

# Five Tips for Talking About Apportionments

## 1. The Apportionment Process is Democratic, Not Autocratic

I'm convinced that many people in the UMC believe apportionments are determined in an autocratic way: at the whim of someone like a Bishop, District Superintendent, Conference Treasurer, or President of Conference CF&A. They don't realize that the apportionment process is quite democratic! Therefore, my first tip is to make sure listeners understand how apportionments are determined. For a step-by-step breakdown of the apportionment process, check out the following link:

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/articles/where-do-apportionments-come-from>

## 2. Shift Conversation from Apportionments to Mission/Ministry Shares

Now that you've explained the "how" of apportionments, leave that word behind. It is limited in focus to how the numbers (dollars) are determined. You will do best to move the conversation on to how the money is used, where I think terms like Mission Shares or Ministry Shares help to keep the focus where this connectional giving is used.

## 3. Connectional Is Best

Ultimately, a "win" in this conversation is not going to be someone who was resentful of their apportionments and is suddenly happy about paying. A win for me is simply someone who comes to see the value of being a connectional church. "Together we can . . ." is one of my favorite phrases for talking about all the ways United Methodists—working and sacrificially giving together—are able to dream big dreams, like covering the continent of Africa with bed nets to impact the number of children dying from Malaria. Churches working on their own, each its own little island, could never dream that big!

## 4. Move Perspective from "They" to "We"

This is one of the biggest challenges when engaged in these kinds of discussions. I experienced this in a dramatic way when I was part of a group consulting with an annual conference. The Bishop had assembled conference leaders: Superintendents, conference staff, leaders of groups like the UMW and UM Men, finance and pension officers, chairs of program committees. The head of our consulting team had the floor when one of leaders in the room made a statement, to the effect of, "the conference, they always seem to be asking us for more and more . . ." I stood up and called attention to the comment: "the conference, *they*? Who is this other, this 'they' if not the people in this room?" This is exactly the challenge of moving the perspective from "they" to "we." How do we help our people to see the ministry done by the annual conference or general church, not as "their ministry" but as "our ministry?" No ministry happens at the conference level or general church without the participation and support of local churches. If you can move someone to claim as "ours" the ministry funded through connectional giving (whether it is ministry done by a district, annual conference or through the global UMC presence) you have had a very successful engagement!

## 5. Tell Stories of Impact and Scale

A child whose life has been influenced and shaped through the ministry of your church. An individual who suffered the loss of a spouse and could have retreated into their grief, but the church surrounded them in love and wouldn't let them withdraw. Tell stories of impact. Stories are the currency of generosity. People are hungry to make an impact.

Through our United Methodist connectional giving, persons are connected to purpose and impact, and the better you are able to articulate the stories of impact, the easier it will be to open hearts to the joy of generosity. Accumulate stories of impact by regularly visiting websites like [www.UMCgiving.org](http://www.UMCgiving.org) and [www.umc.org](http://www.umc.org). As you have opportunity, tell stories of scale: how working and giving together United Methodists gave birth to Africa University, shaping graduates who are shaping Africa. United Methodists coming together to fight Malaria in Africa and raised over \$70 million and cut the number of childhood malaria deaths by 75 percent. Scale gives us the means to have impact beyond our wildest imagination. The more we share these stories, each of us will increase our impact!