

Mission Shaped Future Conference Organization Narrative Report

Mountain Sky Conference

Introduction

Why adopt a new Annual Conference structure? In the Gospels, the message of Jesus Christ brings a transformation in the way that we understand God. It's a new structure for our faith, built upon the incarnate love of God, made real to us through the life, sacrificial death and enduring resurrection of Jesus. Jesus' embodiment of grace, along with our Wesleyan roots, compels us to imagine a church that's engaged in re-igniting a movement, rather than caretaking an institution. This is the model for our new structure of the Mountain Sky Annual Conference: igniting a movement through vital, engaged local churches.

For the writers of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the idea of structure of the message rose high in significance. So it is with the structure of our new Mountain Sky Conference of The United Methodist Church. First, we raise up the core of who we are and what we will accomplish, with the help of the Holy Spirit. "The Mountain Sky Conference will re-ignite a Christian movement that begins with grace, offers abundant life, and reclaims the life-changing love of Jesus Christ for All people. Our goal is for this to be the prevailing Christian theme in our area by 2030." What follows, then, is the work of many leaders in our church in how best to organize our ministry to accomplish this wonderful and audacious goal.

What takes center stage in the Gospels? It is the sacrificial gift of the incarnate love of God in the death and resurrection of Jesus. So it is in our new conference.

Slide 1 - What is MSF?

Mission Shaped Future is our way in the Mountain Sky Area to critically view our human structures that were designed to serve churches in a different era, and from that create something new. This new thing is a deeply Holy Spirit-led institution to provide leadership, support and resources for local churches, which are the primary places of Wesleyan Grace for our United Methodist Church.

Slide 2 - Our Goal

Our goal is rooted in God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit: that we create spaces (churches and communities of faith) where John Wesley's practice of faith can be lived out fully in our region. We believe that this understanding of Christianity was made for "a time such as this." By committing to see this as a "prevailing" movement of Christianity we hope that God can use us to bring peace, justice, and grace to the communities of the Mountain Sky Area.

Slide 3 - Our Mission

Our church calls us to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. We believe this is done through local churches and extension ministries that are supported, surrounded, and lifted up by our Annual Conference.

Slide 4 - Our Values

- Lay and clergy partnering together is what makes all faith communities strong. This can also be our biggest stumbling block. We work to create systems that lift up strong leaders called by Jesus Christ, and to encourage all leaders to follow Christ's example of partnering with people who are different from themselves.
- Local contextualized ministry is known to be the most effective way to live out God's call for our movement. This means our local structure needs to be strong, vibrant, flexible and adaptable to meeting the needs of our local ministries and callings. It must be a goal of a new conference with this geographical size to make sure the structures are focused on infusing energy and resources to local people who know their regions.
- Our structures are too top-heavy. Yellowstone Conference has known this for some time and has been experimenting with streamlined structures that pull less people out of their local contexts to the administration of the bureaucracy. Rocky Mountain Conference has also known this for some time and has been working to adapt. Now is the time to reduce this burden, by focusing our leadership potential and energy on the local ministries that make the most significant avenues for building up disciples.
- By focusing on the local level and reducing top-heavy structures we will free people to move with the Holy Spirit and find resources to support what God is doing among the people and in creation.

Slide 5 – Book of Discipline, and We Have Flexibility

By discipline and as United Methodists, we have been granted permission to contextualize our structure to meet our needs. Following this guidance we have sought to design an effective Annual Conference for the 21st Century United Methodists in the Mountain Sky region.

Slide 6 – Decentralize (John Wimberly's Report)

John Wimberly was brought in to consult with us across the region. From his work and our discussions were raised two central points:

1. To be effective in our new conference we need to decentralize the ministry creation centers to the local places where they can be contextual and respond to local needs more quickly.

Slide 7 - Using Teams

2. Flexible 21st Century organizations replace committees and boards with teams. Please review slides 7 to 9 for a description of the primary differences. This goal became vital in our design of a new Annual Conference, maintaining committees and boards where required, but favoring teams to meet the needs of other areas.

Slide 8 - Difference Between Teams and Committees

Please refer to the slide for this description.

Slide 9 - Who Forms Teams and Committees

It is important to note that teams have an ability to form locally and be assigned by governing entities or individuals. The hope is that teams comprise the right people, and not just those enlisted. It is also worth noting that team structures more easily allow us to invite people with a fresh calling from God to a task rather than the traditional structures.

Slide 10 - Understanding the staff referenced

Any new structure is going to require a re-alignment of resources. This staff structure proposed is designed to help us through the transition and can be shifted as we align ourselves more into this new way of doing things. It is important to note that four of these new positions are focused on resourcing local ministry and only one on maintaining the larger organization. This is intentional for the goal of decentralizing.

Please note the District Administrators and Congregational Resource Ministers will be local positions to each district and focused on the support of the local churches.

Slide 11 - Overview of New Structure

Our structure should be the fertilizer from which good things grow. Our conference level leadership is not the soil, but instead boosters for resources so the localized layers of our organization are receiving what they need to grow disciples. Traditionally we have seen the flow of resources go from local church to circuit to district to conference and beyond. Our goal in the new structure is to change this flow, so the resources of the Annual Conference flow to the district to the circuit and mainly to the local church and extension ministries.

Slide 12 - Overview of New Structure (cont)

This new conference structure is designed to surround and lift up the local church as an expression of love and grace to its local community. The Mountain Sky Roundtable is the overarching connecting body to help lead us. Other disciplinary and called requirements of our conference to support local ministry are embodied in the leaders in each of the blue circles. The green circle represents a staff-led ministry that completes the circle with a professional communication staff.

Slide 13 - Mountain Sky Roundtable

This body will be the executive governing body of the conference and will address the goals of fostering movement, establishing outcomes and evaluating progress. Unlike previous entities of governance, this body will focus on the big picture. By having our structure more based on teams to meet pressing needs and work out problems, this group makes sure the movement is serving, surrounding and lifting up the local churches.

Slide 14 - Mountain Sky Roundtable (cont)

The roundtable will be using tools based on metrics that help measure the success of local ministries. We know those metrics have changed greatly in the current era (pew sitting is no longer the most helpful metric) so the developed metrics need to be based on how the localities of ministry can thrive in “making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world”.

Slide 15 - Makeup of the Roundtable and Committees Relating to it

Slide 16 - Leadership Development

Leadership development will focus on equipping leaders well, helping to provide opportunities and methods to guide discernment, and working to help our conference be a place that nurtures call. It is important to note many of these new committees will have specific discipline sections of responsibility assigned to it, so we will meet our discipline obligations without overextending leadership of the conference.

Slide 17 - Leadership Development (cont)

Leadership development will be served by a Superintendent of Leadership Development who will work to cultivate leadership at all levels of the new conference. There will be a committee to support this work and develop the implementation tools, as well as overarching goals of this area. Committees serving in this area include the Board of Ordained Ministry and Board of Laity. The teams serving under this area are the Youth Leadership Team and Campus Ministry Team.

Please note that committees are annotated here in blue and green indicates a team.

Slide 18 - Congregational Vitality

This area will work to begin new faith communities, support revitalization, and implement discipling processes throughout the conference at all levels. This area will focus on strengthening churches by providing relevant training emphasized at the circuit and district levels, seeking vitality in faith communities by helping the local churches understand contextual ministry, and helping develop discipling processes in the local ministry.

Slide 19 - Congregational Vitality (cont)

A congregational vitality committee would be created to help set goals and vision for work in this area, based on the priorities listed in the previous slide. A Superintendent of Community and Congregational Development would help direct the work of this area. Teams under this focus area would include one that continues the Whole Church Initiative, which equips existing congregations to do ministry in the 21st Century. A stewardship and evangelism team would be used to help create resources for both these areas that can be used in the local church.

Slide 20 - Community Engagement

The 21st Century requires churches to engage with a variety of communities through direct and dynamic partnerships. Many of our churches are doing this well while others struggle to engage with communities effectively. This area will focus on equipping our congregations and ministries to connect with communities as a way of transforming the world. When we live faithfully, act courageously and love boldly we are drawn into relationships that engage communities and honor the uniqueness of others. The Community Engagement area will include a lot of disciplinary required groups and long-held ministry priorities, so it is designed differently than other areas.

Slide 21 - Community Engagement (Cont)

There will be a Director of Community and Congregational Engagement to help guide the work. The committee will partner with numerous teams to hear the ministry needs and ensure resources are made available to empower teams as they engage communities.

Slide 22 - Community Engagement (Cont)

The community engagement teams will be numerous in number and topics. They will be action oriented with some addressing long-held ministry commitments and priorities while others form for new and emerging issues and ministries. Some teams will be ongoing and others will be created for very short and specific activities.

Slide 23 - Responsible Stewardship

We have to keep the trains running on time. However, traditional methods of managing our resources have often been focused on institutional survival. The goal of this area is for our resources -- physical, financial and administrative to line up with what God is calling our conference to be. This area is tasked with cultivating resources needed for ministry, being transparent in financial management, and budgeting for the missional alignment of our work.

Slide 24 - Responsible Stewardship (Cont)

The committees making up responsible stewardship are ones we area traditionally used to seeing. These committees will be tasked with using our resources to meet our needs as a conference, so we are more focused on how to be a "prevailing Christian movement" in our area.

Slide 25 - Communications Team

The communications team will embody a need we have had for many years, but neither conference has been able to address well. The team will focus on three goals: 1. Proactive storytelling with resources for us to share what God is doing through our ministries and people in the area. 2. Oversee technology by providing resources to local churches, employing the best technology to accomplish our goals, and resourcing it with staff trained in the field. 3. Communication is fundamentally about connecting ministry because the Holy Spirit works when

we can share the Good News of Christ amongst each other. This team will work to ensure we are one church serving Christ.

Slide 26 - Communications Team (cont)

This team will be a staff team to ensure efficient communication, well-trained people serving in these roles, and streamlined to get communication out quickly. This team does not negate the need for local ministries to develop communication strategies, connect with one another and build their networks to sustain ministry. Instead, this team is designed to resource that work and to provide the overarching story of connected ministry in our region.

Slide 27 - Cross Functional Teams

These are teams formed to cover specific tasks and we may need more of them as needed. Some examples are Annual Conference planning and Annual Conference rules, which are both necessary teams for our shared work and don't fall under one of our other areas.

Slide 28 - Local Churches and Circuits

Local churches and circuits are where the mission of making disciples happens. We believe this group is at the heart of our work. In order for this to be true, these entities need to network, support, and share in the tasks of making disciples. We believe for our new structure to work we must support these ministries so they grow in supporting one another to achieve our goal.

Slide 29 - District Table

The District Table is designed to make personal contact, make ministry fit its context in a diverse and large area, and resource the local congregations with the tools they need. This will be done by deploying resources as the local churches and circuits need to accomplish their goal. This group will need to advocate for the needs of a district, and call the conference to provide resources when they themselves cannot find those resources

Slide 30 - District Table (cont)

The District Table will work energetically to understand what is needed in a region. The District Superintendent will be working directly with our District Administrators and Church Resource Ministers to be aware of what is needed; this table will serve as a resource and focus group to accelerate the equipping needed at the local level.

*MSF Conference Organization Team
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