

**The Reverend Leah Burns,
Associate Director of Multicultural Ministries for the Holston
Conference of the United Methodist Church.**

Our communities are becoming increasingly diverse. More and more of our neighbors are from a variety of cultures, ethnicities and cultural backgrounds. But most churches are still culturally homogenous and are not reflective of every tribe and tongue. As agents of God's reconciliation and hope, how can we minister more effectively to our multicultural society that includes various racial, ethnic and cultural backgrounds? The work of the Multicultural Ministries area begins with questions such as this.

As the associate director of Multicultural Ministries in the Holston Conference, since July 2023, The Reverend Leah Burns seeks to lead and guide Holston Conference churches and communities that seek to build diverse and inclusive faith communities reflective of our diverse communities. This is a ministry area created specifically to help our Annual Conference congregations to honor the diverse cultural richness and traditions around us.

Rev. Burns actively works to cultivate cultural competence and racial literacy in churches and in the community, bringing people together from disparate backgrounds to foster new relationships. She does this by leading workshops, seminars, book studies, discussions, and Bible studies in communities throughout the Holston Annual Conference which encompasses East Tennessee and Southwest Virginia. For 20 years, Rev. Burns has served in pastoral appointments at Lennon-Seney, Second, Church Street, and Haven Chapel United Methodist Churches.

Rev. Burns was raised in Shaker Heights, Ohio, and comes from two generations of AME clergy in her family. Pastoral ministry is a "second career" for Rev. Burns. Previously she held various executive-level positions in both the corporate and nonprofit sectors prior to following the call to pastoral ministry in The United Methodist Church. These career opportunities have taken her to live in six states and abroad to several countries prior to eventually moving to Oak Ridge, where she currently resides.

The world feels so frantic and messy and broken right now, but we can still have hope because God will use our efforts to do amazing and beautiful things. Our moment really *IS* now!!

Bio
Rev. Leah Burns
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