



Grand AveNews

May 2026

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Come
Holy
Spirit



Building Faith,
Bringing Hope,
Reaching Out in
love

Grand Avenue
United Methodist Church
Hot Springs, AR
501-623-5626

God's Creative Connection

On Pentecost Sunday, the church celebrates one of the most dramatic moments in the life of the early church. In the second chapter of *Acts*, the followers of Jesus are gathered together when the Holy Spirit comes with the sound of rushing wind and tongues of fire. People from many nations hear the disciples speaking in their own languages, barriers begin to fall away, and a new community is born.

Beginning on Pentecost Sunday we will explore this theme in a six-week worship series titled "God's Creative Connection."

The series begins with the Pentecost story itself. There we discover that the miracle is not only that people speak in different languages, but that people hear and understand. God speaks in whatever language people need in order to receive the good news. The Spirit creates connection where once there was confusion and division.

But Pentecost is not the first time God's Spirit has done something creative.

Genesis tells us that before creation took shape, "the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters." Then God spoke – and the world came into being. Light appeared. Life emerged. Order came out of chaos. Again and again the text repeats the words, "And God said..." Creation itself begins with God communicating life into existence.

That insight guides our journey in the weeks following Pentecost. After celebrating the birth of the church, we will spend five weeks exploring stories from Genesis that reveal how God has always worked creatively to reconnect what has been broken.

Along the way we will encounter familiar stories with fresh eyes. We will see how hospitality becomes sacred when Abraham and Sarah discover that welcoming strangers may mean welcoming God. We will wrestle with family division in the story of Hagar and Ishmael and discover how God still works to redeem situations damaged by human choices. We will consider the difficult story of Abraham and Isaac and ask what it means to trust God when we do not understand. Finally, we will watch as God brings Isaac and Rebekah together, showing how relationships themselves can become part of God's larger design.

Each of these stories reveals something about the creative ways God works in the world. Again and again, when human actions threaten to divide and destroy, God finds new ways to bring life, promise, and connection.

That truth is not limited to Scripture. The same Spirit who hovered over creation, spoke through the prophets, and filled the disciples on Pentecost continues to work among us today. The Spirit is still bringing people together, still speaking words of life, and still creating connections where we once saw only barriers.

As we move through this series together, we will be invited to notice the many ways God continues to work creatively in our lives, in our church, and in the world around us. We hope you will join us for worship as we explore God's Creative Connection and discover anew the Spirit who continues to make all things new.

Keys to the Kingdom



For all have sinned and fallen short
That none have earned God's grace.
Why even Peter fared the same
When he was in our place.

The man who first called Jesus, "Christ"
Would thrice deny it all.
And as for walking on the sea,
His doubts led to his fall.

For even good men slip at times
Especially when pressed.
What matters is they try again
To do and give their best.

Saint Peter never would have let
A stumble mean defeat.
And now he holds the Kingdom's keys -
Perhaps one day we'll meet.

Although at times he failed in life
Much like we'll likely do,
The Lord said he was like a rock!
What would he say of you?

Steve Jennings

**Outreach is collecting canned
vegetables during the
month of May.**



Arkansas Annual Conference

June 15 - 17, 2026

Hot Springs, AR



Miracle Sunday Offering

On Sunday, May 17, we reach the final week of our global journey of Love Boldly, Serve Joyfully, and Lead Courageously. On that morning we will *celebrate boldly*, giving thanks for the movement of the Holy Spirit across Africa, Europe, the Philippines, and right here in our own congregation. God is raising up leaders whose ministries are transforming lives in extraordinary ways. May 17 is designated as **Miracle Sunday**, a day when United Methodists around the world join in sacrificial giving to permanently endow theological education for pastors outside the United States. Through this offering, we help prepare 500 students each year for ministry, strengthening the church for generations to come.

Thank you for being part of this global movement of faith. May God continue to shape us into people who love boldly, serve joyfully, and lead courageously.





Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors.
The people of The United Methodist Church*

UMC GLOBAL SURVEY 2026

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

PREPARED FOR:



SURVEY OVERVIEW & KEY FINDINGS

12,292 United Methodists across 9 world regions shared their priorities, concerns, and hopes for the denomination's future — **distributed to clergy, employees, and church members in 5 languages.**

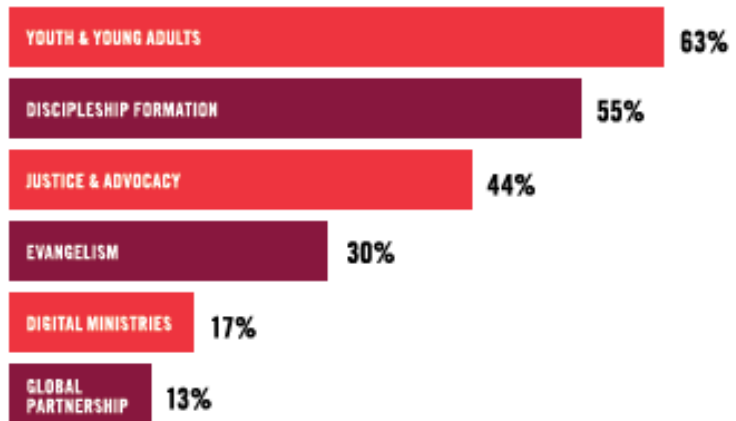
TOP FINDINGS

- **Youth & Young Adult Engagement is the #1 priority across every age group, role, and region** — selected by 63% of all respondents.
- **Discipleship Formation is the top-ranked denominational priority** (avg 2.32 of 6) and the #2 ten-year focus at 55%.
- **Justice & Advocacy is a shared value** across all ages at 44–47% — not a generational divide.
- **International respondents prioritize Evangelism** at 55% vs. 34% in the US, reflecting distinct Wesleyan expressions.
- **The most common word in open-ended responses: "Love"** — transcending every demographic segment.

! Over 71% of respondents are age 55+. Only 6.5% are under 35. All findings should be read with this demographic weighting in mind.



10-YEAR CONGREGATIONAL FOCUS AREAS (%)



DENOMINATIONAL PRIORITY RANKINGS

Respondents ranked 6 priorities (1 = most important). Discipleship leads decisively. The near-tie between Social Justice and Evangelism reflects the denomination's dual identity.

(lower = more important)

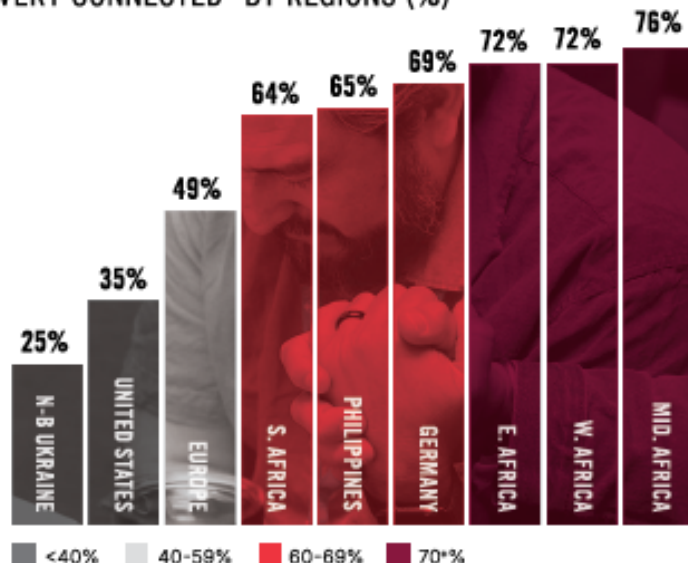


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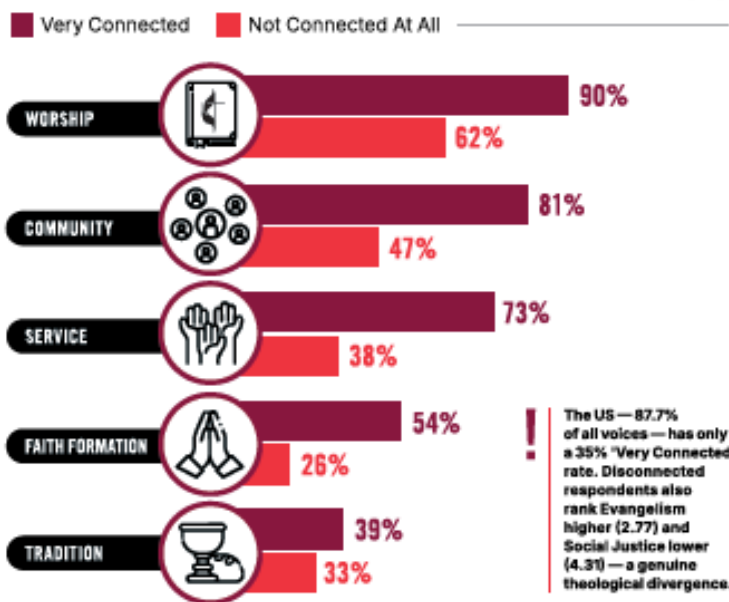
CONNECTEDNESS: THE MOST ACTIONABLE FINDING

How connected respondents feel to the wider UMC shapes their priorities, participation levels, and vision statement awareness — the most strategically important variable in the survey.

"VERY CONNECTED" BY REGIONS (%)



PARTICIPATION: VERY CONNECTED VS. NOT CONNECTED (%)



"Form disciples, invest in youth, love boldly, act justly, and give us a clear plan to do it together."

—THE VOICE OF 12,292 UNITED METHODISTS FROM AROUND THE WORLD

! Methodology: Full analysis of all 12,292 responses. Open-ended themes from stratified sample of ~320. Percentages on responding population per question. Responses in German, French, Portuguese, and Filipino included.

WHAT RESPONDENTS SAID IN THEIR OWN WORDS

Seven themes emerged consistently across open-ended responses:

- LOVE & UNITY**
 "Love" is the most common word. Respondents want the UMC remembered for unconditional love and unity.
- YOUTH & SURVIVAL**
 Urgency about aging demographics. Respondents link the church's survival to engaging young families.
- SOCIAL HOLINESS**
 Many envision a UMC that lives faith through action in the Wesleyan tradition of works of mercy.
- THEOLOGICAL TENSION**
 Progressive vs. traditional tension — most pronounced among disconnected and older US members.
- STRUCTURE & COMMS**
 Frustration with distance from leadership. Requests: less bureaucracy, better communication.
- FORWARD MOMENTUM**
 Tangible outcomes needed — roadmaps and plans, not just conversation. "Don't miss this moment."
- GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP**
 International respondents call for genuine shared decision-making and amplified non-US voices.

FIVE IMPERATIVES FOR 2026

- 1 YOUTH & DISCIPLESHIP**
 Concrete, executable plans. Both appear in every cross-section — they are complementary.
- 2 US CONNECTEDNESS GAP**
 Only 35% "Very Connected." Bridge via better communication and reduced friction.
- 3 THEOLOGICAL SPECTRUM**
 Social Justice (3.40) and Evangelism (3.41) tied — frame as complementary Wesleyan expressions.
- 4 TANGIBLE OUTCOMES**
 Fatigued by reports, not action. Need measurable, locally-usable results.
- 5 ELEVATE GLOBAL VOICES**
 International perspectives must be full partners — not addenda to a US-centric agenda.

Open Hearts. Open Minds. Open Doors.
The people of The United Methodist Church

New Pollinator Friendly Planting

Look for something new! Last June, our church hosted a breakfast for the UMC Board for Church and Society. The speaker from Pinnacle Mountain State Park, spoke about plants that support pollinators and how small changes make big impact. Karla Hefty liked the idea and wondered if we had an area for this project. After Trustee approval last summer, a group of people started planning. The unused weedy area in the corner of the parking lot was built up with compost and organic soil. Recently, around 20 pollinator friendly flowers were planted and mulched. All materials and labor have been donated. More to come! Watch our progress as plants and identifying markers are added. With some sun and water, we should have an area friendly to bees, butterflies, and hummingbirds. Watch it grow!



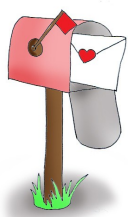
Sheila McLarty

Outreach Update

As the Outreach Board Chair for 2026, I have set a few goals for organizing and improving the store. These changes are underway and will help volunteers in identifying in-season and out-of-season clothing storage, plus holiday décor. Also plans are underway to organize many of the non-clothing departments.

We have had a number of people who recently volunteered to help on an occasional basis. We still need a few more people who will commit to working one day each week. One of our goals is to have the store open all day on Tuesday instead of just half a day. Most of our volunteers are Grand Avenue members, but we also have several volunteers from other churches.

Carol Dickinson



GAUMC Mailbox

Dear Body of Grand Avenue UMC,

I wish to express my gratitude and thanksgiving for the wondrous gift of love reflected in sponsorship of the Walk to Emmaus #201. God blessed me so when He brought me to my new home in this church body!

Christ's love and His presence both enfold and challenge me as I seek His will in my life. I am committed to this process.

I am comforted on this journey by His presence and love you have reflected individually and in this church family.

In Christ's Love,

Sandy Lunestad

Grand Avenue United Methodist Church,

Thank you for your kindness and support. Your donations play an important role in helping us care for the women and children we serve each day. Supporters like you help us provide a safe, loving, and faith-filled environment where lives are being restored.

Sincerely,

Patience Brakebill

Potter's Clay Ministries



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We're Here to Serve You

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



Join Us On
Pentecost Sunday

May 24, 2026
for worship at 8:30 and 10:45
as we celebrate

The Holy Spirit

**A time of fellowship with coffee &
light refreshment will be held in
Fellowship Hall from 9:15 to 9:45**
Everyone is encouraged to wear red.