

Office of the Bishop



Todd H. Fetters
Bishop

Since assuming this office in 2015, I've worked hard to maintain the continuity of the official and unofficial themes that issue from our National Conference, with the rallying prayer of "Let the Wind Blow!" It's a simple prayer that invites the Church of the United Brethren in Christ to trust the indwelling Person of the Holy Spirit to lead each of us, our churches, and our movement.

In 2015, we were introduced to the theme, "Neighborhoods and Nations."

In 2017, when we celebrated our 250th anniversary as a denomination, we reaffirmed our core commitments—Gospel, Unity, Mission—and restated our existential purpose, "to strengthen existing churches and start new ones" under the superintending power of the Holy Spirit.

In 2019, we called everyone to the core discipline of prayer with the theme, "Let's Pray!"

Now, in 2021, we will reaffirm our commitment to Jesus' divine assignment in Matthew 28:17-20 with the theme, "Make Disciples." The foundation is established, and I'm eager to see the coalescing of these themes into a harvest of ministry and multiplication.

Five Strategic Initiatives

Since 2017, five strategic initiatives have guided the work of the Bishop's office.

1. Organize a denomination-wide prayer network.

While we have not yet developed a prayer "network," our emphasis on prayer has led to stronger commitments to the discipline of prayer among our pastors, many of whom have developed a culture of prayer in their own churches. Over 60 pastors have participated in a Strategic Renewal cohort led by coach Daniel Henderson. He was our keynote speaker at the 2019 US National Conference, which met under the theme "Let's Pray!"

In 2019, prayer cards were created for each of our clusters, with prayer requests submitted by pastors of the various churches. It's been encouraging to have folks request these again.

2. Facilitate a local church assessment and consultation program.

This has involved prioritizing our own "human resource" rather than some written plan intended for a church to follow. We have found value in "face to face, heart to heart" connections. We've seen encouraging signs of fruitfulness.

3. Continue investing in cluster leaders as catalysts for strengthening and starting churches in their region.

Cluster leaders are the backbone of our denominational structure. In addition to our personal investments of time, conversation and prayer, we make sure they are equipped to support their pastors. Many cluster leaders are actively engaged in stationing their pastors. Mike Dittman, as director of National Ministries, works closely with our cluster leaders. Every January, we bring all of the cluster leaders to Huntington for the Cluster Leader Winter Gathering.

4. Recruit pastors who can strengthen and start churches.

We do our best to assess a pastoral candidate's commitment to multiplication during each stationing process. Our Fresh Start initiative has laid out a pathway for church planters to identify with us and enables us to assess them.

5. Appeal to churches to identify and invest in our next generation of pastors, church planters, and missionaries.

The Veritas Theological Institute at Huntington University is a good start, but we have much more to do. The Pastoral Leadership Ministry Team is ready to roll up their sleeves with me to lay out a strategy.

7/3/2021

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DISCIPLES



2019 US National Conference

In our 252nd year as a Church, the National Conference was convened in Bowling Green, Ohio, on the campus of Bowling Green State University. Over 700 registrants participated in the four-day event. We gathered under the banner, “Let’s Pray!” This was the first time we have conducted National Conference on a college campus since 2005, when we met at Huntington University.

Daniel Henderson, author of many books on prayer, including, *Transforming Prayer*, was the keynote speaker the first two nights. He spoke passionately on the topic of prayer, delivering memorable lines such as, “He is worthy; we are needy,” and “We must seek God’s face before we seek his hand.”

Daniel was a familiar face and voice to many of our pastors who had read his books over the past 18 months. Nearly 40 UB pastors and leaders had participated in one of his 90 Days to Pastoral Renewal cohorts. His Thursday afternoon workshop was a hit! The room was set up for 250 and nearly 300 attended, giving evidence that there was a hunger to learn how to lead dynamic prayer meetings in our churches that were worship-based, Scripture-fed, and Spirit-led.

David Datema keynoted the Friday evening service, which focused on missions. Dave was familiar to many UB people, as an ordained UB minister and an endorsed missionary with UB Global. I then concluded the conference with a message on Saturday morning.

The Thursday morning business session featured many editorial changes to the Discipline. There was much discussion about changing the expectations of ministers with respect to mandating abstinence from alcohol and tobacco. The results of a ballot vote were in favor of bringing all members of the Church of the United Brethren in Christ, USA, under the same standards: “We urge all of our members to avoid using alcoholic beverages” and “...all members are urged to abstain from its [tobacco] use in any form” (US Discipline, page 11).

I followed up the decision with a letter the week after National Conference to all UB licensed ministers to remind them of our strong stances on alcohol and tobacco and provide an official interpretation of the new standard: “We permit, but do not endorse.” I also commended our licensed ministers “to navigate [their] freedom in Christ through the counsel of the Scriptures, the indwelling guidance of the Holy Spirit, and the encouraging accountability of the church, which includes [their] ministry peers.”

Strategic Partnerships

Strategic partnerships expand our leadership. We have a number of them—some going back decades, some very recent.

Huntington University

We cherish our partnership with Huntington University. We founded this college in 1897, and it has been our preferred partner in higher education ever since. Dr. Sherilyn Emberton, who became the president in 2013, is a visionary, action-oriented leader. She champions the close relationship between the church and college at every opportunity. We can all be proud of Huntington University. They continually add programs, and big plans are in the works as the University approaches its 125th anniversary in 2022.

UB Association (UBA)

We have been in partnership with the UBA since it was created as the “Mid-Atlantic Foundation” in 2005. It was launched as a solution to the group health insurance challenges that our ministers and churches faced when annual conferences were disbanded between 2005 and 2007. The team at the United Brethren National Office (UBNO) and other UB ministers are insured through this network. The UBA also wants to be a resource to pastors, local churches, and mission work, especially at its biannual spring and fall meetings. Rev. Michael Mudge is the president of the UBA. There is a membership body and a board of directors.

National Association of Evangelicals (NAE)

One of our Core Values says, “We link with the larger church.” The statement says, “We are not separatist in mentality or practice. Rather, we intentionally develop connections with other Christian denominations



and groups which are similar in purpose and spirit, so that we can more broadly advance the work of the Great Commission and impact our world.”

One example is the National Association of Evangelicals, in which we have been a member denomination since 1953. Over the years, various UB bishops and other UBs have served in leadership positions with the NAE and its mission arm, World Relief. I feel that the NAE provides the gold standard definition for evangelicals in a day when the word “evangelical” is sometimes viewed negatively. I appreciate the NAE’s non-partisan, Bible-based, winsome, and wise voice in the public square.

I was privileged to serve on the Presidential Search Committee that led to the historic appointment in October 2019 of Dr. Walter Kim, the son of Korean immigrants, as the new executive director of the NAE. Heather Gonzales, the oldest daughter of former bishop Paul Hirschy, continues as Chief Operations Officer of the NAE.

Strategic Renewal

Our relationship with Strategic Renewal began prior to the 2019 conference and has continued. I value the relationship I’ve developed with Daniel Henderson. Furthermore, I trust the ministry of Strategic Renewal, as do many of our pastors. I will continue to promote this organization for the health of our pastors and for the spiritual vitality it brings to our local churches as they develop a culture of prayer. The partnership between Strategic Renewal and the Church of the United Brethren in Christ doesn’t come with a contract or continuing obligations.

Church Multiplication

Our strategic partnership with Andy Sikora has helped us define our strategy in church multiplication. We are eager to expand his role as Associate Director of Church Multiplication. In addition, we have developed two other strategic partnerships: with Exponential, a church multiplication organization with a focus on disciple-making; and with Stadia, which assists us in assessing potential church planters.

Pure Desire

A recent addition to our strategic partnerships is Pure Desire, an organization which is a resource for sexual addiction and trauma.

Other Activities & Initiatives

Funds for Ministry and Multiplication

Since May 2016, over \$1.5 million has been earned or given for the purposes of ministry (Discipline 532.3) and multiplication (Discipline 442.3.d). Funds earned came through the sale of six UB-owned properties. Four of those properties were former UB churches owned by the denomination: in Harrisonburg, Va.; Fountain Hills, Ariz.; and in Freeport and Traverse City, Mich. In addition, several churches sold all or part of their property and donated it to the denomination. We also received money from a family trust.

Two places in the Discipline recommend using funds from church property for church planting and other denominational ministries:

- ¶442.3d addresses churches which close: “It is recommended that money from the sale of closed churches be given to the US National Conference to start new churches.”
- ¶532 gives four options regarding property which reverts to the US National Conference, including: “Sell the property to an outside interest and use the funds for ministries within the US National Conference.”

Two other properties owned by the US National Conference are the Bethesda Haitian UB church in Bradenton, Fla., and the United Brethren Building in Huntington, Ind. The Bradenton property continues to be used and maintained by a Haitian congregation. We share the UB Building with Huntington University. In May, we welcomed the Huntington University Advancement Office to the building. Previously, the Graduate School and counseling program occupied offices on the east side of the building (originally home to the printshop). We enjoy our interactions with the HU staffpersons.



Clergy Financial Help and Health

Our partnership with the NAE led to our involvement in a pilot program designed to increase clergy financial health and provide financial help to ministers. Nearly \$45,000 was raised and matched by NAE, creating a healthy balance which is used to help ministers in various ways. In addition, around 60 churches have participated in two Bless Your Pastor campaigns which generated \$67,000 in pastor appreciation. We commend and appreciate Gary Dilley, Janis Creason, Tom Datema, and Joe Leighton for their leadership and stewardship. They help manage these funds.

A Diverse Nominating Committee

In 2020, the ELT appointed a Nominating Committee which consists of a diverse group of individuals. The inclusion of women, both lay and clergy, may be an historic first for the National Conference. The inclusion of a pastor of color of non-American descent is also notable. We can be proud of this decision. Rev. Tim Sherman, pastor of Bethel UB church in Elmore, Ohio, was named chairperson. Other team members include Rev. Christine Augustat (Fowlerville, Mich.), Rev. Dalton Jenkins (Yonkers, N. Y.), Rev. Steve Fish (Fort Wayne, Ind.), Mrs. Kristi McConnell (Grand Rapids, Mich.), and Mr. Jeremiah Greenland (Shippensburg, Pa.).

Hispanic Churches

I had hoped to connect with Hispanic churches in Texas, New Mexico, and southern California in 2020. Leaders from these churches had expressed a desire for a formal connection (or reconnection) with our denomination.

Denis Casco, bishop of the Mexico Conference, and I were unable to meet in February 2020 when I was in Southern California. The former UB churches in California are still involved in litigation due to the entanglements of a Trust, which owns the properties. The matter needs to be resolved before any formal relationship can be established.

The Covid-19 Pandemic

The Covid-19 pandemic affected us all in many different ways—our families, our jobs, our churches... everything. Some of us lost loved ones; at least three United Brethren ministers succumbed to the disease. The effects of the pandemic will live on for many years.

Most United Brethren churches went into lockdown in mid-March and didn't resume in-person services until June or July. During this time, all church activities were suspended, and churches scrambled to figure out how to be a congregation without face-to-face meetings.

I was pleased to see UB pastors and lay leaders listen to the counsel of national, state, and local civic leaders and health officials, and lead their churches to respond with an attitude of love that demonstrated concern for others, especially the most vulnerable. Some pastors, when they first announced the lockdown and canceling of in-person services, made it clear to their congregation that this wasn't about religious freedom, but about being good citizens and protecting the health of their members. I'm thankful and deeply proud. Church governance boards tackled the issue thoughtfully and thoroughly, honored the leadership of government officials, and tried to be positive team players in their communities.

In March 2020, with lockdowns descending everywhere, our pastors and churches had to make a very quick pivot to providing online services. The learning curve was steep for many of them, but they climbed the digital mountains and organized online services, Bible studies, prayer meetings, daily devotionals, youth meetings, board meetings, and more. Some churches did drive-in services, with people listening in their cars via FM radios. In good weather, some held services outdoors. But most took their services online, which they happily discovered led to entirely new connections with people they wouldn't otherwise have encountered.

Some pastors reported positive responses to the Gospel. As one pastor put it, "Just as the Roman Road was a game-changer for the Gospel, this pandemic has forced many of us to take the Good News onto new roads—the Internet—and the Gospel is ZOOMing!"

Churches reopened with varying restrictions regarding masks, distancing, seating, singing, and many other areas—restrictions which were revised as they went along. Some churches held multiple services with different requirements—masks required in one, voluntary in another—or with a second venue in the church



with different requirements than for those in the sanctuary. Gradually, more and more people returned, though church leaders gave people permission to stay home—older people, those with vulnerabilities, etc.

By fall 2020, most church ministries—youth groups, Sunday school, children's church, small groups, etc.—had resumed meeting. But then, in November, the Second Wave hit, and many churches again suspended in-person meetings or re-imposed restrictions through the rest of the year and into 2021. The issue of masks, while somewhat contentious, was mostly recommended and not mandated into early 2021.

The vaccines changed everything. Today, all of our churches are meeting in person and many, if not most, offer an online option for those who are not comfortable gathering in a room with others. As we have moved further into 2021, life has begun returning to normal—or a “new normal,” as people say.

Denominational Finances

Finance Director Marci Hammel and Judy Dyer, our finance assistant, spent hours learning about the CARES Act, particularly the Payroll Protection Grant/Loan. Marci followed up with our bank and submitted an application on behalf of the UB National Office. We fully believed that our income would be adversely affected, since the majority of our budget is funded through the 3.5% partnership fee that we receive from churches.

Marci reported a 6% decrease in funds received from partnership fees. However, we also saw substantial decreases in expenses (such as travel), so we stayed on par with 2019. The funds we received in April 2020 from the Paycheck Protection Program were returned in May.

Resources (articles, links, webinars) were sent to help our pastors, treasurers, and board chairs understand the CARES Act, if they desired to apply for assistance. Some chose to apply while others have decided not to. By my estimation, about one-third of our churches applied for and received PPP funds.

On March 23, 2020, I sent a letter to senior pastors, treasurers, and board chairpersons to inform them that there would be no change to the 3.5% partnership fee since it represents a percentage of tithes and offerings. However, the letter invited them to contact Marci or me if they “need to send less or take a hiatus.” Simply put, I wanted to make sure that our churches were not over-burdened by their financial obligations to the denomination.

However, few if any churches experienced financial struggles because of the pandemic. Overall, people remained faithful in giving. The state of the plate throughout the denomination seems generally good. It is anecdotally shared that our churches are near, at, or above budget. People have been faithful in continuing to support their local churches, even if they were not attending in-person. Some churches reported that giving actually increased when they weren't meeting in person.

UBNO Staff

The UB National Office closed as of March 18, 2020. All 10 persons who worked in this office were able to do their work from home. I preferred coming to the office to work, and others occasionally showed up at the office, but most toiled away at home. We held a weekly Zoom meeting to get caught up with each other.

We promptly cancelled the various summits scheduled during April and May of 2020. That included the May 4-8 Ministry Leaders Summit (for pastoral staff in UB churches), the Youth Workers summit, and the three Pastor & Spouse summits: April 20-23 (churches with an attendance above 300), April 27-30 (attendance of 150-300), and May 4-7 (attendance under 150).

For the rest of 2020, very little travel occurred—no international travel by the UB Global staff, and very little domestic travel by me and others.

By June 15, everyone had returned to working at the national office building. Guidelines were put in place to ensure their protection and safety. In May 2021, we relaxed our guidelines further, and no longer require visitors to wear masks.

Embracing the Virtual

Every crisis brings opportunities to learn, experiment with novel ideas, and incorporate new methods for meeting needs and getting the job done. Most Americans have had a crash course in video-conferencing. We have fully embraced it as a new way of doing business. We have used video-conferencing, mostly Zoom, in a number of ways.

Idea to Action. The March 30, 2020, Idea to Action Symposium was cancelled and the topic was pushed to the fall symposium slated for October 26, 2020. Both the October 2020 and March 2021 symposiums were



held virtually.

ELT. The Executive Leadership Team met via Zoom in March 2020 and October 2020; we were able to care for all business within a couple of hours, with no expenses for travel and lodging. The ELT then met in-person in April 2021.

Leadership Teams. The spring 2020 leadership team meetings were moved from in-person sessions to an online format, including the Pastoral Ministry Leadership Team (March 30), the UB Global board (April 30), and the Higher Education Leadership Team (April 15). As of June 2021, only the HELT and the ELT had returned to in-person meetings.

UB History Course. Two sessions of the UB History Course were scheduled for March 30-31, 2020. Daryl Elliott would teach one at Devonshire Church in Harrisburg, Pa., and Bob Bruce would teach the other at the UB National Office in Huntington, Ind. The two-day course was quickly transitioned to a single Zoom class taught by Bob Bruce. It proved to be very effective. Another Zoom course was held in September 2020, with a record 25 participants, and a third one in April 2021. Both were taught by Bob Bruce. The virtual format enabled four Jamaicans and one Canadian to attend, and for various UBs (Daryl Elliott, Anthony Blair, Steve Dennie, and others) to share in the teaching. The PMLT will continue offering the course virtually.

Women's Conference. The UB Women's Conference is held every two years. The 2020 conference was originally scheduled to be held in Shipshewana, Ind. Instead, it was held virtually on September 25-26, and it was a hit, with 300 women participating. Some ladies watched from the comfort of their own homes while others gathered in "watch parties" in houses or churches. Thank you to Lissa Litka, the keynote speaker, for graciously adapting her messages to this format and helping to make the event a success.

Clusters. For the most part, clusters stopped meeting in person through the remainder of 2020. When possible, they met via Zoom. The annual Cluster Leader Winter Gathering, which meets every January in Huntington, Ind., was held entirely via Zoom in January 2021.

Webinars. The UBNO facilitated five webinars in 2020 that featured four nationally-recognized authors, including Gary Thomas, Daniel Henderson, and Nick Stumbo.

Pastoral Fatigue

The pandemic has been a stressful time for ministers. Dealing with virtual technology took many pastors totally out of their comfort zone and sidelined their relational skills. They struggled to figure out how to carry out their pastoral calling amidst the pandemic, and how to do congregational life without meeting as a congregation. And all the while, they dealt with gripes and criticisms from all corners.

Reopening brought a host of decisions they and their fellow parishioners had never dealt with before, and they ran headlong into impassioned and sometimes politicized differences of opinion. Pastors found people leaving, or threatening to leave, no matter what decision was made. Some wouldn't attend if they had to wear a mask, and others wouldn't attend unless masks were required.

Let me quote one pastor: "The division is exhausting. Masks vs. no masks. Covid is real vs. it's a government conspiracy. 'You are a bunch of sheep' vs. 'You don't love or care about people.' It is all discouraging and saddening, if I'm being honest....Being a leader right now (ministry or non-ministry) feels like lose-lose. You can't seem to make a decision that doesn't enrage a group of people."

Make no mistake: after a year-and-a-half of dealing with Covid, pastors are weary.

Racial Tensions

Racial tensions exploded in June 2020 with the death of George Floyd.

My heart truly breaks for our African American brothers and sisters in the United Brethren in Christ. I mourn with you that race relations in the United States is not where any of us had hoped and would have thought it would be 50 years after Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. delivered his powerful "I Have A Dream" speech at the Lincoln Memorial.

I've been generally pleased with how our pastors and congregations have responded. There's an openness to learn and lament like I've not seen before. That encourages me and should encourage all of us.

In the wake of Floyd's death, I spent hours talking with some of our African-American and immigrant pastors. I learned a lot and lamented some, all in an effort to lead us well. These brothers and sisters graciously



afforded me the privilege of listening to their thoughts and feelings. Despite a spike in frustration and a resurgence of fear and anxiety, each of them expressed an enduring and persevering love for the Lord and their fellow man. These men and women know that the real power to heal our pronounced relational divides lies in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Yes, we grieved together, but not as men and women without hope. Our shared hope for America and the nations firmly resides in the Holy Spirit who can free our minds from the chains of ignorance, bigotry, and hatred. Certainly, I must say that it seems to me that God has our attention. I know he has mine.

With 250 years of history under our belt, I'm grateful that the United Brethren church has typically landed on the correct side of issues of race and the vulnerable. When most American denominations were compromising to allow room for slavery, we remained abolitionist. As the Civil War ended and other denominations were trying to figure out how to make room for former slaves, we pushed ahead to advocate for full citizenship. As we saw Native Americans and Chinese immigrants suffering abuse, we spoke out against it. We began as a denomination of immigrants, and as we expanded westward, with people from many nations continually arriving in this Land of Opportunity, we welcomed immigrants into our congregations.

We emphasized this in 2001 when the United Brethren in Christ adopted eight Core Values. One of them, "We Demonstrate Social Concern," begins: "We must not only seek the salvation of our fellow human beings, but show genuine concern for their total well-being. We recognize our responsibility to victims of poverty, prejudice, injustice, and other forms of human suffering."

The statement continues with actions we can take in response: raise our voice, stand against, advocate, recognize our responsibility, seek the end, insist, don't ignore, help, respond corporately. As United Brethren, inviting anyone to "come with us...we will treat you well" (Numbers 10:29), we can apply these in various ways to society's ongoing struggle with racial injustice.

While United Brethren can be thankful for our history, we do not take this moment to pat ourselves on the back. Instead, we mark this moment by taking up the same mantle of our spiritual fore-brothers and fore-sisters, which is to follow the example of Christ and love our neighbor, regardless of color, as ourselves.

The UB National Office Team

Changes in the UBNO Team

We typically have very little turnover at the UB National Office. From 2017-2019, there were no changes. But we had a good number during the past two years.

Jeff Bleijerveld resigned as director of UB Global in June 2020, after serving 12 years in that role. *Frank Yang* was selected as the new executive director effective January 1, 2021. Frank, a member of Emmanuel Community Church in Fort Wayne, Ind., had served on the UB Global staff as an associate director since 2011.

Jana Gass joined the UB Global staff in 2013 as administrative assistant. She resigned in December 2020 to take a position at a local bank. *Angela Vincenti* became the administrative assistant in January 2021. Angela grew up in UB churches in Michigan and Indiana, and graduated from Huntington University in 2000 with a degree in Cross Cultural Ministry. She and her husband, Mark, have served at UB churches since 2000. Mark is currently Pastor of Prayer and Young Adults at Emmanuel Community Church (Fort Wayne, Ind.).

Steve Fish, who had been serving on the pastoral staff at Emmanuel, joined the UB Global staff in February 2021. He is a 1989 Huntington University graduate and ordained UB minister who has served in UB ministry since 1989. He fills the associate director position previously held by Frank Yang.

Judy Dyer, the finance assistant since November 2014, retired at the end of April 2021. In her place we hired *Jennifer Furnish*, who grew up in Huntington and attends a local United Methodist Church.

Two longtime staffers turn 65 this fall and will be cutting back their involvement.

Cathy Reich has been administrative assistant to the bishop since 2007. But long before that, while a student at Huntington University in 1975, she began working in the former United Brethren printshop. When the printshop closed in 1981, she became executive secretary to Paul Hirschy, then the director of Church Services, and served in that role until 1984, when she left the office to raise her family. She then returned in 2007. In October 2021, Cathy will transition into a new part-time role as Events Coordinator, and will work from home or wherever she happens to be. Cathy is the mastermind in organizing all of our events, from national conferences to the women's conferences to the pastor summits...and many more. I'm glad she'll continue



sharing her expertise in this area. We will be hiring a new administrative assistant.

Steve Dennie, our Communications director, has served at the UBNO since 1978, just after his junior year at Huntington University. He started as assistant editor of publications, became editor of the United Brethren magazine in 1982, and transitioned into a centralized role as Communications director in 1993. In January 2022, at his request, Steve will begin working three days a week.

Update on Former General Officials

I am grateful for the lives and ministry of past denominational officials (persons elected to office). They have all impacted my life in various ways. Let me give an update on those still living, and those we lost during the past two years.

C. Ray Miller, now 93 years old, was bishop for 20 years, 1973-1993. Since 1997, he has served on staff at Emmanuel Community Church in Fort Wayne, Ind. He and his wife, *Lanie*, live in Fort Wayne.

Ray Seilhamer, bishop 1993-2001, is living with his wife, *Ruth*, in Roanoke, Ind. After leaving the bishopric, he served three years as associate dean of the HU Graduate School of Christian Ministries, followed by 12 years as pastor of New Hope UB church in Huntington. In July 2016 he began serving two years as interim pastor of Mount Pleasant UB church in Chambersburg, Pa. In July 2020 he was appointed senior pastor of Zanesville UB church (Zanesville, Ind.), where he continues serving today at age 83.

Paul Hirschy was elected five times as Director of Church Services, beginning in 1981, and then served as bishop 2001-2005. Paul has served on staff at College Park UB church in Huntington, Ind., since 2012. He and his wife, *Barb*, live in Huntington.

Ron Ramsey, bishop 2005-2009, is retired and living with his wife, *E. J.*, in Fort Wayne, Ind.

Phil Whipple, bishop 2009-2015, passed away November 15, 2020, a victim of Covid. He was 63, and pastoring a Missionary Church congregation in Michigan. His wife, *Sandy*, continues living in Michigan.

Howard Anderson was elected Secretary of Education in 1973, and then Secretary of Church Ministries in 1977. He then served seven years in pastoral ministry. He and his wife, *Eva Nell*, live in Huntington, Ind.

Carlson Becker, who was elected Director of Stewardship 1977-1981, lives with his wife, *Naomi*, in Traverse City, Mich.

Kyle McQuillen was elected Director of Missions in 1993 and served in that role until 2001. He had been a UB missionary in Sierra Leone 1983-1985, an associate director of Missions 1987-1989, and pastor of College Park UB church in Huntington 1989-1993. He and his wife, *Mar Louise*, were living in Fredericksburg, Va., at the time of his death on March 16, 2020.

Gary Dilley was the last person to be elected to head our missions program (it became an appointed position in 2005). He was elected director of Global Ministries in 2001, and served in that position until 2007. He pastored College Park UB church (Huntington, Ind.) for 11 years, and in July 2019 joined the staff of Emmanuel Community Church (Fort Wayne, Ind.), where he is now Pastor of Spiritual Care and Missions. He and his wife, *Rhonda*, live in Huntington.

Dr. Eugene Habecker was president of Huntington University and the elected Director of Education 1981-1991. He went on to serve as president of the American Bible Society and then president of Taylor University (Upland, Ind.). He recently retired and is living with his wife, *Mary Lou*, in Indianapolis, Ind.

Dr. G. Blair Dowden, president of Huntington University 1991-2013 and the elected Director of Education 1991-2005, is now a senior affiliate consultant at Credo Higher Education. He and his wife, *Chris*, live in Greenfield, Ind.

Two other wives of former bishops are also still with us. *Mossie Sites*, wife of former bishop *Wilber L. Sites, Jr.*, who passed away in 2010, lives in Chambersburg, Pa. *Eleanore Datema*, wife of former bishop *Jerry Datema*, who passed away in 1994, lives with her son Tom in Dorr, Mich.

The Blessing of a Sabbatical

The Executive Leadership Team granted me a month-long sabbatical in July 2020. I appreciated the opportunity to rest and reset. It was helpful. I was completely unplugged, never checking my email once nor calling into the office. The UBNO team did an amazing job providing the UBIC with uninterrupted service. Mike Dittman, Cathy Reich, and Jim Bolich played vital roles in my absence. I was also pleased to be supported by many of you as the Holy Spirit prompted you to pray.



A Vision for the United Brethren in Christ

Since 2017, the UBNO team has focused on strengthening existing churches and starting new ones. I've been seeing evidence that this vision is taking hold. But there is much work to do.

If granted another term as bishop, during the next four years I intend to focus my attention on 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 United Brethren National Office team to effectively serve UB churches, pastors, and missionaries.
6. Renovate the UBNO building to accommodate a shared working environment for the US National Conference, UB Global, and Huntington University.

Among Our Ministers

Senior Pastor Appointments

August 4, 2019. Stephen Clymer, Victory Chapel (Liberty Center, Ohio). He replaced Don Ross, who had served Victory Chapel for ten years.

September 8, 2019. Jody Fleming, Strinestown UB (Manchester, Pa.). Dawn Spangler retired in July 2019 after seven years at Strinestown.

October 21, 2019. Ryan Koch, Hopewell (Auburn, Ind.). He followed Jeff Lawson, who had served Hopewell for three years.

October 27, 2019. Ken Meyer, New Horizons (Rockford, Ohio). He replaced David Souers, who had served there for five years and resigned May 1, 2019.

December 1, 2019. Stan McCammon, Mt. Olivet (Chambersburg, Pa.). Marc Stephenson had served there for seven years.

January 1, 2020. Dan Young, supply pastor at Findlay First (Findlay, Ohio).

January 5, 2020. Larry Reinertsen, interim at Mt. Washington (York, Pa.).

January 20, 2020. Brian Black at Macedonia (Greencastle, Pa.). Milton Herrold resigned as pastor effective March 27, 2019.

March 1, 2020. Jason Carter at College Park (Huntington, Ind.). He followed Gary Dilley, who became pastor in 2008 and served until June 25, 2019.

April 1, 2020. Art Page at Lurgan (Lurgan, Pa.).

June 21, 2020. Tom Datema at Gaines (Caledonia, Mich.). He followed Kelly Burnside, who served at Gaines from November 2007 to January 2020.

July 1, 2020. Ray Seilhamer at Zanesville (Zanesville, Ind.). He followed Tom Datema, who had pastored Zanesville since 1998.

August 1, 2020. Mark Ralph, pulpit supply at Findlay First (Findlay, Ohio).

August 2, 2020. Jeff Dice, pulpit supply at New Hope (Camden, Mich.). He replaced Travis Ambrose, who resigned as of July 26, 2020, after six years at New Hope.

August 16, 2020. Matt McKeown at First UB (Holly Hill, Fla.). He had served there as associate pastor since 1998. His father, Chuck McKeown, the pastor since 1988, moved into a staff role.

September 1, 2020. Alan Harbold at Mt. Washington (York, Pa.). Larry Reinertson completed his interim assignment August 30.

November 8, 2020. John Shadle at Prince Street (Shippensburg, Pa.). He had served 13 years as a UB youth



pastor in Michigan and Pennsylvania. He replaced Mike Wentz, who pastored Prince Street for two years, until June 23, 2020.

December 1, 2020. Robert Larimore at New Hope (Camden, Mich.).

January 16, 2021. Ernie Suman at Mt. Zion/Bobo (Decatur, Ind.). He replaced George Kuntzman, who had pastored the church since 2015 and retired December 31, 2020.

March 1, 2021. Rikkz Premnath at First UB (Findlay, Ohio).

May 23, 2021. Mark Ralph at First UB (Van Wert, Ohio). Jody Harr, the pastor since 2005, concluded his ministry May 21, 2021.

July 1, 2021. Mark Tinsley at Jerusalem Chapel (Churchville, Va.). He replaces Dennis Sites, who will retire at the end of July 2021 after pastoring the church since 1984.

July 1, 2021. Ricky Hull at Sunfield UB (Sunfield, Mich.).

Deaths in the Pastoral Family

Frank Yang, in his report as director of UB Global, tells about the United Brethren missionaries who died during the past two years. I will focus here on UB ministers.

July 14, 2019. Taylor Sharp, former UB minister in Indiana.

September 9, 2019. Alan DeCristoforo, former pastor in western Pennsylvania.

September 14, 2019. Milan Maybee, 86, longtime pastor, church planter, and superintendent in Michigan.

November 24, 2019. Mark Rutledge, UB pastor since 1962 in western Ohio.

November 27, 2019. Ralph Fry, a UB minister in four different states going back to 1967.

December 1, 2019. Doyle Clark, former UB pastor in Michigan and Indiana.

December 27, 2019. Harold Cherry, pastor for 44 years in Michigan.

March 5, 2020. William E. Shaw, UB minister in Ohio and Pennsylvania.

March 16, 2020. Kyle McQuillen, UB missionary, pastor, and Director of Missions 1993-2001.

May 2, 2020. Richard Mose, 92, UB minister for 40 years in Pennsylvania.

May 15, 2020. Ernest Belella, 94, a retired UB minister in Ohio.

June 18, 2020. George Speas, 88, pastor of six UB churches in Michigan over a 31-year period.

November 12, 2020. Robert Miller, 87, a UB minister for over 40 years.

November 15, 2020. Phil Whipple, 63, a UB minister 1990-2009 and bishop 2009-2015.

December 20, 2020. Irvin T. Shultz, 91, a pastor for 35 years in Pennsylvania, Maryland, and West Virginia.

January 16, 2021. James Mack, 63, former pastor in Pennsylvania.

February 3, 2021. Russ Birdsall, 93, former missionary, pastor in Indiana, and for three years, 1990-1993, fulltime superintendent of Central Conference.

February 18, 2021. Earl D. Peters, 95, UB pastor for 23 years in Pennsylvania.

February 18, 2021. Glenn Flint, 59, former pastor in Michigan, Ohio, and Indiana.

February 24, 2021. John Richardson, 87, former pastor in Ohio and Indiana.

March 1, 2021. Kent Maxwell, 83, UB minister since 1964, as well as conference superintendent and college professor.

March 7, 2021. John Wiseman, 95, UB minister in western Pennsylvania.

March 10, 2021. Paul Baker, 88, UB minister for 35 years, including 30 years at King Street UB in Chambersburg, Pa. Longtime conference superintendent and trustee of Huntington University.

March 26, 2021. C. David Shisler, pastor for 12 years in Pennsylvania and Maryland.

March 27, 2021. William Miller, pastor in California 1984-1994.

April 16, 2021. Wayne Goldsmith, UB senior pastor and interim pastor since 1985 in Ontario, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, and Arizona.

May 31, 2021. Stephen Henry, pastor in Pennsylvania 2005-2021.

Personal

Family

Lisa and I are happily married. She cares deeply about the work we are doing, and I count her my top prayer warrior. We enjoyed traveling together to France and throughout parts of Europe in November 2019.



Jordan enjoys his life in Riverside, Calif., working in the athletic department of California Baptist University. While we miss having him around, we have no desire for him to be any other place than where he is. His job definitely came from the hand of Jehovah Jireh.

Sometime on July 26 or 27, 2020, my younger son, Quinn, suffered and survived a brain bleed. He was quickly diagnosed with an arteriovenous malformation (AVM), and an embolization was done to shore up the ruptured aneurysm. AVMs are rare. Only 1% of the population have one. And Quinn's is even rarer given its location deep inside the middle of his brain.

As I write, we are bracing for a highly invasive brain surgery. Quinn is understandably concerned as there are significant risks, but he is also calm and ready—a gift from the Holy Spirit and a praying church, I'm sure. Thank you for your calls, notes, and messages of encouragement.

Appreciation to Others

Thank you for the trust you placed in me these past four years to serve as Bishop of the Church of the United Brethren in Christ, USA. Every day when I enter the United Brethren National Office, I walk down the hallway between the pictures of our former bishops. I do this on purpose. Each in his own way held fast to our three core commitments—Gospel, Unity, and Mission. I've aspired to do the same this past quadrennium. While I'm inspired by the legacy of the past, I'm also grateful for the extended leadership given by the following:

1. *Our Devoted Pastors and Ministers.* Our pastors have the challenge of living and leading in such a way that echoes Saint Paul's words, "Follow me as I follow Christ." That's not easy. But I am grateful for the men and women in our ministerial ranks who have been determined to show Jesus and point others to Jesus despite the circumstances. You are impressive, and it is truly my pleasure to serve you!

2. *Our Dedicated United Brethren National Office Team.* You won't find a more hard-working team around. This group truly cares about what they do for our churches, pastors, and missionaries. We laugh a lot. We even cry some, too. Life has dealt us blows, but we rally together to support each other and to work for the Church. It is my privilege to watch them care for the Church...care for you.

3. *Our Diligent Cluster Leaders.* We have over 20 cluster leaders who support and encourage our pastors. They willingly add this responsibility to their already full plate as senior pastors. Being a "pastor to pastors" is something our cluster leaders gladly do. They are the backbone of our structure.

4. *Our Pastoral Ministry Licensing Team.* These eight members do the work of credentialing in our denomination and maintaining the Pastoral Ministry Handbook...and they do it well. This team is responsive to individuals in the licensing process, even to the point of initiating contact to see if they can assist in any way.

5. *Our Higher Education Leadership Team.* This team of six helps foster the denomination's relationship with Huntington University. That relationship is strong! The ideas generated from this group have been mutually beneficial, such as the Idea to Action Symposium.

6. *Our Executive Leadership Team.* These 12 members have served the National Conference well during the biennium. You can be proud of them. They've upheld your integrity. They've listened carefully and decided wisely. They've honored the Lord. They've supported the Church.

7. *Our Magnificent, Faithful God.* The Lord, as usual, has been nothing short of impressive. I will always point to his faithfulness. His track record is what we rely upon to see us through each day and to lead our movement along an inspiring, fruitful path.

My father introduced me to three-word prayers over a decade ago. So, I end with this simple prayer at the close of one quadrennium and the start of another: "Your Glory Lord." Amen.