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December 2024

CCP Update

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2024 CCP Report!



2024 CCP Report: Strengthening Global Connections in Ministry

Wespath is pleased to share the **2024 Central Conference Pensions (CCP) Report**, highlighting the impact of the CCP program, which supports over 11,000 clergy, retirees, and their families across Africa, the Philippines, and parts of Europe. This program exemplifies the power of connection within The United Methodist Church (UMC), fostering strong relationships between Wespath, the UMC's Central Conferences, and thousands of dedicated donors.

Launched 20 years ago, the CCP program was established to provide a steady income for retired clergy and surviving spouses, ensuring financial security in their later years. Wespath, alongside local leaders, has built a partnership to support these ministers and their families through pension funds, administrative support, and collaborative efforts to create sustainable, self-governed benefit plans that reflect each region's unique cultural and social needs.

The CCP program's success is a testament to John Wesley's vision of social holiness, where working in connection helps transform the world for the better. Over the years, the program has distributed over \$16 million in pension benefits to over 3,700 retirees and surviving spouses. The positive impact is felt most deeply through the stories of those whose lives have been changed by this support.

For Andy Hendren, Wespath's General Secretary and Chief Executive Officer, one notable experience occurred during a 2023 visit to Mozambique and Zimbabwe, where Wespath leadership met with retirees in their homes and churches. These conversations, despite language barriers, highlighted how even modest pensions can make a significant difference.

"I was moved by the world economy's inequities as pensioners described the personal sacrifices made so they can live into their calling to serve God," Andy recalls. "At the same time, I was reminded of the power of the UMC mission, witnessing how even modest Church pensions can improve the lives of these servants of God in their later years by providing financial security that helps them afford essentials like medicine, eyeglasses and sometimes even food."

(continued on second page)

CCP Financials as of 11/30/2024

\$28,158,757

Total donations received
Inception to date

\$124,038

Donations received
Year to date

\$899,351

Emergency grants
2006–2012

\$16,723,077

Pension funds distributed
(2007 to date)

\$1,361,741

Pension distributions
Year to date

As the UMC continues to grow, especially in regions like Africa and the Philippines, the demand for local benefit plans that provide financial support to retirees increases. In response, Wespeth has worked hard to strengthen relationships with Central Conference partners, ensuring that the CCP program continues to evolve and meet the needs of those it serves. This effort includes extensive travel, such as visits to Liberia, Kenya, Sierra Leone, and the Philippines, as well as connections during the 2024 UMC General Conference and other gatherings involving Central Conference personnel.

Looking to the future, Wespeth aims to ensure the CCP program's sustainability through donations and continued collaboration. The 2024 CCP Report includes financial summaries and insights into the 19 Central Conference pension plans, along with many stories of lives impacted by this crucial program. To help support the CCP program, donations of any size are encouraged and can be made online or sent to Wespeth Benefits and Investments, Chicago, IL (more details can be found on the bottom of page 4).

The 2024 CCP Report is a powerful reminder of how, through collective action and a commitment to connection, the church transforms lives around the world.

Wespeth Around the World in 2024

For Wespeth's CCP team, building in-person connections with central conference pensioners and leaders is a high priority. Here's a look at some of the team's travels in 2024.

January: Wespeth's Dale Jones (managing director, Church Relations) and Thomas Kemper, a consultant for the CCP program, traveled to Dar es Salaam, Tanzania for a gathering of Africa General Conference delegates, pension officers and other key leaders, hosted by the United Methodist Africa Forum (UMAF).



Africa General Conference delegates gather for an in-person meeting in Tanzania.

April: Wespeth's General Secretary Andy Hendren, Dale Jones and Thomas Kemper, alongside North Katanga conference benefits officer Didier Banza and conference treasurer Rev. Daniel Mumba, presented an overview on Wespeth's legislation to the central conference delegates during the 2024 General Conference orientation session in Charlotte, North Carolina.



Wespeth's General Secretary Andy Hendren (left) and Dale Jones (right) present at the General Conference orientation session.

July: Members from Wespeth's team traveled to Monrovia, Liberia to discuss the conference's pension plan with pension leaders, the Board of Pensions and Bishop Samuel Quire.



Pensioners are excited to receive their first mobile payments.

September: Thomas Kemper visited Manila for a meeting with the Philippines Central Conference Board of Pensions.



Thomas Kemper with the Philippines Central Conference pension leaders.

November: Wespath’s Michelle Robinson (senior church relations specialist) and Thomas Kemper traveled to Cabanatuan City to attend the Philippines Central Conference 22nd Regular Session.



Representatives of general agencies of The United Methodist Church from across the world stand together at the Philippines Central Conference 22nd Regular Session.

A Life of Service: Reflections of Pastor István Szuhánszky

Pastor István Szuhánszky has devoted his life to ministry and service, spanning 46 years across five districts in Hungary. Now 67, Szuhánszky was born in Miskolc, where he felt called to the ministry from a young age. He vividly recalls playing church services with his brothers, even writing in his first grade schoolbook, “I AM GOING TO BE A PASTOR.” He experienced his conversion at the age of ten, and his father, who led the church in their community, became his role model. Szuhánszky’s passion for working with children was shaped early, inspired by his father’s missionary work, which led to a thriving youth group, a choir, and a gypsy mission. After finishing school, he planned to work for a year but was soon called to assist his father with church duties. This marked the beginning of his own journey as a third-generation pastor.



Szuhánszky’s ministry began in a difficult political climate. Under communist rule, pastors faced numerous challenges. Churches were heavily monitored, and political pressures limited pastoral work to within church walls. Szuhánszky remembers the fear that gripped his community as church members were scrutinized; cooperation with the regime was often promised in exchange for favors. Despite these pressures, Szuhánszky’s small church found ways to thrive. They hosted youth camps in their church

buildings, creating life-changing spiritual experiences. In this environment, Szuhánszky and his peers focused on the gospel and the mission at hand, rather than the hardships they faced.

The greatest joy for Szuhánszky, however, was in leading people to faith. He recalls the profound personal experiences he had while studying God’s word and feeling His love and presence. “You have nothing else to do but save as many people as you can!” was the guidance he took from John Wesley, which kept him motivated throughout his ministry.

The collapse of the communist regime brought significant changes to the church. Szuhánszky remembers the sudden opening of new opportunities—doors that were previously closed to the church. He recalls his time in Kaposvár, where, after being elected to local office, he had a unique chance to engage with the community. He started teaching religious education in schools, leading Bible lessons for over a hundred children, and organizing summer camps. He also served in prisons, performing church services and building relationships with inmates, and began ministering to the elderly in retirement homes. It was a period of intense activity and newfound possibilities, but also one of deep reflection on how to navigate the changing political and social landscape.

Now retired for two years, Szuhánszky and his wife are adjusting to a quieter life. They purchased a farmhouse that is currently under renovation—a place where they feel God has provided them with peace. Despite stepping back from full-time ministry, Szuhánszky continues to stay active in his church and the local community, attending services with his family and engaging in ecumenical events.

One of his most significant reflections is the importance of spending time with his grandchildren. His years of service had often pulled him away from his children, but now, in his retirement, he is dedicated to making up for lost time by being more present for the next generation.

Finally, Szuhánszky expresses gratitude for the support he receives through the pension fund administered by Wespath, which provides a modest, yet essential, contribution to his financial stability in retirement. His unwavering faith and commitment to ministry, combined with his deep appreciation for God’s provision, continue to guide him in this new chapter of life.













Pastor István Szuhánszky with his wife (left) and grandchildren (right).












Central Conference Facts:

The central conferences are located outside the United States and include annual conferences in Africa, the Philippines and Eurasia. Within the central conferences there are 79 provisional and annual conferences (of which 69 are assisted by CCP) with 5.4 million members.

Statistics:

Country	Active clergy	Retirees receiving payments	Surviving spouses/beneficiaries receiving payments
Cote d'Ivoire 	268	3	37
Liberia 	1,137	205	558
Mozambique 	272	35	45
West Angola 	414	96	82
East Angola 	75	18	22
Sierra Leone 	80	18	18
Zimbabwe 	317	51	49
Russia 	54	22	0
Philippines 	1,548	238	225
Nigeria 	350	41	92

Country	Active clergy	Retirees receiving payments	Surviving spouses/beneficiaries receiving payments
East Africa 	702	238	168
East Congo 	405	102	83
Central Congo 	719	257	115
South Congo 	798	152	220
North Katanga 	524	280	233
South Africa 	8	2	1
Central and Southern Europe 	67	20	7
Lithuania 	1	0	0
Latvia 	6	5	0

Total CCP Statistics

- Active pastors covered—**7,745**
- Retirees and Surviving spouses receiving support—**3,738**
- Total of all pension support funds released to date—**\$ 17,622,428***

**Total of emergency grants and pension funds distributed*

Questions?

Central Conference Pensions: Wespath

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Add "CCP" on the "memo" line