

Report to UMEIT from the Associate Ecumenical Staff Officer for Leadership Development

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(During UMEIT USA every year those whose ministries are a part of the Council of Bishops Office of Christian Unity and Interreligious Relationships offer reports on the work of the office. This year I would like to share about how the COB OCUIR is working to help form young adults in this ministry...)

Ecumenical and Interreligious Leadership Development of Young Adults in The United Methodist Church

The formation of young adult United Methodists in ecumenical and interreligious ministries is an important part of the ministry of the COB OCUIR. We are committed to helping this generation love the unity of Christ's Church and have the confidence to reach out to neighbors of other religions with love and grace. Below is an outline of how we are currently seeking to help young adults accomplish those goals.

1. Scholarships

- a. **UMEIT USA** – Every year we offer several scholarship for first-time attenders who are seminary students. In 2015 we welcomed 5 students from: Emory, Vanderbilt, Yale, Duke and Louisville. This year our 4 students are from: Memphis, Wesley, Boston and Garrett. They each received a grant to be used to lower the cost of registration, hotel and/or travel. They are required to write a 1-page report (with photos) and submit an accounting of how they used the grant.
- b. **Bossey** – The Ecumenical Institute of the World Council of Churches, located outside Geneva, Switzerland, offers a 5-month study certificate program in ecumenism every year. We have begun to support one UM participant per year, and in 2016 that person will be Katye Dunn from Garrett Evangelical Seminary. Katye has been granted \$10,000 toward the cost of transportation and tuition. When she returns, she will also write a reflection paper and be invited to make a presentation.
- c. **Other events** like PWR – When other large ecumenical or interreligious events occur, we stand ready to offer grants for seminarians to attend. In 2015, for example, we took six grant recipients with us to the Parliament of the World's Religions in Utah. They were not all young adults but included students at: Emory, Methodist Theological and Claremont. The others were: a pastor from Mississippi, a member of a college staff from North Carolina and a chaplain from Missouri.

2. **Local Initiative Grants** – Every year we offer grants to annual conference CUIR groups. While they do not always go to young adults in particular, in 2015 several young adults applied. The recipients were: two congregations in Texas working with their community on racism, a group of interfaith congregations in Alabama who are taking

pilgrimages to each other's houses of worship, a CUIR group from Michigan who is writing an ecumenical curriculum, and a seminary in the Philippines who is developing a course in ecumenism for laity in their area.

3. **UMEIT Norway and UMEIT Philippines** – We have a goal of helping to facilitate UMEIT events around the world every quadrennium. This ministry project is going slower than we had hoped, but there have been two excellent events focused on young people early in this quad. One was in Oslo, and one was in Manilla. Both were organized particularly around young adults and helping them to learn the importance of unity.
4. **Next global UMEIT** – We are currently looking for another place who would like to work with us on the next UMEIT. We are hoping to find a host somewhere in Africa but are open to all possibilities. Here, again, we would love to work with young adults.
5. **UMEIT: Young Adult Network** – Earlier this year we began a grand experiment with 10 young adults, aged 27-31, from around the world who are committing to a 2- or 3-year intensive training on leadership, ecumenism and interreligious ministry. These young adults are creating networks of other young adults and leading them in the same training they are receiving through monthly conferences. The young adults come from: Democratic Republic of Congo, Austria, Great Britain, Ukraine and the United States. Their networks will be with young adults in their pastoral contexts, through the Upper Room, via the internet, and in their university settings.
6. **UMEIT: Ecumenical Plunge!** – Bishop Devadhar has recently received affirmation from the Council of Bishops for us to move forward in this new, exciting training. This will be a two year commitment for young adults from all annual conferences where the bishop will support one candidate. The Plunge will consist of two intensive pilgrimages: the first to Europe to experience Taize, Bossey and the WCC, and the second to the Holy Land to experience the context of Palestinians and Jews living together. The first year the bishop will provide financial support for the young adult, while the second year he or she will provide their own funding. We hope to begin organizing the first Plunge after GC.
7. **Additional Resources Available to you and your young adults:**
 - a. **Facebook page** – If you visit our page, you will see daily posts with stories from around the world to encourage you. You will also be connected with others who care about this ministry.
 - b. **Twitter** – When we are sharing in special events on behalf of the COB, we tweet about them! You can also follow us for daily updates similar to those on Facebook.
 - c. **Quarterly newsletter** – If you sign up to be on this mailing list, you will receive a larger e-newsletter every three months with updates on dialogues, resources, grant opportunities and other news.
 - d. **Annual Conference visits** – During Annual Conference season, several of us make visits and presentations across the connection. Have your bishop invite us, and we will be happy to come to you.

- e. **Paper or internet resources** – We have several brochures, booklets, books and other resources we can either email or send through the postal service to you. These include brochures designed to help pastors when they are invited to participate in interreligious weddings or funerals. We also have Dr. Glen Messer's, and Dr. Don Messer's, excellent new study books which young adult groups can use for several-week small group studies.
- f. **Call us!** – We are available for conversations and questions. My contact information is below, but you can call any of us by using the office number listed.

For more information about any of these young adult ministries, feel free to contact me directly:

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