and were married in 1988. Lisa encourages my faith. She expects me to stay focused on Jesus, believing that my obedience to the Lord will be for her blessing and benefit. Together, we have raised two sons, both of whom have hearts for Jesus. They currently show the important signs of seeking God’s path for their lives. I have a great wife. Jordan and Quinn have a great mom. God is good.

Describe your call to ministry.

I sensed the Lord’s call to vocational ministry in November 1985.

A true call to ministry is confirmed both internally and externally. Growing up “Fetters” meant that I had



many external affirmations—expressed sentiments from well-meaning, spiritually-minded individuals that perceived that I would someday make a good minister, following in the footsteps of several family members. A high school baseball coach asked me to pray before several games and at a team banquet. Preaching my first two sermons at College Park as a high school student reinforced the likelihood of ministry as a fitting career path. My father and two brothers were ordained and set this same expectation for me in the minds of others. These external affirmations came often enough that I became defensive and adamant that “God didn’t need another Fetters in ministry.” But, what I really needed was internal affirmation—to hear directly from the Lord.

The moment occurred in the basement of Huntington University’s Administration Building (known today as Becker Hall). I was a business major overwhelmed by an exam in an underwhelming accounting class. As I struggled through the section of the test on “stocks and bonds,” my internal dialogue became frustrated and angry. I “yelled” (in my head), “How is this going to help me in the ministry?!” Immediately, I felt a peace about my future. I dropped the accounting class, finished out the semester, and signed up for courses in a new major—Bible and Religion. Further confirmation of the Lord’s calling came as my grades noticeably improved. My whole being—heart, soul, mind, and body—was rightly calibrated with the Holy Spirit. I publicly committed myself to the Lord’s call at the altar of College Park United Brethren in Christ church. Eventually, this congregation would grant me a local conference license as a United Brethren in Christ minister.

The clarity of the Lord’s call has sustained me throughout 32 years of local church and denominational ministry. It lent purpose for my undergraduate studies. It guided me into and through my graduate education. When ministry was fruitful, the call reminded me that God deserves the credit. When I wanted to quit, my calling held me in place so that I could learn to trust God more. God’s call upon my life was, is, and will always be a motivating and stabilizing gift.

What drew or encouraged you to continue to serve in the UB?

The Church of the United Brethren in Christ is my ecclesiastical family. It is the church of my new birth, baptism, call to ministry, higher education, and pastoral service. I’m indebted to my parents, Sunday school teachers, youth leaders, pastors, bishops, superintendents, missionaries, professors, and a whole host of individual Christ-followers who have served as living examples, encouraging me to live in the way of Jesus. Serving the United Brethren in Christ in any capacity is simply a form of returning on the investment of many faithful influencers.

Why are you interested in serving as Bishop of the US National Conference?

Serving as the bishop for the Church of the United Brethren in Christ has been among the highest honors of my life. The seeds we’ve sown for strengthening existing churches and starting new ones seem to be on the verge of yielding a harvest, and I am very interested to continue working with the UBNO team in order to bring portions of that harvest in over the next four years.

Are you in agreement with the seven doctrinal beliefs contained in the UB Confession of Faith? Explain any disagreements.

I stand in full agreement with the United Brethren Confession of Faith.

According to our theological documents, “We are (mostly) Arminian.” Are you in agreement with that traditional theological position? If not, how will you lead the UBIC theologically? How will you respond to those whose theological positions differ from your own?

I line up with the traditional theological position of the United Brethren in Christ. The Arminian perspective, which emerged from the Reformation, provides a way of salvation that is supported by the Bible—salvation is the gracious work of God alone that divinely prompts and involves a human faith-response. While my Christian brothers and sisters with a Calvinist perspective will differ from me on some theological details, I will engage them with an irenic spirit. My convictions are strong, but my interaction with them will be courteous, charitable, and cooperative. I will expect the same spirit from my Calvinist brothers and sisters.

Rather than promoting the tenets of one theology over another, I tend to lean into the pietistic spirituality that influenced the launch of our movement in 1767. Pietism emphasized relationship with Jesus Christ over and above any particular theological perspective and ecclesiastical formalism. As authors, Christopher Gherz and Mark Pattie write in their book, *The Pietist Option*, “The Pietist option is to opt in to a distinctly hopeful way of coming back to Jesus: growing to be more and more like him, living at peace as part of his body, and



fulfilling his mission in service to others” (p. 9). I strive to model this spirituality today, which I believe was demonstrated beautifully in our earliest founders—a spirituality that invites all people to come to or come back to Jesus.

Practically, there are at least two arenas where the bishop will navigate the Calvinist/Arminian tension—licensing and stationing. Licensing teams will be encouraged and equipped to focus on the candidate’s theological perspective with an eye on his or her biblical clarity, systematic consistency, and relational charity. As the one responsible for stationing pastors, I will be careful to understand the theological leanings of the local church and strive to appoint a pastor who would be theologically compatible.

What is your vision for the United Brethren in Christ denomination?

I believe the Lord Jesus Christ wants the Church of the United Brethren in Christ to become an intentionally relational, prayerful, scripture-informed, Spirit-empowered movement that fulfills our Lord’s mandate to make disciples—individuals who learn and live the way of Jesus—in our neighborhoods and among the nations.

Considering the full spectrum of United Brethren history, I am drawn to our earliest days where the Holy Spirit revived the hearts of men and women who were hardened by the cold, dead formalism of their day. The primary commitments were the Gospel, unity, and mission. Consequently, souls were saved, hearts came alive, churches were started, lives and families were transformed, local communities were blessed, and many pastors and missionaries were called to give their time, influence, and energy for vocational ministry.

Since 2017, our team has focused on strengthening existing churches and starting new ones. Frankly, there was much cynicism and skepticism to overcome within the denominational family. Through our intentionally relational and spiritual engagement, we constantly pointed individuals to the Holy Spirit’s track record of success throughout church history rather than rehash decades of perceived or real denominational, local church, and/or individual failure. As a result, we are seeing evidence and hearing more chatter that suggests to us that our vision for strong churches (communities of disciples) that start churches (multiplying disciples) is taking hold and on the verge of becoming a reality.

We have invested in our pastors, leadership teams, and congregations, offering three vital continuing invitations. First, we invite our pastors to realign their hearts with Jesus Christ so that they can authentically, confidently, and humbly say, “Follow me as I follow Christ” (1 Corinthians 11:1). Second, we invite pastors and church leaders to rethink their priorities and shape their strategies to fulfill Jesus’ disciple-making mandate (Matthew 28:16-20; Acts 1:8). Given that prayer is critically essential to hearing the Lord and fulfilling his mandate, we invite our congregations, through their pastors and church leaders, to develop cultures of prayer where believers seek God’s face with “Scripture-fed, Spirit-led, worship-based prayers” (*Transforming Prayer*, Daniel Henderson).

Heading into 2021-2025, it seems that the seeds are sown for a fruitful harvest of church renewal and reproduction. However, there is an important focal shift in our disciple-making strategies that we must continue to make. Existing congregations that seek renewal will need to shift their focus to becoming equipped disciple-makers that are unleashed to reach those where they live, work, learn, and play. As for our church planting efforts, one of our considerations will be the least Christian places in the country. Much like the 10/40 Window has influenced global missions for the past three decades, we want to encourage local churches and potential church planters/planting teams to identify the “least Christian places and spaces” and develop disciple making strategies that evangelize and equip. Much like Saul who became the Apostle Paul, it is quite possible that our most effective future pastors, church planters, missionaries, and persons of Christian influence haven’t even been saved yet. There is much work to do.

During this quadrennium, in addition to communicating regularly with the United Brethren in Christ family, my attention will be directed to these six initiatives:

1. Identify, train, and send church planters to take new ground by starting new United Brethren churches in new places.
2. Encourage and train ministers to walk with God, build disciple-making leadership teams, and launch missional communities that help people learn and live the way of Jesus.
3. Raise and recruit next generation pastors and church planters.
4. Oversee and collaborate with stationing committees in the search for and appointment of senior pastors to local churches.
5. Realign and develop the UBNO team to effectively serve UB churches, pastors, and missionaries.



6. Renovate the United Brethren National Office building to accommodate a shared working environment for UBIC (USA), UB Global, and Huntington University.

Our optimal path forward is best taken by implementing our Lord's strategy in our everyday lives—"... go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19-20). The sure promise is that none of us will make disciples alone or in our own strength. We will benefit from the empowering, superintending, effectual presence of the Holy Spirit...always, to the very end of the age. So, with tremendous confidence and humility, let's go help people learn and live the way of Jesus!

What do you believe are the top 3 strengths of the UBIC?

1. *Cluster System and Leaders.* The United Brethren in Christ is organized in clusters. The strength of this system is evidenced in several areas. Each cluster is organized geographically, which has been a catalyst for stationing, strengthening churches, and starting new ones. Each cluster has a leader who can respond quickly to any local church situation, thus the matter(s) does not need to wait for the bishop. Pastors are connected to one another, equipped, and supported with accountability. Communication from the UBNO spreads easily and thoroughly to pastors and churches through cluster leaders. Our cluster system is a productive training ground for future denominational leadership.

2. *Developing Cultures of Prayer in the Local Church.* We have invested in our cluster leaders and pastors to increase their own prayerfulness and develop cultures of prayer in the congregations they serve. While we are seeing increased prayerfulness in their ministries, we also experience it with them in our conversations.

3. *Cultivating a Disciple-Making Mindset Among Leaders.* We are intentionally investing in developing a disciple-making, multiplying mindset at every level from the bishop to the directors to the cluster leaders to the senior pastors to the local church leadership.

The UBNO team is optimistic about and dedicated to serving our churches, pastors, and missionaries. Service overrides any sense of entitlement. From our directors to our support staff, the engagement we offer, especially in human resources, seems to provide a significant added value to our constituents.

How will you build on the current strengths of the denomination?

1. *Cluster System and Leaders.* The strength of our denomination is directly proportional to the strength of our cluster system. Each cluster has an appointed leader. Each leader's spiritual vitality, relational maturity, and strategic experience is key to a productive system. Therefore, continued training will be provided so that cluster leaders are spiritually healthy and practically equipped to support pastors and resource churches.

2. *Developing Cultures of Prayer in the Local Church.* Prayer is central to everything we do to strengthen existing churches and start new ones. Our leadership will continue to model the importance of prayer in every conversation and every event. We will continue the investment we make in newly appointed pastors, which is to underwrite their coaching experience with Daniel Henderson.

3. *Cultivating a Disciple-Making Mindset Among Leaders.* We will continue to emphasize and provide relational investments that mentor and model for our senior pastors the important leadership shift from a "me" to a "we"—to seeing themselves as a team leader. Furthermore, given that "seeking the lost" is one of our core values as a denomination, we will promote and provide resources that emphasize the importance of evangelism in the discipleship process.

In what ways do you see the UBIC denomination partnering with Huntington University?

1. *National Conference.* Since 2007, Huntington University (HU) staff has facilitated the youth activities at National Conference. Over the past four conferences, we have shined more attention on delegates who are HU alums. Greater goodwill seems to have been built. We will continue these practices. "HU Day" will be Friday's focus during National Conference 2021. We desire to promote a partnership that has existed for 125 years, wherein HU has developed and equipped men and women to influence the neighborhoods and nations for Christ.

2. *Veritas Theology Institute (VTI).* VTI is a commitment to the growth and development of ministry leaders for the next generation of the Church. It is designed for students who are serious about their faith and desire to grow deeper in their walk with Christ, while exploring their own calling. This two-year experience features an eight-day institute at HU to be followed up during the year with pastoral mentoring and participation in an online community. Successful completion of Year 1 allows the student to be eligible to participate in



a Year 2 international experience.

3. *Summer Service Projects.* HU students are gifted and could add value to churches through service projects that meet a need in a local church. One idea that emerged from a meeting of the Higher Education Leadership Team featured small crews of students from the Digital Media Arts program going to churches for a few days and creating quality video presentations, i.e. VBS montages, welcome messages on websites, “man on the street” segments, etc. The ideas are limitless.

4. *Graduate School Education.* The HU Graduate School offers a Masters program that was designed in 2013 to meet denominational ordination requirements. The Pastoral Ministry Handbook underscores that the standard course of study is graduation from Huntington University with a Bachelors degree in a ministry-related field and the Master of Arts in Pastoral Leadership. Dr. Sherilyn Emberton has been a generous catalyst in providing our ministers with this opportunity at an affordable price.

5. *Continuing Education.* The UBIC and HU partnered together in 2019 to launch the Idea to Action Symposium. The symposia are designed to provide continuing education twice per year to ministers in specific areas of ministry interest and expertise. Each topic presented at a symposium is built on three component parts—a theological deep dive, an exemplary model, and practical resourcing. We will continue to partner with HU to meet a need for the continuing education of UB ministers.

6. *Higher Education Leadership Team (HELT) and University Trustees.* Members from our denomination serve on the HU Board of Trustees. Currently, there are six members that serve on the HELT that also sit on the Board of Trustees by virtue of the office. There are seven other UB members that sit on the Board of Trustees. An effort will be made to identify potential trustees within UB churches and cultivate the goodwill for HU that is necessary for those who invest their time, energy, and resources for its benefit.