

Responding to Shifting World Realities: A New Ministry Model for the North Carolina Conference Connectional Ministries

Context and Mission

Confronting dynamic social realities while balancing theological essentials is the challenging context in which the 21st century Church must thrive. The North Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church is committed to meeting this challenge by serving to equip, encourage and connect local churches in their ministry of making disciples of Jesus Christ. This ministry of service is framed by the Conference's mission statement: "Healthy congregations and effective leaders in every place making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world."

The North Carolina Conference office of Connectional Ministries is charged with aligning resources to the current conditions of a community and to the mission of the North Carolina Conference. Shifting world social and financial realities have converged with a shifting reality for the North Carolina Conference. After years of decline in the denomination there are recent signs of decline in the North Carolina Conference. These internal and external forces compel the office of Connectional Ministries to formulate new strategies and approaches.

To fully live into the Conference's mission, to support the new polity structure approved by the 2008 North Carolina Annual Conference, and to align ministries with the changing social and financial realities, the office of Connectional Ministries is moving forward into a new ministry model. This model is rooted in Wesleyan Methodism with a nimbleness that will allow for flexible approaches and collaborative partnerships that will move the Conference mission forward.

New Ministry Model

The mission of the North Carolina Conference is "Healthy congregations and effective leaders in every place making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world." The new model of connectional ministries will support this mission by:

1. Equipping local church leaders for their mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ
2. Envisioning ministries necessary to live out the mission of the church, helping the local church to discern its unique, God-given vision, and to develop the ministries and resources needed to fulfill their vision
3. Striving to build healthy congregations and effective leaders, especially lay leaders, using tools for assessment, identifying areas of strength and weakness to:
 - a. Move the church from institutional maintenance to incarnate mission in the community
 - b. Call, train, and support lay and clergy leaders for the church
 - c. Engage in shared ministries with district, conference and general church that fulfill the vision of the Kingdom of God.

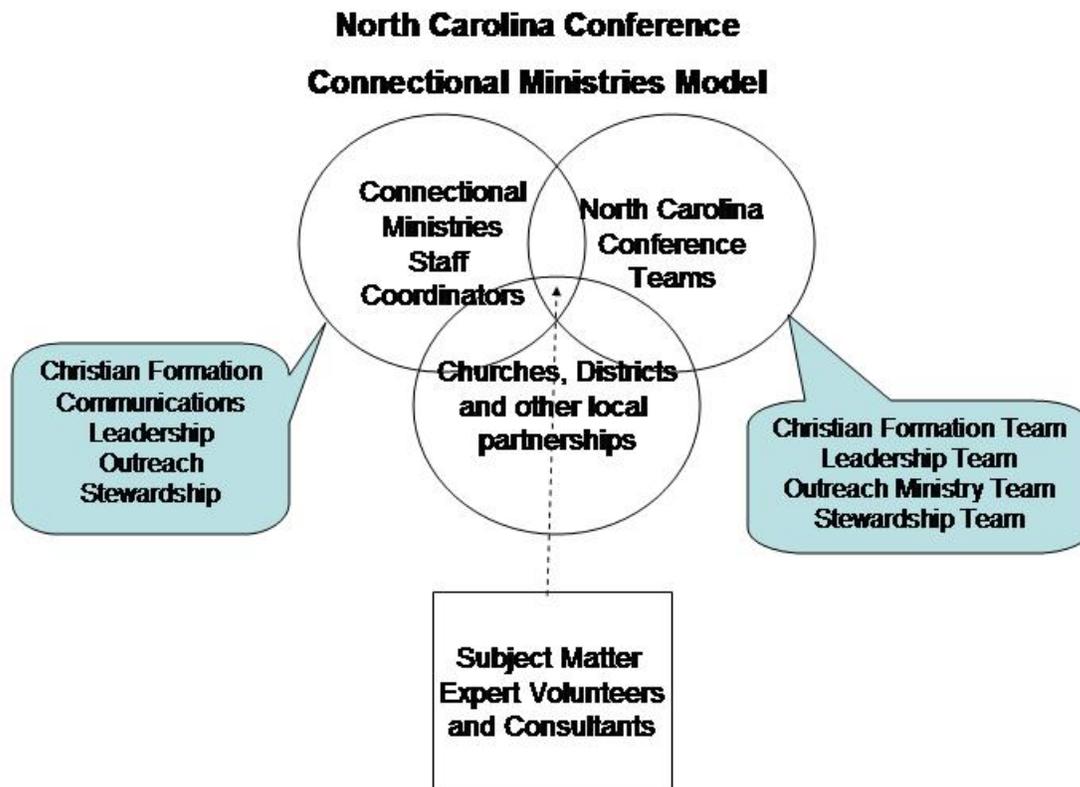
Critical to the success of this model is the formation of partnerships with local churches, district clusters and other entities working toward local visions that make disciples and transform the world.

The Four Areas of Focus lifted up and approved by General Conference 2008—combating the diseases of poverty by improving health globally, engaging in ministry with the poor, creating new places for new people and revitalizing existing congregations, and developing principled Christian leaders for the church and the world— will further direct the work and ministries of the Connectional Ministries teams. The structure of the North Carolina Conference Connectional

Table is integrated into the ministry model as well. Intended to transcend both of these structures, the model will develop leaders and programs from biblical and spiritual models of faithful Christian discipleship.

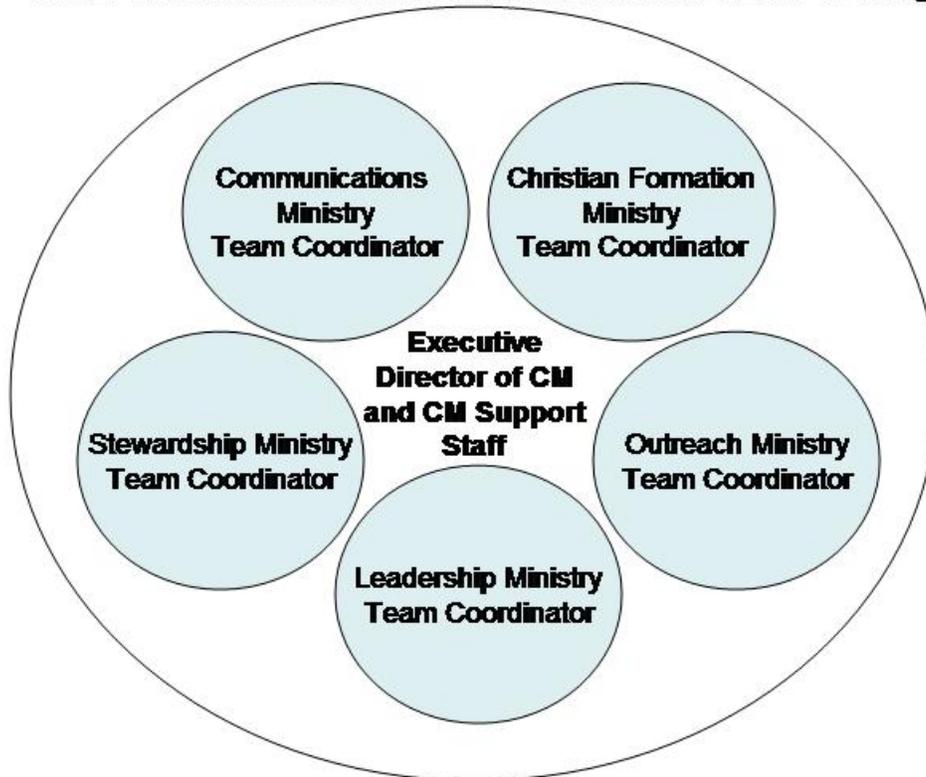
Five Connectional Ministries Teams will form the framework of the ministry model. These five areas support and mirror the needs identified in the four areas of focus and the new polity structure voted by the 2008 Annual Conference. The Executive Director of Connectional Ministries will provide overall leadership as well as act as Team Coordinator for the Leadership Ministry Team. These Teams are:

1. **Leadership Ministry Team:** developing principled Christian leaders for the church and the world; encouraging best practices of staff development; identifying and equipping ethnic leaders; creating environments that foster change; practicing hospitality
2. **Christian Formation Ministry Team:** transforming existing congregations through Christian formation, ministries of nurture and evangelism, faith sharing, and small teams for spiritual growth and accountability; includes age level ministries
3. **Outreach Ministry Team:** engaging members in ecumenical work, Christian unity, mission and social justice and multicultural ministries
4. **Stewardship Ministry Team:** applying time, talent and treasure according to the biblical standard of a tithe; financial management; trustees and the ministry of preserving the church's story; and engaging in ministry with the poor
5. **Communications Ministry Team:** telling stories of mission and ministry connecting the outcomes of local churches with the mission of the Conference; using multiple channels of communication including publications, web ministries, media resources, social networking and other strategies that speak through today's culture



The work of these ministry teams will be guided by a core group of Conference leadership with a staff coordinator for each ministry team providing planning process and evaluation expertise. Rather than a subject matter expert, the partnership approach for each of these ministry areas requires the staff coordinator be an expert facilitator, coach and mentor balanced with some knowledge of the ministry area. Other Conference staff and subject matter expert volunteers and consultants will support specific team initiatives. The teams will work collaboratively with local churches and other church agencies to develop ministry partnerships that will support the achievement of outcomes related to locally defined needs and expectations. When appropriate, Conference-wide initiatives will be supported through collaborative relationships with local congregations and church agencies.

North Carolina Conference Connectional Ministries Staffing



Collaborative Connections and Support

The Connectional Ministries staff will provide training and encouragement through Conference programs and district leadership training opportunities. In addition, resourcing for new ministries will continue to come from seed grants and CPI grants. Connecting the interests of the local church with resources of the General Church will continue to be one of the objectives of the Connectional Ministries office. Training and resources specific to a church's context and potential will be provided by the Connectional Ministries office, as well, through a consultation model.

This ministry model is designed to be locally focused with high potential for transformative outcomes within local churches and communities. It is service driven and flexible in approach. Primary to the new ministry model is a determination to serve the North Carolina Conference and the Body of Christ by moving forward the work of the Conference: *To reach more people, more diverse people and more young people with the Gospel, and to transform existing congregations into healthy, vital centers of witness and work for those who do not know God.*