

CCP Program Renamed

As of May 2026, the 'Central Conference Pensions' (CCP) program has been renamed 'Connectional Pension Support' (CPS) to reflect the significant regionalization structural change within The United Methodist Church (UMC).

This name change follows the worldwide ratification of constitutional amendments approved in May 2024 by the UMC General Conference and certified by the Council of Bishops in November 2025. Under the newly ratified structure, the Church's central conferences and the United States are now collectively referred to as 'regional conferences,' each with equal standing and certain legislative authorities within the denomination.

The new name also reaffirms the program's connectional, worldwide mission to help provide a steady source of retirement income for about 3,700 clergy and surviving spouses and surviving children in the regional conferences across Africa, the Philippines and Europe.

Wespath continues to provide support and consultation while working alongside regional conference leaders to strengthen pension sustainability. While financial support for these pension plans is stable and secure, funding and administration varies by plan. The program will continue to focus on enhancing plan sustainability.

Wespath has also undergone brand refinement with an updated logo and consolidated website, **wespath.org**, bringing its benefits and investment offerings together under one name: Wespath. The name remains deeply rooted in Wespath's calling to care for those who serve, honoring its United Methodist heritage while supporting its service to a diverse and growing community.



CONSIDER DONATING TO CPS

Donation information is available on wespath.org/cps. Thank you!

Council of Bishops Meeting Sparks Conversations

As bishops from around the world gathered in Jacksonville for the Council of Bishops meeting in late April, Wespath's Ross Lundstrom (manager, Church Relations) and Dale Jones (managing director, Church Relations) met with several bishops to discuss pension plans in their episcopal areas. During these insightful conversations, the Wespath team heard about:

- Hardships arising from ongoing war and violence in parts of the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo;
- Numerous challenges as well as opportunities in launching the new Tanganyika Episcopal Area;
- Updates on the implementation of pension plan changes made by the Liberia and Sierra Leone Annual Conferences in recent years;
- Potential development of a pension program for pastors in Ukraine (see "Work Begins on Creating Pension Plan in Ukraine" article);
- The status of the Rwandan government's closure of churches; and
- The exploration of Angola pastors joining the national pension program (comparable to social security) for retirement benefits.

Wespath is grateful for bishops' support in encouraging pension plan participation and funding, which helps improve plan sustainability.

CPS Financials as of 4/30/2026

\$28,448,203

Total donations received
(inception to date)

\$33,579

Donations received
(year to date)

\$899,351

Emergency grants
(2006 - 2012)

\$18,772,237

Pension funds distributed
(2007 to date)

\$703,004

Pension distributions
(Year to date)

Work Begins on Creating Pension Plan in Ukraine

After Russia invaded Ukraine, the Ukraine-Moldova Annual Conference had to move from the former Eurasia Episcopal Area to the Northern Europe and Baltic Area. This action left Ukrainian pastors without a pension program. In April, Wespeth conducted Zoom meetings with representatives of the Ukraine-Moldova Provisional Conference and the Nordic-Baltic-Ukraine Regional Conference to begin work on establishing a pension plan for clergy in Ukraine. The CPS team met with Rev. Oleg Starodubets, district superintendent, and Anastasia Mykhtotnyuk, administrative assistant, from the Ukraine-Moldova Provisional Annual Conference, and Bishop Knut Refsdal from the Nordic-Baltic-Ukraine Regional Conference. The CPS team has offered to provide plan design ideas and considerations as well as financial analysis of proposed plan designs and looks forward to assisting with the creation of a pension program.



Rev. Oleg Starodubets, district superintendent for the Ukraine-Moldova Provisional Annual Conference, during a virtual meeting with the CPS team.

“We Can Be the Heart of God Fleshed Out”: Rev. Ben Williams on Supporting CPS



At 73, Rev. Ben Williams discovered that retirement doesn't end a calling—it simply takes new shape. After 37 years as a United Methodist pastor and eight years in retirement, he speaks with gratitude about a life marked by ministry, music and a growing commitment to serve beyond his own community.

Rev. Ben's outlook on connection and faith broadened early on through mission work. During seminary, he joined his first mission trip to India—an experience that “opened [his] mind and heart” to the realities of poverty and the needs of communities outside the U.S. In the years that followed, he helped organize and participated in short-term missions across the U.S. and abroad, including hurricane recovery work in Florida after Hurricane Andrew.

Today, retirement has given him time to keep serving in new ways. In Shawnee, Oklahoma, Rev. Ben spends most Sunday mornings playing music and preaching at a local rescue mission for people experiencing homelessness. He's also helped lead a long-running ecumenical Bible study at a Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA).

It's from that posture of gratitude—both for God's care and the financial stability he's been blessed with—that Rev. Ben feels a personal responsibility to support the CPS program. “I was born where I was born,” he said, reflecting on the prosperity that allowed churches in the U.S. to contribute to his pension throughout his ministry. In retirement, he's able to live comfortably, something he does not take for granted. “People in other parts of the world who've served retire with a very small pension or no pension at all.”

That awareness led him to give a portion of his pension income to support pension recipients served by the program. More recently, he and his wife also began to consider donating from the growth of their investments.

When asked what he would say to the clergy and surviving spouses receiving CPS support, Rev. Ben answered: “I hope they see they're not ignored or forgotten. That people in another part of the world recognize and appreciate their sacrifice and service.” He described donating as a way of making God's care tangible, saying, “We could be like the heart of God fleshed out by supporting them.”

As he looks ahead, Rev. Ben finds hope in what he calls “the reality of the kingdom of God”—present not only in eternity but in everyday life through a relationship with Christ.

CPS Team Strengthens Partnership in Liberia and Sierra Leone

In early spring 2026, Wespeth's Ross Lundstrom, Frederick Hyland (managing director, Retirement Plans and Actuarial Services) and Thomas Kemper (CPS program consultant) traveled to Sierra Leone and Liberia to meet with bishops, conference leaders, Board of Pensions members and retirees. The visits provided valuable opportunities to engage in conversations about pension administration and clergy well-being.

In Sierra Leone, the CPS team met with episcopal leadership, newly appointed conference financial leaders and the Board of Pensions to discuss the current pension structure and governance responsibilities. Conversations focused on ensuring clarity around roles, building shared understanding among board members and reinforcing the importance of transparent communication with plan participants.

In Liberia, the CPS team connected with conference staff and the Board of Pensions to review pension administration practices and discuss participant engagement. Meetings highlighted continued efforts to enhance communication with clergy and laity about the pension program, including the use of mobile technology to distribute benefits and stay connected with retirees and survivors.

During both visits, the team also spent time with retirees and surviving spouses, who shared their personal stories and reflections on the role pension benefits play in their daily lives, some of whose you can read below.



(L-R): Wespeth's Ross Lundstrom, Frederick Hyland, Bishop Caulker and Thomas Kemper (CPS consultant) in the bishop's office in Freetown, Sierra Leone.



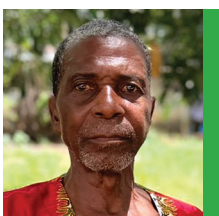
Rev. Lango Flomo

The CPS team visited Rev. Lango Flomo, one of the first ordained women pastors in the UMC in Liberia, in the city of Kakata. Born in 1932, she served many years as a lay pastor before being ordained in 1996. She founded a local church and helped build the John Saki Memorial Church. Although she officially retired in 2002, Rev. Flomo continued working until 2010, reluctant to step away from ministry. Her husband passed away in the 1980s, and of her 14 children, five survived. To supplement her CPS pension, Rev. Flomo sublets part of her home.



Rev. Peter M. Dogbah

Born in 1922, Rev. Peter M. Dogbah is the oldest CPS pensioner the team has met. He and his wife, Kpowan, have lived in the same home for the past decade. "And God willing, I will die here," he shared. Rev. Dogbah began his ministry as an evangelist and lay pastor in the Gbarnga district before being ordained in the early 1980s. He loved traveling from house to house to preach the gospel. Only ten of their children survived, and they now have numerous grandchildren. Last year, Rev. Dogbah began receiving his pension through his mobile phone. In retirement, he spends his days tending his orange and avocado trees, grateful for a life of service and provision.














Pastor Sumo Kpoquwoe









Retired Pastor Sumo Kpoquwoe served five different United Methodist churches in Liberia's Weala district before retiring in 2007. Two years ago, he was involved in a motorbike accident that left him struggling to walk, but during the CPS team's visit, he proudly shared the progress he has made since then. Praying for people was the part of ministry he loved most. Today, he lives with his wife, their child, and five grandchildren. During their visit, the CPS team was presented with a rooster—a heartfelt expression of gratitude for their support.

Regional Conference Facts

The regional conferences are located outside the United States and include annual conferences in Africa, the Philippines and Europe.

Statistics:

Country	Active clergy	Retirees receiving payments	Surviving spouses/beneficiaries receiving payments
Burundi and Rwanda 	423	112	59
Central Congo 	743	256	118
Central and Southern Europe 	68	21	7
East Angola 	148	18	21
East Congo 	398	99	103
Kenya-Ethiopia/Uganda-S. Sudan 	392	149	108
Latvia 	6	5	0
Liberia 	538	200	567
Lithuania 	1	0	0
Mozambique 	271	38	42
Nigeria 	350	70	95

Country	Active clergy	Retirees receiving payments	Surviving spouses/beneficiaries receiving payments
North Katanga 	534	238	167
Philippines 	1,446	237	235
Sierra Leone 	108	19	25
South Africa 	6	1	2
South Congo 	803	171	241
Tanganyika 	116	53	66
West Angola 	388	108	85
Zimbabwe 	265	43	55

Total CPS Statistics

- Active pastors covered—**6,666**
- Retirees and Surviving spouses receiving support—**3,716** pension
- Total of all pension support funds released to date—**\$19,671,588***

**Total of emergency grants and pension funds distributed*

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Website: wespath.org/cps

Connectional Pension Support c/o Wespath

75 Remittance Drive, Suite 6714
Chicago, IL 60675

Note: Make checks payable to Wespath. Write "CPS" in the "Memo" field.