United Methodist Church
OF GENEVA

DIRECTOR OF NEXTGEN MINISTRIES ANNOUNCEMENT

Our Staff-Parish Relations Committee and NextGen Search Team are delighted to announce that our 3:15 prayers have been answered as we welcome Dr. Greg Coates as our Director of NextGen Ministries, a new position at UMCG!

The Director of NextGen Ministries reaches out to children from birth to 12th grade and their families in our community with an experience of the intergenerational community of God; nurtures an understanding of faith traditions, shepherds children into living a life of love in service to others and equips families to practice the Christian faith.

Dr. Coates – Greg, as we will come to know him– comes to us from the Free Methodist denomination. He is highly trained in theology, demonstrates fruitfulness in connecting the church and community in partnership with younger generations in both rural and urban contexts, and is committed to inclusive expressions of Wesleyan theology and practice. Greg is affable, compassionate, justice-minded, and is as passionate about evangelism and outreach as he is about teaching in the classroom and doting on his two daughters.

Ali Wetmore, NextGen Search Team member, is excited for this next chapter in the life of our congregation and says, “Greg has a great energy and is a wonderful listener. I think he will be an easy addition to our church family and I'm very much looking forward to Greg joining us and seeing where he can help us take our youth and children's ministries.” Ken McNeil, SPRC Chair and NextGen Search Team member says of Greg, “I feel very good about Greg and look forward to seeing his experience and knowledge help us take the next step as a church to educate/guide our youth and to reach out to young families and others to grow our congregation.” We invite you to read more about Greg in his attached bio.

Greg will begin his ministry with us at our first-ever Tri-City VBS, June 27-29, and will be living in our Pepper Valley Parsonage starting in mid-July. Greg wants us to know, “I am truly thrilled to be joining the team at UMCG as the Director of NextGen Ministries. Perhaps more than ever before it is imperative that the church in our

nation learn how to contextualize the gospel into the lives of our young adults, teens, and children. In an age of growing isolation, loneliness, and despair, the church must hold forth the hope of the gospel of Jesus Christ and prophetically call all Jesus followers to embody the peaceable kingdom of God. We live in a culture that so desperately needs vibrant, Spirit-led communities of faith that extend hospitality and friendship to all, especially to those on the fringes. I could not be more grateful to join hands with UMCG in spreading the love of Christ to Geneva and the Tri-City area."

We are eager to see how the Spirit is leading us through Greg's leadership to reach the next generation of families in our community as we illuminate our community with God's grace as we lovingly accept, listen to, and serve all in the Spirit of Jesus. Information about a formal welcome of Greg and his first Sunday in Geneva will be published soon.

The NextGen Search Team - Ken McNeil, Pastor Rob Hamilton, Ali Wetmore, Andrew Whitfield, Diana Heckman-Trathen, Jessica Jagielo, and Louis Faucheux

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Dr. Greg Coates Biography, Director of NextGen Ministries



Dr. Greg Coates (he/him/his) is an Illinois native, having spent most of his childhood in our lovely state capital of Springfield. His father is a pastor in the Free Methodist Church, a smaller Methodist denomination that was established to promote holiness of life and holistic care for the poor. Greg attended Greenville College in south-central Illinois and, following graduation, taught English for a year at Tianjin Foreign Studies University in Tianjin, China. Greg is also a graduate of Asbury Theological Seminary in Kentucky (Master of Divinity), Duke Divinity School in North Carolina (Master of Theology), and Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary on the campus of Northwestern University in Evanston, IL where he received his Ph. D in Historical Theology in 2020.

Greg has also served for seven years as a senior pastor: four in urban Indianapolis at the First Free Methodist Church and, most recently, for three years in rural central Illinois at the Glasford United Methodist Church. Greg is particularly passionate about helping Christians to discern and live out the social, ethical, and political implications of

the gospel, and he has written one book toward this end called “Politics Strangely Warmed: Political Theology in the Wesleyan Tradition” (2015, Wipf & Stock). Much of Greg’s career has been devoted to advancing the causes of economic justice, racial reconciliation, and creation care — all within the context of the proclaiming and embodying the life-changing, world-shaking gospel of Jesus Christ.

Dr. Coates answers to many names, but in the church he would be delighted for you to affectionately refer to him as “Greg.” In the classrooms at Garrett where he teaches church history, the students refer to him as Dr. Coates so he answers to both! Greg has two daughters, Lydah (age 16) and Eve (age 14) who reside most of the time with their mother in Evanston, IL. They are his pride and joy, and he will be eager to introduce them to the church in the days ahead. While not reading or writing, Greg enjoys the occasional video game, hiking in the woods, and taking his two dogs for their evening walks at sunset.