



COMMUNICATIONS

United Methodist Communications

THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

2023 Evaluation Report



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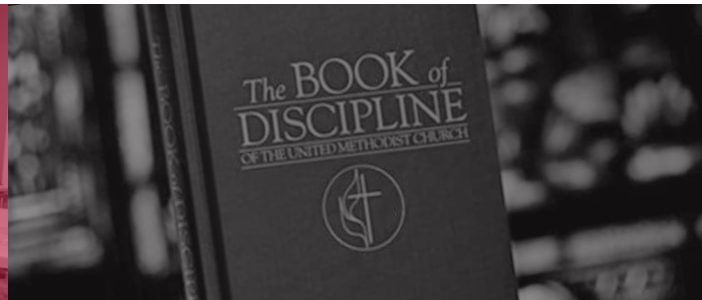
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COMMUNICATIONS

United Methodist Communications

THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH



WHO WE ARE

Our Vision

Changing the world by sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Our Mission

Communicating all the good we can, in all the ways we can, to all the people we can, in all the places we can.

WHAT WE DO

Engage people with the story of God's work in the world through The United Methodist Church.

Equip The United Methodist Church at all levels to become effective communicators, as together we seek to grow the church in the 21st century.

Claim our role as the strategic communications and marketing agency for the global United Methodist Church by building communication infrastructure and networks.

Nurture our people and demonstrate good stewardship.



WEBSITE PERFORMANCE

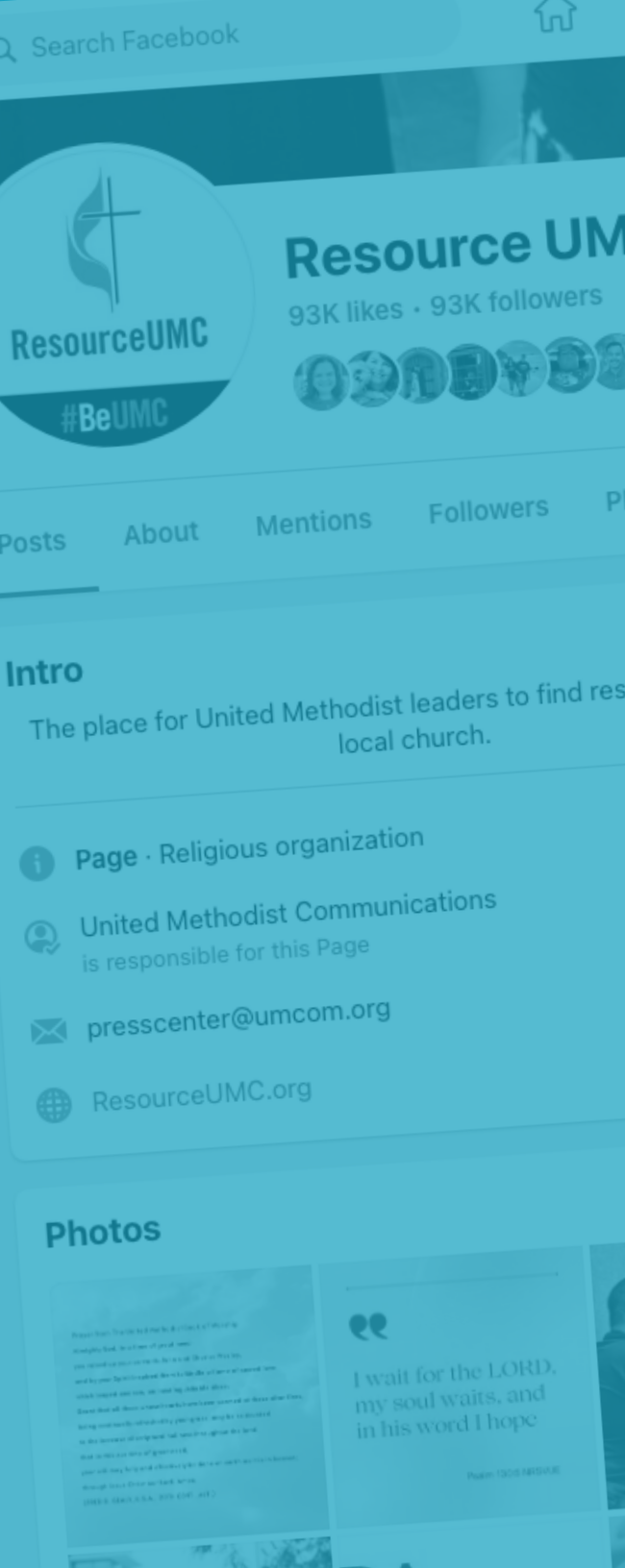
Websites and newsletters managed by UMCCom continued to keep people informed, equipped and inspired.

WEBSITE	2023 Sessions
UMC	6,253,273
Resource UMC	2,347,542
UM News	2,079,525

NEWSLETTER PERFORMANCE









Subscriptions increased by **8.6%** in 2023.

PUBLICATION	2023 Subscriptions	2022 Subscriptions	% Change Subscriptions	2023 Open Rate (% of delivered)
UM Now	130,017	120,370	8.0%	37.6 %
MyCom	50,930	48,564	4.9%	33.5%
Friday Digest	51,855	48,894	6.1 %	36.8%
Daily Digest	63,508	57,779	9.9%	39.3 %
COMPASS	27,420	23,159	18.4%	24.2 %
The Source	16,840	14,824	13.6%	49.3 %
UMComtigo	1,009	867	16.4 %	41.2 %
DuruAllimi	2,420	2,172	11.4%	53.3%
TOTAL	343,999	316,629	8.6%	38.1 %



SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNEL PERFORMANCE

The agency had **1.87 million+** social media followers across platforms and **5.79 million+** Facebook engagements in 2023.

	 Facebook Followers 2023	 Facebook Engagement 2023	 Instagram Followers 2023	 Instagram Followers 2023	 X Followers 2023	 TikTok Followers 2023	 YouTube Views 2023
UMC	834,290	3,010,117	71,392	993,927	N/A	5,654	347,842
UMCom	212,490	347,821	2,709	500,158	N/A	N/A	Included in UMC #
UM News	240,757	1,486,792	N/A	N/A	27,609	N/A	Included in UMC #
ResourceUMC	89,300	169,675	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Included in UMC #
Rethink Church	112,806	267,561	13,286	278,133	N/A	N/A	19,100
UMC Giving	118,249	223,305	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	27,171
Korean Church	51,181	150,585	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Included in UMC #
Recursos Metodistas Unidos	9,962	45,615	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Included in UMC #
La Iglesia Metodista Unida / Servicio Metodista Unido de Noticias	29,643	51,861	699	90,303	27,609	N/A	Included in UMC #
L'Eglise Methodiste Unie	20,177	1,331	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Included in UMC #

ADVERTISING AND PROMOTION

Advertising campaigns, social media and other marketing initiatives helped to spread the message of The United Methodist Church and its ministries.

National advertisements targeted around Easter, summer, fall and Advent generated across a mix of mediums including billboards, social media, paid search, display ads and TV.

The Advent season saw a return to Times Square advertising and NYC subway digital boards.

Highlights include:

- Nearly **418 million impressions**
- **63 billboards** in English / Spanish-language displayed in select cities
- **Two-week flight of Hallmark Channel TV ads** ran during “Countdown to Christmas” programming



INTERNATIONAL ADVERTISING AND PROMOTION

Providing billboards, T-shirts, training, event resources and web development, **UMCom partnered with the Central Conference in six episcopal areas:** Nigeria, South Congo, Zimbabwe, Baguio and Manila in the Philippines and North Katanga, DRC.





#BeUMC

Promotion of the #BeUMC campaign reached 1.6 million people and created approximately 3.5 million social media impressions. Awareness of #BeUMC was also boosted with a presence at events and workshops impacting 4,000+ attendees.

Exposure at the Youth 2023 national gathering for UM youth groups and their leaders provided the means to showcase the hope found within the people of The UMC across ages. An attention-grabbing 30' graffiti-style display wall encouraged visitors to share their stories of how the denomination has helped them grow in their faith allowing for increased learnings about our members.



SEEKER COMMUNICATION

In 2023, Seeker Communications worked to broaden audience reach through new content delivery methods, leveraging the power of search engine optimization, AI-influenced content descriptions and Meta information to improve content discoverability.

In order to reach seekers in the places where they already digitally “hang out”, content placement was focused on platforms like TikTok, YouTube and other social media.

This strategy resulted in:

- 100%** increase in organic Facebook reach
- 6.4 million** UMC TikTok channel impressions garnered
- 78** unique web articles
- 25** Compass podcasts episodes
- 17%** increase in median downloads per podcast episode
- 30%** increase in 30-day views for articles on the Rethink Church portion of UMC.org

MULTILINGUAL CONTENT

Throughout 2023, the Communication Team continued to increase availability of content in languages other than English on UMC.org and ResourceUMC.org, and developed a process for updating pages regularly.

127% increase in non-English content

MEMBER COMMUNICATIONS

Member Communications keep members engaged and connected with an array of uplifting videos, enlightening podcasts and engaging articles.

- 958,000** average monthly visitors
- 117** new pieces of content
- 148** stories from annual conferences, agencies and partners
- 22** new “Get Your Spirit in Shape” podcast episodes

Content included:

- ▶ Stories about inspirational ministries around the connection including how churches responded to issues such as homelessness, creation care and empowerment for those with physical disabilities
- ▶ Supportive content aimed at helping members through a difficult season amidst church disaffiliations from grieving through transition to hospitality tips
- ▶ Video highlights such as new video inviting people back to church, the continuation of the Recap series and the story of how five churches from four continents united to demonstrate God’s love

	2023	2022	2023 Increase
Spanish	1,801,086	782,958	130%
Francophone	102,659	42,187	143%
Korean	234,984	118,039	99%
Portuguese	45,471	20,324	124%
TOTAL	2,184,200	963,508	127%

LEADER COMMUNICATIONS

ResourceUMC.org empowers church leaders by providing ministry tools, resources and information to effectively lead their congregations and connect with their communities.

- 3.4 MILLION+** page views
- 25.14%** increase in page views
- 19.22%** increase in users
- 5,000+** new Facebook fans
- 140+** pieces of support content from agency partners and annual conferences
- 50+** new podcast episodes of “Pastoring in the Digital Parish”
- 41%** of visitors are Spanish-language users
- 14 different podcasts** across agencies, conferences and local churches during 2nd annual Podcast-a-thon week long event

Content highlights include:

- ▶ 7-Day Prayer Challenge videos
- ▶ Healing resources for those impacted by disaffiliation
- ▶ Guidance for Lighthouse and Committed to The UMC congregations
- ▶ Regionalization info
- ▶ What we mean by “means of grace”
- ▶ United Methodists pray for peace in the Middle East
- ▶ State of the Church Report 2022

LOCAL CHURCH SERVICES & TRAINING

United Methodist Communications equipped church leaders to communicate effectively through the provision of training opportunities and resources.

The Local Church Services Team:

- ▶ Served **2,098 churches** and provided **2,765 services**
- ▶ Launched **Coaching Communities** offering small peer group meetings over the course of three weeks to learn from marketing specialists finishing the year with three groups completed
- ▶ Helped **churches affected by disaffiliation** to reach new people through marketing and promotional outreach

The Training team:

- ▶ Connected with **2,015 church leaders**
- ▶ Taught **210 attendees** during the second annual Communications Learning Week virtual event, covering topics such as connecting with multilingual communities, navigating the digital landscape, repurposing sermons with artificial intelligence and hospitality tips
- ▶ Released the Revitalizing Your Church's Social Media course that became the **top online training** for the year

Top 10 Online Training Courses	# trained
Revitalize Your Church's Social Media	260
Developing A Strategy for Communications Planning	258
Communications that Transform	215
Social Media for Churches	160
Welcoming Ministry	153
A Snapshot of Communications	135





COMMUNICATIONS Regions Episcopal Area - Communications #BeUMC



Church Takes Care Of Kailua Beach
BY PETER ROSEGG

You can't quite see Kailua Beach from Kailua United Methodist Church near Castle Junction, but it's clear the beach has a place in the hearts and minds of its congregants.

In keeping with the Methodist call to "care for creation," once a month a group from the church goes to clean and preserve Kailua Beach. Many others clean the beaches, usually showing up with large bags to haul away whatever escaped from trash cans or never made it there to begin with.

KUMC folks, however, show up with kitchen colanders and sieves for the precise work of straining the sand for small pieces of plastic that are abundant but usually invisible. These are larger than "microplastics" that measure less than 5 millimeters across. Emission is taking these larger pieces that way.

"You can go anywhere on this beach — anywhere at all — take a regular colander and just scoop it up and when you're done, you will have a handful of little pieces of plastic," says Dorey Weather, a member

Members of Kailua United Methodist Church clean up Kailua Beach monthly and encourage others to participate. #WASH-COASTS4KUMC UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

SEE PAGE 4

PUBLIC INFORMATION

The Public Information Team helped to spread the message of The UMC and its ministries through publicity, media and public relations initiatives, working with news reporters (national, local and international) across various mediums to share our perspectives and pitch stories, press releases, feature writing, social media, strategic response and media/crisis training and consultation.

- ▶ Expanded visibility and awareness effort highlights: **50 stories pitched** and **36 media assists**
- ▶ Garnered more than **83,000** collective new Facebook fans through page likes campaigns for the primary profiles: UMC, UMCCom, ResourceUMC and UM News
- ▶ Increased UMC Facebook fans by **8.8%** and Instagram fans by **10.1%**
- ▶ Garnered **5,000+** new fans on the UMCCom, ResourceUMC and UM News Facebook pages
- ▶ Supported other general agencies on ResourceUMC Facebook with **39%** of represented post content
- ▶ Assisted church entities on crisis prevention and response strategies with domestic Annual Conferences and the Philippines, including management of media surrounding the Bishop Minerva G. Carcaño trial.
- ▶ Offered public relations expertise for **35 projects**
- ▶ Wrote and distributed **38 press releases** and **14 features**
- ▶ Continued early support efforts for General Conference lead-up



UM NEWS

The UM News Team provided concise, accurate and up-to-date news about what's happening in the denomination around the world, along with engaging feature stories about United Methodists living their faith.

774+ news stories produced

3.2 million+ total page views

5 content languages - English, Spanish, Korean, Portuguese and French

In-depth reporting topic highlights include:

- ▶ Growing church in Madagascar and Kyrgyzstan
- ▶ Mission work in Angola
- ▶ 70th anniversary of the Thai edition of the Upper Room
- ▶ Launch of a Samoan congregation in Alaska
- ▶ Series of video interviews on Black women trailblazers in the church
- ▶ General Conference prep content and presentations

Major and breaking news included:

- ▶ Lighthouse churches and new church starts
- ▶ Disaffiliations and related legal battles
- ▶ Western Jurisdiction church trial

ASK THE UMC

UMCom's information service consistently provided facts, clarity and direction for all things United Methodist.

Responded to almost **13,000** queries via email and live chat.

Produced content for three FAQ series:

- ▶ "Is The UMC Really ...?" - addressing questions related to the disaffiliation process and the state of the church
- ▶ "Regionalization" - explaining the topic and what it means in The UMC
- ▶ "Our Living World" - sharing about what United Methodists believe about the environment



GLOBAL COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY

The agency's staff continued to build an innovative communications infrastructure, offer equipment assistance and provide training that equips United Methodists to impart life-saving and life-changing messages throughout the world.

Training

United Methodist Communications provided training collectively to **213 Central Conference trainees**.

Topics included: news and feature writing, photography, videography, social media, church marketing, communications strategy, mapping and UMConnect text messaging services.

2023 saw the **largest gathering of communicators from across the Philippines in years, with 144 trainees** – 49 AC communicators and 95 District Superintendents and episcopal staff in attendance. Participants met in Manila and took part in publicity tactic training and troubleshooting, writing for readability lessons and strategic social media marketing, in addition to the overall communication training offerings.

Burundi and Uganda (with trainees from Sudan, South Sudan, Kenya and Rwanda) in East Africa and Kinshasa and Lubumbashi in the Democratic Republic of the Congo each served as host cities for the training of communicators within the regions. Whereas, specialized Lusophone training was held in Maputo — the largest city of Mozambique, and focused mapping techniques were taught in Angola.

UMConnect

- ▶ Sent **184,000** UMConnect messages
- ▶ Received by **22,450** recipients
- ▶ Helped to:
 - Curb the spread of a measles outbreak in Central Congo
 - Respond to a deadly cholera crisis in East Congo
 - Create awareness of a reemergence of diphtheria in Nigeria
 - Foster peace and unity in Zimbabwe and Côte d'Ivoire during election time

Strategy and Connectivity

Provided and maintained internet connectivity to Central Conference episcopal offices in Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire, Central Congo, East Congo, Western Angola and Nigeria

Grants

- ▶ Aided episcopal areas in building their capacity to communicate through the purchase or upgrade of equipment or other needs
- ▶ Provided for a third Voix de l'Esperance Radio station location in Côte d'Ivoire
- ▶ Supported web streaming capacity in the Zimbabwe Episcopal Area
- ▶ Provided Eurasia Episcopal Area with web conferencing equipment

Church Mapping

- ▶ Neared completion of Philippines church identification
- ▶ Worked on mapping in South Africa and Côte d'Ivoire
- ▶ Added mapped churches into the comprehensive Find-A-Church online directory

RESEARCH

Research provided the grounding for the work at UMCCom, allowing the agency to understand attitudes, behaviors, needs, motivation, media habits, audience segments and more, leading to the development of the most relevant content.

UMC Youth Exploration Study

The one-of-a-kind project was designed to better understand what younger members love—and what younger prospects want – both crucial to the future of The UMC. The research was designed to deep dive into the lives of both UMC affiliated and non-affiliated youth.

Attitude Awareness & Usage Study

This study highlighted combinations of messages that are most impactful to guide the creative for Seeker advertising, provides insights into market awareness and general attitude towards and usage of The UMC brand.

Advertising Pretest Study

The results of this research guided campaign ad optimization and development.

Launched Asian Leader Panel and held online focus groups

Insights received from study participants aided in better understanding cross-racial/cross-cultural appointments and pastoring in multigenerational congregation.

U.S. CONFERENCE RELATIONS

UMCom strove to supply the best web experiences for internal staff, members and clients.

United Methodist Communications worked to support, inform and equip the Annual Conferences throughout The UMC in the United States as partners in ministry.

Efforts surrounding this relationship building and partnership included:

- ▶ Monthly communicator meetings
- ▶ Regular email updates
- ▶ Disaster communications support
- ▶ Event representation and sourcing
- ▶ Supplying general resources
- ▶ Sharing stories from within their conference

ANNUAL CONFERENCES

- ▶ 18 attended
- ▶ 1 observed
- ▶ 4 Epi Awards presented

AGENCY-WIDE EVENTS

- ▶ 17 attended
- ▶ 1 resourced
- ▶ 3 sponsored



CREATIVE STRATEGY

The Creative Strategy Team worked across the agency and the connection to assist with the creation of images and messages that compel people to take notice and take action.

- ▶ **3,895+** staff hours
- ▶ **157** design projects completed
- ▶ **1,425** assets delivered
- ▶ External client hours **increased 13%** from 2022
- ▶ **\$22,558.29** in revenue generated for UMCCom ministry
- ▶ **100% satisfaction** rating on performance surveys

VIDEO PRODUCTION

The Production Services Team produced a variety of internal and external projects in the studio, on-location, including livestream events, interviews, presentations, Bible studies, book recordings, virtual meetings, features, how-to videos, promos and more.

With its state-of-the-art studios and production team, United Methodist Communications delivered stories about the church and its people, completing projects for 13+ church entities including supporting UMCCom projects and others including the Council of Bishops, Connectional Table and other general agencies.

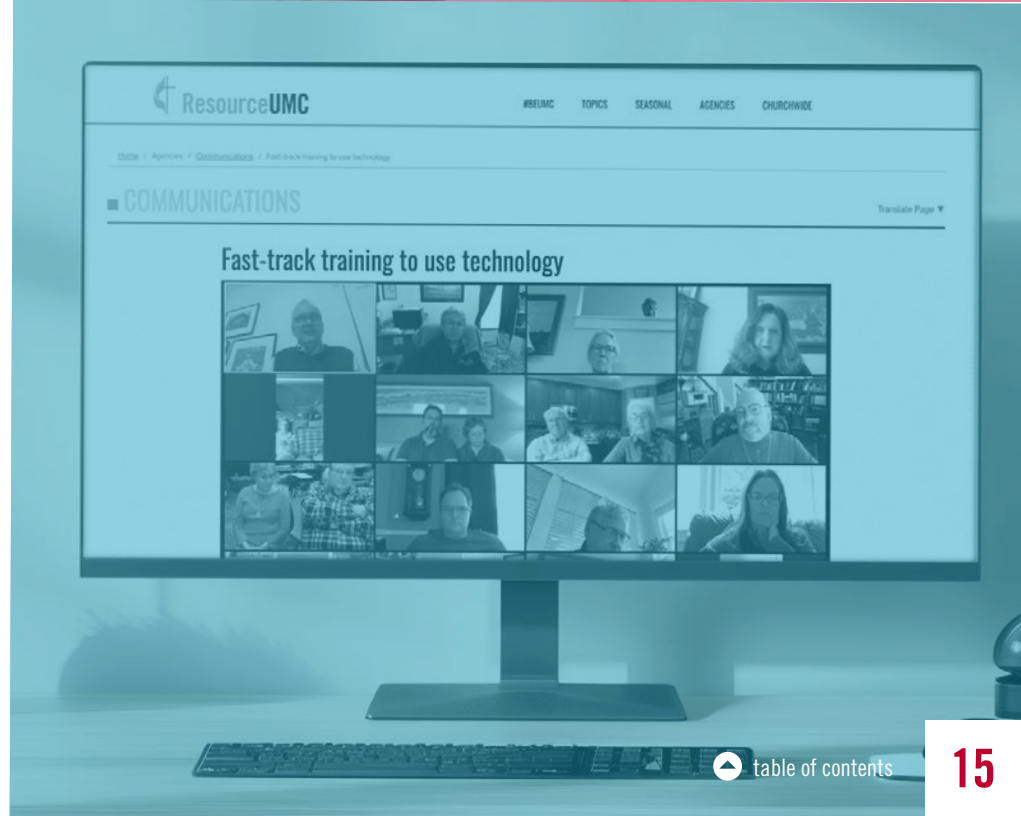
- ▶ **9,640+** staff hours & equipment time
- ▶ **120** projects completed
- ▶ **\$137,000** in revenue generated by Kingswood Productions for communication ministry by providing production services to 20+ outside organizations including Vanderbilt, Nashville Ballet, PIC, Red Giant, Storybrook Media and Harper Collins Publishing

TECHNOLOGY

UMCom strove to supply the best web experiences for internal staff, members and clients.

Activity Highlights:

- ▶ Launched an updated Find-A-Church web app that saw between **12,000-20,000 pageviews per week**
 - Added ability to filter results by ethnicity, language, accessibility services, online worship, etc.
- ▶ Partnered with **1,546 local churches** with upgraded web hosting services
- ▶ Supported **11 Central Conference websites** and relaunched LiberiaUMC.org
- ▶ **Maximized web accessibility** to accommodate the greatest number of visitors possible
- ▶ Improved SEO, site performance and security
- ▶ Migrated to upgraded content management system, ensuring a **stable web platform through 2028**
- ▶ Built framework to enable bringing more content, including other agencies websites under the ResourceUMC.org umbrella, examples include:
 - All John Wesley sermons uploaded
 - Connectional Table website migration
 - GBGM's Methodist Bicentennial Celebration site
- ▶ Provided data and reports to teams across agencies





CONNECTIONAL GIVING

The Connectional Giving Team elevated awareness of and played a prominent role in securing financial gifts for The United Methodist Church's special giving structure.

- ▶ Designated giving reached **\$47 Million**
- ▶ Reached **\$106 Million** in apportionment funds
- ▶ Combined promotional efforts achieved **4 million engagements** through **246 million impressions**

UMCOM FOUNDATION

The Foundation raised awareness of and brought in supplemental financial support for the ministry work of United Methodist Communications.

- ▶ **72% increase** in new gifts with 66 new donors
- ▶ **280% increase** in the number of reactivated donors
- ▶ **200% increase** in donor upgrade to higher giving level
- ▶ **247% increase** in total revenue from individuals, matching gifts, churches and organizations
- ▶ Secured matching gifts of \$5,000
- ▶ Best GivingTuesday and Communications Impact Week campaigns on record
- ▶ Direct mail pieces reintroduced

INFRASTRUCTURE, FACILITIES & NET-ZERO EFFORTS

UMCom worked to ensure high-efficiency facilities moving us closer to our just and equitable net-zero emissions goals.

- ▶ **Doubled our EPA ENERGY STAR rating**, going from a 14 to a 29
- ▶ Switched to a **96% efficient boiler**
- ▶ **Enabled ENERGY STAR setting** on all agency laptops, monitors and computers
- ▶ Educated tenants on the importance of mindful of their impact on power, paper, equipment, etc.
- ▶ Collaborated with the overall **Just & Equitable Net-Zero Coalition (JENZ)**
- ▶ Actively participated as a JENZ core team member
- ▶ Started work on educational videos with fellow agencies
- ▶ Raised awareness of the climate crisis and creation care via content
- ▶ Managed the initiative's main landing page
- ▶ **Reduced overall General Agency footprint** by continuing to share building space with other church agencies to
- ▶ Evaluated facilities, programming and staff resourcing to develop a baseline to holistically work towards reducing greenhouse gas emissions

HUMAN RESOURCES

The HR department managed employee experiences to maximize productivity and encourage overall wellness.

- ▶ UMCom staff continued to thrive in a predominantly remote working environment.
 - **93% of employees worked from home** and 7% on-site
 - Staff consisted of 12 out-of-state staff and 69 staff in Nashville and surrounding communities
 - Online town hall meetings, digital community meetings, weekly online chapel services and two in-person gathering opportunities aided staff in staying connected
- ▶ Our retention rate was above average
 - Milestone honorees represented a collective **115 years of service**
 - Three staff terminations, two voluntary and one involuntary
- ▶ **Staff honed important skills by participating in a number of individual and group trainings.**
 - **12 general staff trainings** undertaken and an Emeritus Digital group training
 - **\$54,411.24** paid to support continuing education
 - Supervisors participated in and completed EQ-Emotional Intelligence Training
 - **All staff** received training on Cybersecurity, Data Privacy, Diversity & Inclusion Essentials and Unconscious Bias in the Workplace
- ▶ **64 staff participated in the wellness initiative**
- ▶ **100%** of staff completed open enrollment on time