

United Methodist Foundation for the Tennessee-Western Kentucky Conference
The Reverend Dr. Philip Jamieson, President

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who are being protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you rejoice, even if now for a little while you have had to suffer various trials, so that the genuineness of your faith—being more precious than gold that, though perishable, is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed” (I Peter 1:3-7).

On the first Sunday after Easter we hear startling words from the old *triple-denier*, the “rock” who definitely “rolled” as soon as he had to stand up for Jesus. It is our old friend, Peter, years after that first Easter, seeking to bring comfort to fellow believers who are now being tempted to deny our Lord in the midst of persecution. Their present amounts to suffering and their immediate future is quite unsure. They cannot possibly know how any of their immediate circumstances will play out. However, they do know this: they have been born into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ! A hope not granted by pleasant circumstances cannot be taken away by bad ones. Peter is reminding them (and us) that we do not know the details, but we know the end of the story. The tomb is empty, Jesus is raised from the dead and we have hope because of that; a hope that cannot be shaken by present hardship. I am thankful that our work at the Foundation and Development Fund causes us to be future oriented, to be hopeful.

2022 was a year of present difficulties. Inflation and the necessary tightening of credit helped cause a significant drop in both the equity and bond markets. As a matter of fact, most analysts agree that 2022 was the worst year for bond trading in American history. So, now we have done that!

Yet, in spite of that, because of our hopeful, future orientation, in 2022, the Development Fund gave over \$166,000 in capital improvement grants. Projects of various sizes were funded, strengthening local churches in their ability to perform their crucial work. Simultaneously, the Development Fund paid out over \$734,000 in interest to individuals, churches and other ministries.

In 2022, the Foundation distributed over \$2.5 million to various churches and other ministries. In addition, the Foundation gave approximately \$40,000 in stewardship grants and other ministry support. In spite of those present difficulties, we were still able to encourage one another to offer signs of hope in many ways.

Now, in 2023 we are excited about a number of new ventures. First, we are partnering with Horizons Stewardship to offer a *generosity hotline* for all the churches in the Annual Conference. By going through our website <https://umfmmc.org/> you will be able to book a 50-minute appointment with an expert to help you with questions regarding stewardship campaigns, capital improvements and other ministry financial matters. Horizons Stewardship has helped raise billions of dollars for local churches and other ministries. That is why we are providing this service which will be free of charge for you. Also, later this year, we will begin an association with Partners for Sacred Spaces. Partners is a leading expert of helping church access and better utilize their space for stronger mission and ministry. More on this will be released later.

In conclusion, there is a common refrain regarding investing: “Past performance is not indicative of future results.” I’ve said it, myself. One cannot make investing decisions based solely upon the past, they do not guarantee the future. That is a bedrock principle for the investing world. But it is the opposite of the truth of our faith. We can be confident that although different, our future in Christ is always better because we have beheld the future through his empty tomb. I am certain that our Lord is doing and will continue to do remarkable work in the Tennessee-Western Kentucky Annual Conference. We at the Foundation and Development Fund are thankful for the role that we have been invited to play in that wonderful endeavor. Let us continue to encourage one another to stay alert to our hope and to always remember that in the words of John Wesley, “the best of all is that God is with us!”