

2013-16 Quadrennial Strategic Plan

This document outlines the objectives and strategy for United Methodist Communications for the 2013-16 quadrennial. This plan will guide the communications efforts of the agency and integrates with the Four Areas of Focus. The Four Areas incorporate and give shape to the holistic mission of the church to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. They are dynamic, expansive and comprehensive. They provide us with a pathway to achieve vitality, create new places for new people, address the diseases of poverty and engage in ministry with the poor.

United Methodist Communications' objectives align with the Four Areas of Focus. For example, through our global health initiatives we revitalize local churches as members become more active. This helps the church combat diseases of poverty while being in ministry with the poor. When we reach adult seekers through our advertising and local church outreach events, we create excitement and increase local church engagement. Our advertising also showcases the church's work in eliminating diseases of poverty.

We fully recognize that Four Areas of Focus are not mutually exclusive, nor competitive; they are complementary and can be mutually reinforcing. Because of this integrated nature of the Four Areas of Focus, we have organized our plan around three unifying objectives. This eliminates the need to be repetitive as one goal may support more than one Area of Focus. Below are our three objectives:

1. Increase awareness and positive perception of The United Methodist Church and its ministries
2. Establish United Methodist Communications as the recognized leader in communications through its role of preparing leaders to meet communication challenges
3. Develop UMC's communications infrastructure

1. Increase awareness and positive perception of The United Methodist Church and its ministries (through advertising, marketing, public relations, outreach events, news distribution and religious education)

(200561) Church Advertising and Marketing:

Reach and engage adult seekers (age 18-34) and existing members in the U.S. through ongoing advertising, digital presence and multi-media communications

We will continue to develop advertising messages to attract young adults to the church. These advertisements will appear increasingly in new media, which allows for better message targeting than traditional channels. Moreover, we will refine and deploy experiential marketing techniques, that engage the receiver through visual displays, mobile apps, and more. Those who experience our advertising will continue to be directed to the online presence including RethinkChurch.org and social media channels to become connected to a local church.

- Increase overall awareness of The United Methodist Church by 5%
- Improve adult seekers' perceptions and likelihood to engage in ministry with United Methodist churches by 10%
- Increase seeker online engagement by 30%
- Increase awareness and level of support within the church for the RethinkChurch campaign by 20%

Enhance local church outreach and new church starts through marketing, regional advertising and resources

United Methodists are changing lives in their communities through grassroots efforts—from cleaning local parks to collaborating with community developers. We will continue to provide church clusters, districts, conferences and new church starts with *Rethink Church* marketing grants, website services, and how-to resources to draw non-United Methodists to their outreach projects.

- Impact 18 million lives through Rethink Church events
- Enlist 1 million volunteers to provide 3 million hours of service
- Increase the number of churches partnering with Rethink Church and using the resources by 25%

500592 Enhance and manage a positive public image for The United Methodist Church and generate increased awareness and goodwill through an aggressive public relations program

We will expand the visibility of The United Methodist Church in the international and national news media. We will develop a database of media-trained experts on a variety of issues and collaborate with the Council of Bishops to issue statements and commentaries about issues in the news.

We will continue to work strategically to increase name recognition and influence, provide explanation, information and resources about United Methodist beliefs and practices. We will help members understand the connectional nature of the denomination and how they support mission and ministry beyond their local church.

We will also collaborate with agencies, conferences and churches across the connection to promote events and develop crisis prevention and response strategies. A timely strategic response in a crisis is crucial to minimize long-term damage that can affect the credibility and reputation of the entire denomination.

We will fully leverage social and digital media and emerging new technology to increase exposure and reach new audiences. We will actively monitor social media and other channels to measure engagement and click-through rates to determine what works best.

- Increase number of mid and high profile placements, positive news stories, and gross impressions by 10% annually
- Increase visits to the UMC press center by 25%
- Increase the number of persons engaged through UMC social media channels by 5% annually
- Expand UMC's social media presence into at least three emerging channels with younger demographics
- Increase the average number of people engaged per post by 2%
- Increase click-throughs to UMC.org from Facebook by 3%

500590 Serve The United Methodist Church as the official newsgathering and distribution agency (UMNS) by telling stories about the church's beliefs, its people and its causes and reporting the news of the day

UMNS will continue to work closely with communicators across the worldwide connection, collaborating on stories and providing leadership that enables people to tell the stories of the church more effectively. The news service's photographs, depicting United Methodists living out their faith, are widely used in publications and web sites. Its video clips are used as

resources by secular TV reporters, local church study groups and pastors seeking sermon aids. Other services include free newsletter templates for local churches and a free daily news digest that is sent by e-mail to subscribers inside and outside the church.

- Increase levels of engagement with Facebook by 5% annually
- Increase average readership of UMNS articles by 5% annually
- Increase total page reads of UMNS articles by 5% annually

Tell stories about The United Methodist Church, its beliefs, its people and its causes that inform, inspire, and engage those within and beyond the membership of the church

We will provide content that attracts young adults and a global audience through various channels (UMC.org, UMTV, RethinkChurch.org, social media etc.)

- Increase global readership by 20% annually
- Increase readership of young adult oriented content by 20%
- Increase the number of stories generated by non-US conferences by 15%
- Increase the number of young adult generated content by 20%
- Increase viewership of videos by 20%

200560 Manage The United Methodist Church brand with a unifying focus and consistent messaging throughout the connection

United Methodist Communications will lead the denomination in advocating brand harmony throughout the church. We will create and promote branding guidelines for all levels of the church. Working and coordinating with partners at all levels, we will educate about the importance of a consistent brand and ensure it continues to experience higher levels of acceptance and expression related to the overarching strategic communications (e.g. Imagine No Malaria, Vital Congregations, Path1, Four Areas of Focus etc.). We will work toward consistent representation of brand strategic elements across all agency communications including storytelling, resources, and advertising.

- Encourage increased agencies' usage of consistent brand with a goal of 3 partner agencies
- Encourage Annual Conferences to adopt the brand guidelines with a goal of 40%
- Increase the number of local churches including brand elements on their website by 10%
- 100% acceptance of UMC branding guidelines by United Methodist Communications

(500591) Strengthen positioning of UMC.org as the primary denominational location to increase awareness and engagement on areas such as faith, beliefs, church initiatives, four areas of focus, and positions of the church on issues of the day

Provide visitors with a digital door to United Methodist Church history, outreach and funding; meet people who make a difference; learn about church-related news, global issues and programs; discover how we live, practice, and share our faith through action; read answers to frequently asked questions; and find a local church. Develop stories related to major church initiatives and four areas of focus such as *Ministry with the Poor* to promote awareness of and advocacy for changing conditions. Continue promoting the site throughout the connection to make it the first stop about all things United Methodist.

- Increase number of unique visitors by 2% annually
- Increase number of page views by 2% annually
- Increase engagement (average pages, time on site, comments, etc.) by 3% annually
- Increase global readership by 10%
- Increase by at least 4 the number of unifying portals around specific needs (e.g. training)
- Increase understanding of the denomination's Four Areas of Focus by 2% annually
- Increase page views for FAC section by 3%

400580 Position the denomination as a recognized leader regarding global health issues and its work in eliminating the killer diseases of poverty

The consequences of extreme poverty threaten the lives and the quality of life for billions of people worldwide. United Methodist Communications will continue to educate and advocate for better health globally. We will continue to strengthen existing partnerships, both external and interagency, to increase public awareness of The United Methodist Church and its impact as a leader in global health activities. A network of global health partners will advocate and champion the cause at conference, district and global levels. We will leverage member involvement in the malaria campaign to cultivate additional health activities to create a healthy and whole world.

- Among church leaders, increase awareness of global health as a priority for the church by 15%
- Familiarity of global health issues within the body of The United Methodist Church will increase by 15%
- Increase the number of churches engaged in denominational health activities by 20%
- UMC is invited to and recognized at two secular global health related events

Provide religious education through digital technologies

United Methodist Communications will explore opportunities to reach children in central conferences with religious education using digital mediums. Currently, United Methodist Communications plans to support this need by developing mobile applications. The agency may adjust the direction of support based on further analysis.

- Develop five religious apps

2. Establish United Methodist Communications as the recognized leader in communications through its role of preparing leaders to meet communication challenges

Strengthen United Methodist Communications's image as the leader in communications

United Methodist Communications will enhance its standing as the religious communications leader through developing thought leadership content such as white papers, webinars etc. We will promote it through active social media presence, building relationships and proactively meeting needs in a relevant and timely way.

- Get invited to five high-profile communications events as speakers
- Develop 10 white papers and have 2000 downloads
- Update the handbook on communications and create an electronic version for it
- Provide communications best practices related training at three annual conferences annually
- Sponsor a communications conference for the denomination

(200560) Provide information on best practices to support entities within The United Methodist Church to develop and implement communications strategies

United Methodist Communications provides tips and tools on communication best practices related to message development, media selection, application of innovative digital technologies, outreach, social media, communications audits etc. through its website, publications and e-newsletters. The agency also offers information and workbooks to local churches that guide their development of outreach-related marketing plans.

- Increase the number of e-newsletter subscriptions by 20%
- Benchmark and increase by 5% annually the number of churches indicating they have used tips in improving local church communications
- Benchmark and increase church usage of innovative communications media by 5% annually e.g. Facebook, Twitter, blogs or electronic newsletters)
- Increase the usage of the Marketing Planning tool. Create an online course and increase the number of local churches developing their plan by 10% annually
- Increase usage of UCom.org by 10%

Provide training in a variety of mediums to equip leaders across the connection to strengthen their communication skills for ministry

We will provide relevant and practical consultation, training and resources to our global audience. Training opportunities will help church leaders communicate more effectively, develop skills, use tools and resources in ministry and engage in meaningful discussions that help reach seekers and inform members. United Methodist Communications offers a growing catalog of interactive, cutting-edge learning experiences (web ministry, Rethink Church, welcoming, spokesperson, crisis, central conferences communicators training, ICT4D, UM basics etc.) and we will continue to add new courses, based on assessed needs. Delivery platforms include face-to-face, online, webinars and self-directed courses. We will evaluate global training needs and create a comprehensive plan for the development of curricula and implementation.

- Increase the number of people participating in United Methodist Communications sponsored training by 20%
- Develop a comprehensive plan to address global training needs and develop appropriate curricula
- At least 20% of training participants will implement at least one recommendation/ learning from the course
- Increase the number of annual conference and executive leadership trained in spokespersons and crisis communications by 30% and local church communicators by 5% **(500592)**
- Conduct large scale face-to-face training in 30% of annual conferences over the quadrennium based on conferences' expressed needs
- Increase training revenue by 100%

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Provide church leadership with communications resources

United Methodist Communications supports the development of leaders by providing a wide variety of communications tools and resources. We assist clergy and church leadership in staying current with UM programs and ministries, planning and implementing local programs, remaining relevant and reaching out to different audiences. Both the Spanish and Korean resource teams are in the process of re-envisioning their service offerings and will continue to be in concert with the national plans to which they relate.

- Increase circulation of the Interpreter magazine (or its successor) by 2%
- Increase engagement with digital leadership resources by 5% (pages read, click-throughs, etc.)

- Increase the number of churches using Rethink Church resources by 5%
- Improve the value of Program calendars for church leaders by providing additional information, evaluating new formats etc. Maintain Program calendars revenue.
- Reposition the language ministries and their publications to best serve their constituencies
- Increase viewership of videos by 25%

Partner with annual and central conferences and general agencies to provide communications leadership and consultation

United Methodist Communications will develop a more robust relationship marketing program for annual and central conferences to understand their needs and support them by providing resources, training, webinars, best practices, consultation, program updates etc. In this relationship, with regular communication, they become our extension partners and help us reach a larger audience. We also collaborate with other general agencies to strengthen their communications efforts through research, planning and implementation.

- Increase usage of communications learning opportunities by 20%
- Benchmark and increase content consumption
- United Methodist Communications will work with and provide support to 50% of central conferences
- United Methodist Communications will support at least six general agencies in accomplishing their marketing and communications goals

Build relationship with local church leaders through events

We will have face-to-face interaction with local church leaders via agency display, workshop/training or speaking opportunities.

- Among leadership, familiarity/positive perception of United Methodist Communications will increase by 5%
- Among attendees, familiarity/positive perception of United Methodist Communications will increase by 5%
- United Methodist Communications will be present at 90% of US annual conferences

500593 Create and implement a master communications strategy to promote the connection and giving

United Methodist Communications has historically provided strategic communication plans and marketing support for all apportioned funds and Special Sundays. Going forward, we will create one master communications strategy to promote the connection and giving. Toward this effort, we develop and distribute materials including downloadable electronic resources, printed resources for annual conferences, webinars and new training options based on ongoing research and evaluation. We will provide tools to support District Superintendents in the promotion of giving.

- Annually distribute 200,000 United Methodist handbooks and use survey tools to evaluate its usefulness.
- Create a digital version of the handbook and have 1,000 downloads
- Boost awareness levels of the connection and its role by 2% annually
- Increase resource downloads by 5% annually
- Improve the perception that apportionment dollars support valuable programs and ministries by 30%
- Increase webinar participation by 5% annually
- Increase usage of *Mission Moments* by 5%

3. Develop UMC's communications infrastructure

(200560) Be recognized as a technology leader in religious communications through developing global partnerships and providing support for setting-up coordinated communications infrastructure at all levels of the denomination

We will develop a partnership-based network that links United Methodist communicators globally. We will strengthen our communications infrastructure and evaluate and support community radio projects in the Central Conferences. We will evaluate the radio projects based on their effectiveness in spreading messages related to health, education, weather alerts, congregational care, and conference communications. We will provide best practices and implementation support for ICT4D (Information Communication Technologies for Development) globally .

- Establish four partnerships with key players who use mobile and other emerging technologies
- Be recognized within the secular communications technology community through invitations to high-profile meetings, speaking engagements, and other forms of recognition
- Create at least four community based ICT4D programs with at least 1 pilot project using tablet and low wattage projectors in primary education setting
- Receive foundation or corporation grants (funds or in-kind products/services) for ICT4D totaling at least \$200,000
- Provide support to launch at least 2 new community radio stations in central conferences

Provide a platform to all UM entities to have a digital presence

United Methodist Communications will continue to offer a web presence to every local church through Find-A-Church. This service will put ministry opportunities, contact information, Web links and more at the fingertips of people actively searching for a church. We will expand it to global churches. The agency also will offer additional options to enhance local church web presence through web hosting and site development services. This will allow United Methodist Communications, other agencies and annual conferences to find a broader reach for their content through automated feeds. United Methodist Communications will also work with partners to tag UM entities on a global map.

- Increase the number of churches updating and maintaining their FAC profiles by 20%
- Add at least 200 international profiles on FAC

- Provide web hosting and development services to at least 1,000 churches by end of 2014
- Complete asset mapping for at least 100 entities

Keep TechShop at the cutting-edge of providing technology products and services to UMC organizations

TechShop currently provides computer hardware and software, church management software, projectors, peripherals, and websites. It will partner with companies to provide emerging technological support to churches and conferences, such as live-streaming and mobile app development. TechShop will continue to monitor and provide appropriate technologies for central conferences such as solar powered, ruggedized laptops, low-wattage projectors etc.

- Increase the number of active TechShop customer base by 5%
- Increase TechShop revenue by 5%

Maintain leadership database

United Methodist Communications maintains a leadership database to facilitate communications deeper within the church. The agency will make the database more robust by allowing audiences to update their profiles with information such as job roles, geography and interests. These additions will enhance our understanding of individual needs, allowing us to send more targeted and relevant messages that will encourage higher engagement. United Methodist Communications will expand its email database to reach more churches in the most cost-effective manner available. We will expand the database to include leaders from ethnic churches. The agency will integrate its email communication and CRM systems to ensure they update and share information automatically.

- Increase agency email reach to 96% of local churches
- Have at least 15,000 updated profiles
- CRM system will integrate with Email Service Provider
- Have at least 1,000 ethnic leaders contact information

Provide infrastructural and support services to develop multi-media resources

United Methodist Communications currently has a very high quality production facility with state-of-art tools and equipment and experienced staff. We routinely provide video

development, editing, live streaming and other production support to all levels of the connection including the Council of Bishops, Connectional Table and the General Conference.

- Increase revenue by 20%
- Increase by 5 the number of United Methodist entities served