

June 6, 2017

Dear Servant of the Gospel,

Each of our churches is unique and gifted. The formation of Crossroads Mission Zones has provided opportunities for us to work collaboratively, bringing our unique gifts to strengthen each other and bless our neighbors in the mission fields close to home.

Church Conference 2017 **“Essentially Missional”** will be a good opportunity to name the blessings each congregation brings to the gathering of churches within their Mission Zones. II Corinthians 8:1-7 – the Early Church of Paul’s ministry was already connected. Christians loved each other across the miles. They knew that their partnership and their support of each other made a difference in the ministry of Christ’s Gospel. They knew that their love for each other stood out to be a redemptive force in a world that needed God. Please work together in your Mission Zone Leadership Team and with church leaders prior to the conference and apply your prayerful creativity to prepare a celebration of your zone, emphasizing the blessing your congregation brings.

An agenda for your Church Conference is enclosed with this letter. It will be simple. We will meet as a zone (not individual churches on separate days). There will be a time for praise and worship celebrating the zone and its churches’ blessings. We will sing and pray, receive a brief reflection and the usual information that needs to be shared from the greater Connection.

We will then separate by churches/charges into breakout rooms for separate business meetings to be held simultaneously. I (your DS) will preside over one of them, Elders from outside your Mission Zone will preside over the others. These business meetings will include a “state of the church” report delivered by the pastor/clergy and necessary action items for decisions. You are asked to have all other reports printed and published as a booklet and distributed to the congregation. There will be no other reports presented in verbal form.

If you have a significant decision to be made (such as a decision point in a building process or to pass bylaws for an endowment fund), please let me know well in advance of the conference so I may be informed of the details. Also, please hold an informational meeting with the congregation in advance to introduce the topic, answer questions, and discuss it without the pressure of having to make an immediate decision. That will prepare the church to be prepared to vote on any special items at church conference.

Please submit copies of all completed “early forms” that are due before the meeting to the district office via an email attachment. Submit all “signed unbound original forms” to me at the meeting in an envelope. Forms are found on-line on the Crossroads District website at <http://crossroads.michiganumc.org/>.

Pastor/Staff-Parish Relations Committees are scheduled to meet on a date prior to the Church Conference. Please assure committee members that this will be a significant time with their district superintendent. We will discuss their assessment of the church’s congregational health and their relationship with you. Pastors’ presence is requested through the whole course of the meeting. It will be held to a 45-minute length. If there is reason for further discussion, we will schedule another time for me to meet with them.

I look forward to our time together in this vital observance that has been a part of our Wesleyan life since the days of the Quarterly Conferences and Camp Meetings on the Sawdust Trail. It was a high point of spiritual and social life 200 years ago. I expect it will be as significant for our church life today.

Carpe Diem (Seize the day)!

John H. Hice

Crossroads District Superintendent