



# Discipleship Council Report

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Greetings! My name is Jessica Hayden, chairperson of Discipleship Council. We are grateful for the energy and faithfulness of our ministry team that allowed us to have an impactful year. As all of us have learned during the dual pandemics, rooting ourselves in purpose and mission is essential, both in the local church and the conference, as we all made necessary pivots.

As we began our ministry year, we centered our work around the mission and vision of the Annual Conference, *the Baltimore-Washington Conference inspires and equips local faith communities to develop disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world so that more transformed lives transform lives.*

Deepening discipleship is at the heart of everything we do—leader development, new faith expressions, young people’s ministry, advocacy & action and wellness & missions—all undergird this.

## Discipleship Council Purpose

- a. Functions, as necessary, on behalf of the Annual Conference in between sessions;
- b. Ensures that Conference resources align to our vision, mission, and critical issues;
- c. Discerns, develops, reviews, and evaluates the strategic direction of the Conference toward its vision and goals;
- d. Coordinates and consults with the Conference Council on Finance and Administration regarding the annual budget.

This centering work is important for us so that we can fulfill our responsibility to ensure that Conference resources align to its vision, mission, and critical issues; as we discern, develop, review, and evaluate the strategic direction of the Conference toward its vision and goals

## Discipleship Council Measuring Conference Ministry Effectiveness: "More Transformed Lives Transform Lives"

1. Progress on board goals which are essential to the BWC's mission and board's role.
2. Number of people:
  - a. Engaged and
  - b. Maturing in Wesleyan discipleship
3. Impact being made in communities in which our churches reside.

One of our primary goals for the year (pre-COVID) was to identify, develop and implement meaningful, shared metrics regarding Conference ministry effectiveness.

We began a multipronged approach to discern the most meaningful ways to measure the number of people who are engaged and maturing in Wesleyan Discipleship as well as the impact being made in communities in which our churches and ministries reside.

How do  
we know  
it is  
working?



"NEW" in church  
and community

Relationships  
Participation  
Pathways



Synergistic (output greater than  
input), replicable and sustainable



Connected to maturing in  
discipleship

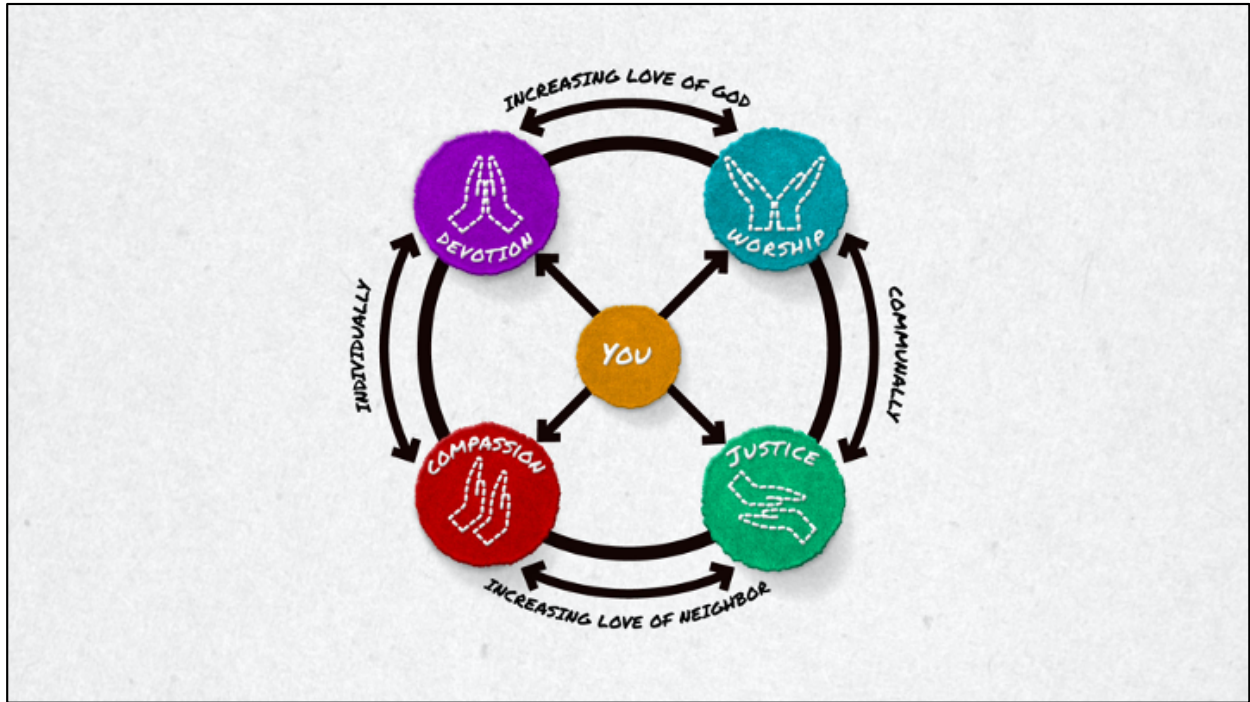


Stories of transformation (I used  
to... and now I...)

We began with discussing what effective metrics would include. We responded to the question, "How do we know world transforming discipling is working"? Or "how do we determine ministry effectiveness. We know it's working when:

- NEW connections in church and community. This includes new relationships, new participations, new pathways to discipleship
- Synergy – this includes ministries that are replicable and sustainable and have a healthy balance between input and output.
- Ministries are connected to maturing in Wesleyan discipleship. This relates to the ministry's "why".
- Lead to transformative experiences

As a reminder, here is the Wesleyan discipleship we are reclaiming



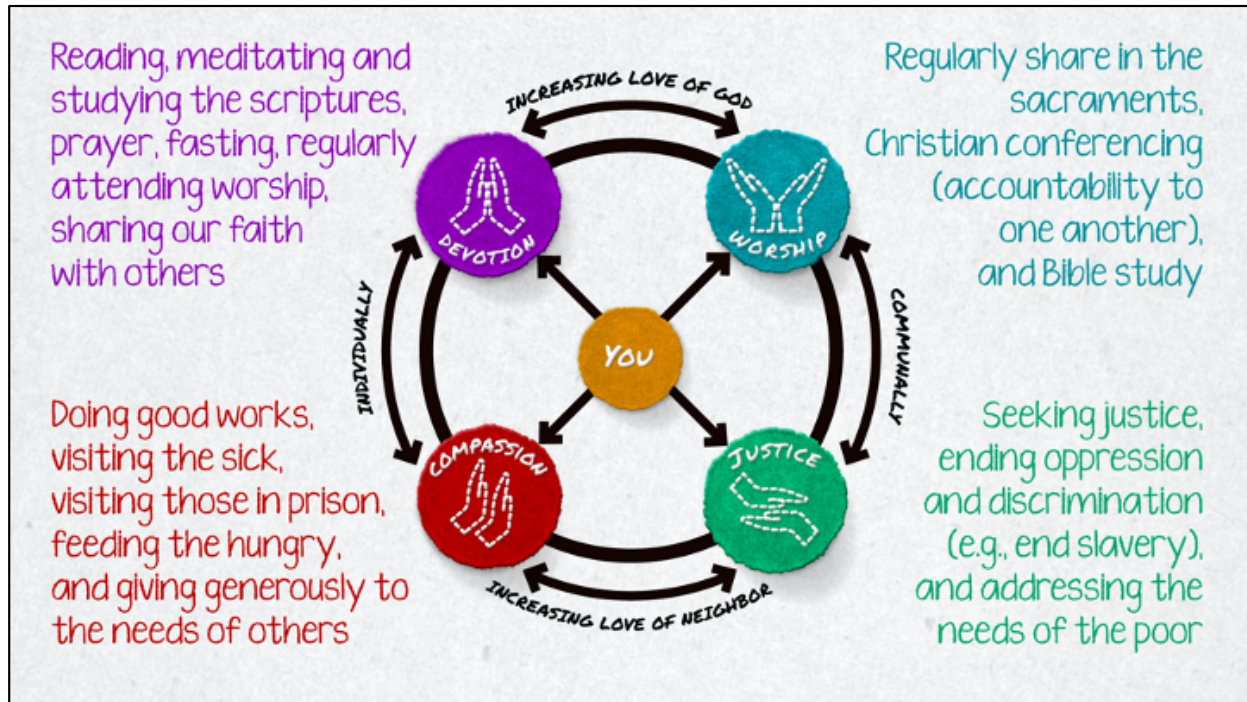
As United Methodists, we unite as disciples engaged in *witnessing to Jesus Christ in the world and following His teachings through acts of compassion, justice, worship, and devotion under the guidance of the Holy Spirit*. (The Rule of Discipleship, Paragraph 1117.2a)

This is rooted in the Great Commandment as we seek to increase in our love of God (through acts of devotion and worship) and increase in our love of neighbor (through acts of compassion and justice)

Both individually and communally

Our action and participation is required in order for this not to be a theoretical exercise.

As you and I follow Jesus through engaging in acts of devotion, worship, compassion and justice under the guidance of the Holy Spirit we grow as well-rounded disciples.



The words that surround this Wesleyan Rule of Discipleship are the means of grace. John Wesley taught that God's grace is unearned and that we are not to be idle waiting to experience grace. We are to engage in the means of grace. This is not an exhaustive list or a list of "to do's." The means of grace are ways God works invisibly in disciples, hastening, strengthening, and confirming faith so that God's grace pervades in and through disciples.

Amidst this pandemic we are learning that practicing the means of grace is not dependent upon our ability to gather for in person worship. Virtual spaces have become spaces for worship, prayer, studying of scriptures. Ministries of compassion continue to occur as individuals and churches respond to the physical, social and spiritual needs of their neighbors. We have also witnessed the reclaiming of the discipline of justice as individuals and churches have led and participated in marches and protests that call out the sin of racism and work to dismantle it.

We continue to reclaim our Wesleyan discipleship even as we respond to the changing ministry and social landscape.

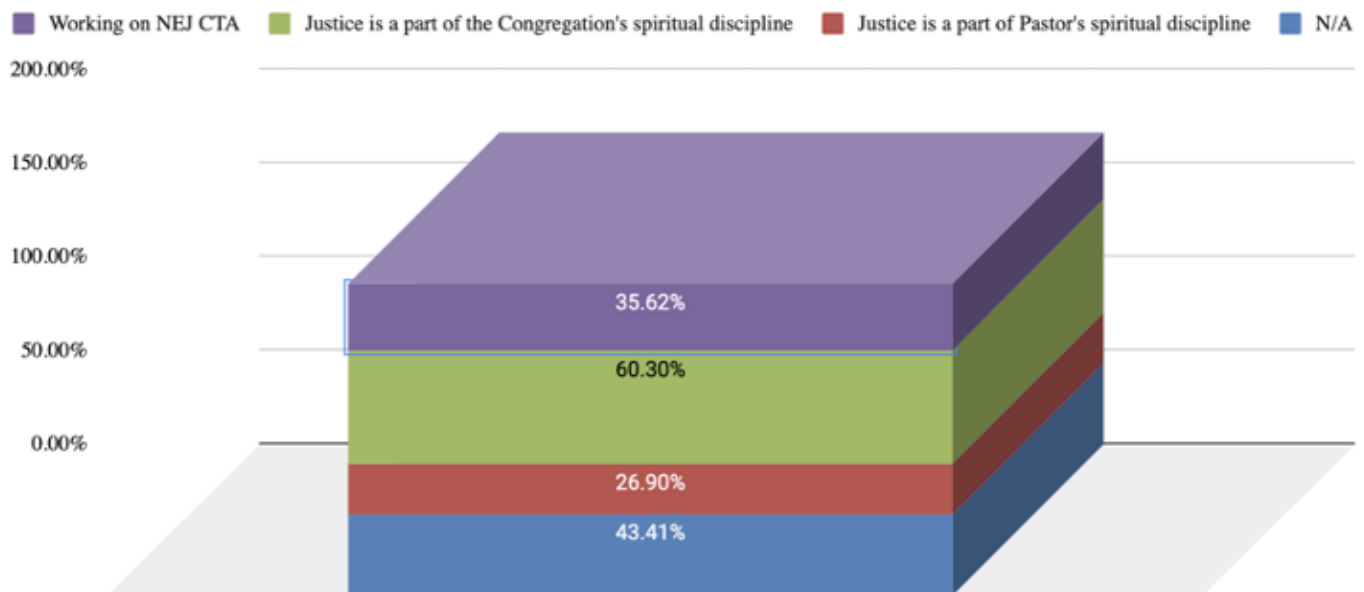




## Added Questions to Pastor's Report to Begin Collecting Data and Sowing Seeds

During the 2019 Church Conference season we began gathering data about pathways to maturing disciples through additional questions in the Pastors' reports. Pastors were asked to respond to questions about their church's engagement in justice and specifically, the NEJ Call To Action on racial justice. Pastors were also asked to respond to questions regarding the congregation's process for intentional discipleship and how they measure impact.

# 1. How are you and the congregation engaging with the spiritual discipline of Justice and specifically the NEJ Call To Action on Racial Justice? (539 responses)



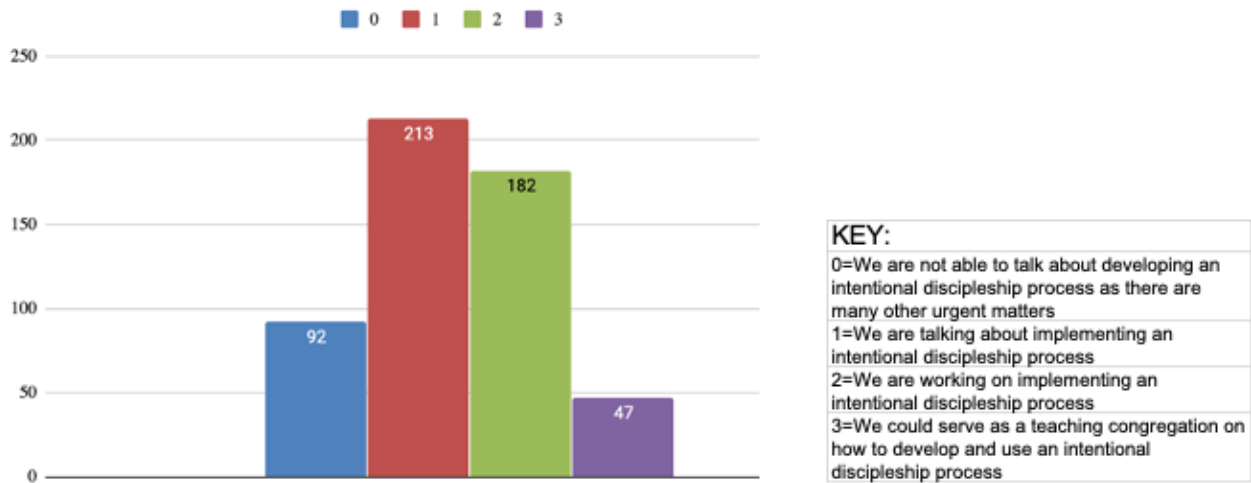
As we reviewed the data gathered from those reports we CELEBRATE the fact that

- More than 1/3 of pastors reported concrete congregational engagement with the NEJ Call to Action
- 60% of our congregations practice acts of justice—not just compassionate service—as a part of their communal spiritual disciplines

The reason this adds up to more than 100% is that some written answers described multiple categories



## 2. What is the current state of the congregation's intentional discipleship process?



We celebrate the number of persons reporting that congregations are:

- *talking about implementing an intentional discipleship process (213)*
- *working on implementing an intentional discipleship process (182)*
- *identified as able to serve as a teaching congregation to develop and use an intentional discipleship process. (47)*

*We celebrate this information as it affirms for us that in the midst of uncertain and challenging times -- which at that point in time involved denominational stress-- congregations within our annual conference are remaining focused on one the core tenets of our faith: discipleship.*

activities attendance bible children christ church  
community congregation  
connect continue developing disciples discipleship  
engaged faith families giving god group growing growth help  
impact intentional involved lives measure  
meetings members ministry mission  
number outreach participation people  
persons process programs school serve service sharing small spiritual study  
sunday ways work worship year

3. How is your  
congregation  
measuring  
impact?

We celebrate that congregations are open to learning how to measure impact better—that many recognize that participation numbers don't tell the whole story and sometimes are inadequate.



BWC Ministries

1. Monitor &  
Support  
Progress on  
Discipleship  
Agency  
Board Goals

All of the data gathered from the Pastor's Reports and from the Discipleships Boards inform our approach to the 2020 Goals. We...

1. Continue to measure progress on board goals which are essential to the mission of inspiring and equipping local faith communities to make disciples of Jesus Christ.



## 2. Monitor & Support NEJ Call to Action for Racial Justice Goals

2. Continue to support the NEJ CTA goals. The Baltimore-Washington Conference's (BWC) approach to the NEJ Call to Action (CTA):

- Is rooted in building relationships and creating a culture that allows all persons and cultures to feel safe in having bold conversations and confronting racism;
- Embeds cultural competency and anti-bias work throughout BWC's existing networks, trainings and gatherings;
- Uplifts what is happening at the grassroots level;
- Invites faith communities to engage in conversations and experiences that help them take the next faithful step toward becoming racial justice change agents;
- Optimizes existing opportunities to include training and conversations; and
- Incorporates better assessment and accountability into our systems so that racism is dismantled and multiculturalism enabled.

We have been making reports on progress Annually to the Northeastern Jurisdiction's Vision Table, Multi-Ethnic Center and Episcopacy Committee. And we have posted those on our NEJ Call to Action webpage.



As a continuation of the NEJ Call to Action for Racial Justice, the Discipleship Council developed the *Commitment to Becoming an Anti-Racist Church* invitation.

Being anti-racist is believing that racism is everyone's problem and understanding that we all have a role in stopping it. That being said, being anti-racist is a different journey for White people than for Black people and other people of color. No one is born racist or anti-racist; these result from the choices we make.

Making a commitment to become anti-racist is rooted in our Christian discipleship. As we see embodied in the person and ministry of Jesus Christ who proclaimed good news to the poor, freedom for the prisoners, recovery of sight for the blind and that the oppressed be freed, as Christ-followers, we must choose to be anti-racist both individually and collectively.

Howard Chapel-Ridgeville UMC, Mt. Airy, MD

Hughes UMC, Wheaton, MD

Huntingtown UMC, Huntingtown, MD

Ijamsville UMC, Ijamsville, MD

John Wesley UMC, Annapolis, MD

John Wesley UMC, Baltimore, MD

John Wesley UMC, Hagerstown, MD

John Wesley UMC, Joppa, MD

Lanham UMC, Lanham, MD

# WE RISE

LIVE + RESIST + ORGANIZE

## SEEK JUSTICE

LISTEN + LEARN + LEAD

## DO THE WORK

TRUTH + CHANGE + LOVE

## END RACISM

As we commit to transform our lives, our churches and our society, we acknowledge we each enter this work in different places. Just as the process of intentional discipleship will develop contextually based on the culture, dynamics and needs within each local church; a pathway toward becoming an anti-racist church is also a contextual process that involves meeting people where there are and providing them the resources, grace and accountability to take the next faithful step toward becoming an anti-racist, both individually and collectively.

The expectation is not that a pathway toward becoming an anti-racist church looks the same among congregations. Instead, the expectation is that congregations within the BWC would make a commitment to be on a path. The Commitment to Becoming an Anti-Racist Church offers a shared framework. And we celebrate the more than 300 disciples and 144 churches and church-related institutions within the BWC who have already indicated that they are on this pathway.





Working together, we strive to achieve the following goals:

1. Increase by at least 10% per year the number of churches who are on a pathway to becoming an anti-racist church so that by 2022 all of our BWC churches are on a path toward becoming racial justice change agents.

**I Will Seek Relationship** because this is how Jesus lived.  
**I Will Respect Different Forms of Expression** so that I might avoid projecting my cultural values onto others.  
**I Will Examine My Own Assumptions and Perceptions** so that I might avoid projecting my cultural values onto others.  
**I Will Assume Positive Intent** as we are all moving onto perfection.  
**I Will Listen for Understanding** because agreement is optional.  
**I Will Exercise Cultural Humility** understanding that the world in which I was born is just one model of reality.

**INTERCULTURAL  
COMPETENCY COVENANT**

2. Each local church reports on its progress as related to the Call to Action (CTA) on Racial Justice and on its internal and external conversations annually at church/charge conference with 10% more churches engaged than the year before so that by 2026 100% of our churches are doing work to grow in our Inter-Cultural Competence (ICC) covenant (traits of beloved community) throughout the conference.



Therefore we invite you to pray about how God is calling you and your church to be engaged in dismantling racism not for a moment but for a lifetime. As a continuation of the NEJ Call to Action for Racial Justice, we are asking individuals and churches to pledge their Commitment to Becoming an Anti-Racist Church by signing their name to the document that may be found on the conference's racial justice resource page at [bwcumc.org/justicenow](http://bwcumc.org/justicenow).

There are two frequently asked questions by those that are considering signing the commitment: "Are individuals or church supposed to sign?" and "What happens once we do?"

Whether you are one person who is working to move your church toward becoming an anti-racist church or if your church leadership or church as a whole has made the commitment, please sign the commitment. In order to understand the magnitude of commitment, we are asking that each person in your church who has been a part of the decision making process and/or have made a personal commitment, to sign the form.

Your digital signature — along with your church's name, city, and state — will become a part of this movement to make different choices about how you are participating in the dismantling of racism. If your congregation is a part of the Baltimore-Washington Conference, all congregations will be asked to report on progress on the NEJ Call to Action at their Church Conference in the fall of 2020 and thereafter. While all

churches have access to our vast online resources ([bwcumc.org/justicenow](http://bwcumc.org/justicenow)), those churches who have made this commitment to do this sacred work will be given priority for consultation and cohort formation if desired. There will be monthly check-ins for support, encouragement, resourcing and more.

Together we will seek justice, do the work and end racism as disciples of Jesus Christ.



### 3. Build our system for understanding ministry vitality

#WEAREONE

#### 3. Continue to crystalize our system for understanding ministry vitality.

We celebrate the effective ministry that is taking place within our local churches before and in the midst of the pandemic. The more we learn about and understand the forms of ministry that are most effective in our varying contexts, the more lives are transformed. The BWC represents diverse and vibrant expression of God's kingdom and there is no one-size model fits all for effective ministry. We want to know what is working well *and* where pastors or congregations need support so that we can share in the work of making disciples for Christ.

One *next step* will occur this fall during church/charge conference season. This year's church profile includes elements from last year's Pastor's report and are directly related to the Discipleship Council's work.

- Specifically, churches will be invited to provide information on:
  - How church members are engaged in Wesleyan Discipleship through rating their participation in WITNESS, COMPASSION JUSTICE, WORSHIP AND DEVOTION
  - Defining the current state of the congregation's discipleship process?
  - Describing the congregation's **current** level of vitality
  - Identifying where the congregation is on the pathway of becoming an anti-racist church.

As we continue to develop and refine this system of understanding, we will strengthen

our ability to inspire and equip local faith communities to better develop disciples for the transformation of the world so that more transformed lives transform lives.