LOVING & SERVING LIKE JESUS

Glenn M. Wagner
Michigan Conference Communications



Randy Hildebrant (right, sitting) appreciates all the donations given by Midland's Open-Door ministry and Midland: First UMC. These donations, headed to the Upper Peninsula, will be given out to residents as part of The Church Mouse, GCCM's free store ministry featuring clothing, household items, and toys for children. ~ photo courtesy God's Country Community Ministries / Facebook

Randy Hildebrant, Director of God's Country Community Ministries in Michigan's Upper Peninsula, is a dedicated Church and Community Worker employed by Global Ministries, the mission and relief agency of The United Methodist Church.

God's Country Community Ministries began in the 1970s as a collaborative effort among seven United Methodist congregations in the eastern half of the Upper Peninsula to meet their communities' needs by sharing resources. Based in Newberry, the ministry expanded in 2024 to include ministry with and for all, regardless of denomination. They address rural poverty and spiritual needs across 2,500 square miles and among roughly 66,000 residents in five counties: Alger, Chippewa, Luce, Mackinac, and Schoolcraft.

Randy Hildebrant has served as the Church and Community Worker (CCW) and director of God's Country Community Ministries (GCCM) for the past ten years. Prior to his work in Michigan, Hildebrant served in similar capacities as a CCW in Appalachia and in Nebraska. Financial support comes from Global Ministries, contributions from Michigan partners, and income generated by the ministry through its service to others. Both Randy and GCCM are also supported by EngageMI, the Michigan Conference's mission engagement program.

Hildebrant notes that his ministry differs from that of a pastor: “I am not ordained or subject to a bishop’s appointment. I don’t baptize, administer the sacraments, or lead a local church. I am commissioned for my service by The United Methodist Church. I have received training for my work from Global Ministries, and I have been moved by the General Church as a national missionary to serve assignments in different places over the years.”
Hildebrant describes his role as CCW further: “I am not a preacher, though I have been asked to preach on occasion. Some people have likened what I do to social work. My work definitely addresses great social needs in our communities. I help our partnering ministries and many volunteers in ‘doing’ the love of Jesus out in the communities we serve.”
According to Hildebrant, God’s Country Community Ministries works because it has a strong team of staff and volunteers, along with many generous supporters. “We do a lot to help people in need,” he explains. “We run feeding programs for children and the poor. We provide showers, laundry service, and shelter for the homeless. We have a free clothing store and work with area school systems to address identified needs for children. I got a call this week from a local school about a student who kept arriving at school in the bitter cold and snow with no coat, so we delivered a coat and helped address some greater dysfunction with the student’s family.”



Youth volunteers from a Methodist church in Pennsylvania learn how to make pasties for a GCCM fundraiser. ~ photo courtesy God’s Country Community Ministries / Facebook

“Train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it.” (Proverbs 22:6)

Hildebrant adds, “We run a special birthday closet at our Dunlap Center in Newberry for needy children who are invited to visit the closet on their birthday to choose their own present. We have a gas card ministry that provides low-income residents with help covering rising fuel costs for required medical care trips. During the long and brutal winter we just had, we also helped many isolated seniors directly with transportation for their medical care.”
A big part of Randy’s job is managing Volunteers in Mission (VIM) teams from across Michigan and the rest of the country who come to help throughout the year, primarily in warmer seasons.

“We host around 17 mission work teams each year,” noted Randy, “composed of able-bodied youth and adults from churches and other organizations across the country who travel to the Upper Peninsula to assist with work projects, primarily helping with needed home repairs for impoverished residents. Last year’s work included replacing a badly leaking roof on the home of a senior couple who were also dealing with a terminal cancer diagnosis. Our work seeks to love like Jesus at the places of community need.”

Oh, What Joy Fills My Soul!

Please join GBGM's CCW Family in celebrating our very own CCW extraordinaire, Trisha Manns, on her graduation from Candler School of Theology, where she earned her Master of Divinity degree.

This remarkable achievement reflects Trisha's unwavering faith, dedication, perseverance, and commitment to excellence. Through countless sacrifices, late nights, and demanding assignments, she has demonstrated resilience and determination that inspire us all.

We are incredibly proud of Trisha and honored to celebrate this significant milestone with her. Her accomplishment is a testament to the power of hard work, purpose, and perseverance.

Congratulations, Trisha! Your CCW family celebrates you and wishes you continued success and blessings on your journey ahead.

THANK YOU!

TRISHA MANNS

Church and Community Worker

After a long journey, I have completed my seminary education at Candler Theological Seminary! On Saturday, May 9, 2026 I crossed the stage and received my Master's of Divinity degree. I am so grateful to be in the missionary within the General Board of Global Ministries family! For all your prayers and encouraging words, the support was more than I can express in words. A special thanks to the Arkansas Annual Conference, the Mission Service Team, and Rev. Maxine Allen!









Celebrating

the Global Mission Fellows 2024–2026 Cohort



Join us in celebrating the remarkable journey of the 2024–2026 cohort of Global Mission Fellows as they complete two years of service and prepare to return to their home communities.

Over the past two years, these fellows have faithfully served alongside local communities around the world, building meaningful relationships, connecting churches in shared mission, and growing together in faith and leadership. Their commitment and witness have made a lasting impact across cultures and communities.

We invite you to be part of this special time of reflection, gratitude, and celebration during the End of Service Celebration livestream.

End of Service Celebration
Date: Friday, May 22, 2026
Time: 9:00 AM EDT
Location: Live on Facebook

Watch the celebration here: Global Mission Fellows Facebook Page
https://www.facebook.com/share/1HJ46suKQZ/?mibextid=wwXIfr

Please keep the fellows in your prayers as they transition home and continue living out their call to mission and service.



Invitation: Leadership Development Training Series Hosted by Gulfside Assembly

“Equipping leaders today for the communities they will transform tomorrow.”
Please join us for an interactive Leadership Development Training Series that offers reflection, renewal, and practical encouragement for clergy, associate ministers, lay leaders, and all who are committed to strengthening ministry leadership.
Goal: Equipping Pastors, Strengthening Churches, Transforming Communities

Upcoming Session:
Tuesday, May 26, 2026
12:00 p.m. Central Time Via Zoom
Session Leader:
Rev. Ken Nelson - District Superintendent, Orangeburg and Walterboro Districts
South Carolina Conference of the United Methodist Church
Session Topic:
Strategic Planning for Faithful and Intentional Ministry
A Practical Conversation for Medium and Small Membership Churches
Join Zoom Meeting:
https://us06web.zoom.us/j/8384072074?omn=81256667946
Meeting ID: 838 407 2074
One-Tap Mobile
+13092053325,,8384072074# US
+13126266799,,8384072074# US (Chicago)
Join by SIP
8384072074@zoomcrc.com



Workshop Description:
This ecumenical Lunch and Learn for pastors will explore how strategic planning can help congregations move from simply maintaining ministry to leading with greater clarity, purpose, and intentionality.
Together, we will examine how churches can:
• Prayerfully discern direction
• Align ministry with mission
• Respond faithfully to changing community needs
• Create practical pathways for ministry effectiveness and growth

We Will Explore:
• What strategic planning is and why it matters in the life of the church
• How churches can move from drifting to intentional leadership
• Ways to clarify mission, vision, and ministry priorities
• Practical tools for setting ministry goals and action steps
• How churches can respond faithfully to changing communities and new generations
• The importance of stewardship, accountability, and evaluation in ministry
Four Key Questions Every Congregation Should Regularly

Ask:
Where are we now?
Where is God leading us?
How will we get there?
How will we measure progress?



Please feel free to share any joys and concerns you may have. I will be happy to send this information out for you. You may email e-news submissions or any questions you may have to abelton@umcmission.org.

Althea Belton, CCW Laison Communicator
Gulfside Assembly
301 Herlihy St.
Waveland, MS 39576
803-900-0878