

NFAMLP – *Letter for the Fellowship*

Resurrection people

Easter came in all its predawn glory, reminding us that an obscure, itinerant first-century Rabbi rose from the dead in a borrowed tomb. His followers saw, touched, and spoke with him for forty days. He commissioned the infant church to share the gospel throughout the entire world. What pure joy to share this Good News with the faith community!

I pray that your worship was vibrant and that visitors felt welcomed. Ministers of the Gospel live to preach on Easter. Undoubtedly, the music was exceptional, and the community's spirits were high. The prayers and liturgy were inspiring. Most importantly, people heard the salvation message and sensed the holy, awe-inspiring presence of the Almighty.

We sincerely hope that the same Spirit of God who raised Jesus from the grave is breathing new life into your ministry and the church or churches you serve. The post-COVID, post-Christian, post-Disaffiliation, social media-immersed culture that we live in is new territory, creating innumerable challenges for the church to navigate.

This year marks seventeen years of pastoral ministry for me. During that time, I've been in an ongoing educational process. I graduated from the basic course of study in 2014. In 2019, I earned a college degree. Shortly after earning my degree, I applied for and was recognized as an Associate Member of the Arkansas Annual Conference. I began working on ACOS in earnest in 2020 through GBHEM online. One day, I hope to be ordained an elder in the United Methodist Church.

The General Conference approved GBHEM to provide online instruction for COS and ACOS. This is huge for people who might otherwise struggle to prioritize pastoral education. I traveled thousands of miles to attend COS, and now I do ACOS from the comfort of my living room, hotel room, or office. We are also allowed to serve across conference lines, another gift of GC 2024.

Annual Conferences will soon begin, dealing with the constitutional amendments passed at last year's General Conference. Many of us will sit at a table with the Lay Members of the faith community we serve and watch them vote for the denomination's future. Per the Book of Discipline, appointed clergy who are Local Pastors or Associate Members are ineligible to vote on these matters.

The General Conference ran out of time before it could consider legislative proposals regarding the status and role of Local Pastors and Associate Members. Instead, another Ministry Study is underway that will be presented to the next regular session of the General Conference. Whether or not that proposed legislation is addressed depends on us.

Every Annual Conference needs a strong and well-led fellowship of associate members and local pastors. What are we doing to recruit other Local Pastors to join the Fellowship? How many people are members of the National Fellowship at your annual conference? Our voices will be heard when we build the necessary relationships with ordained clergy and laity alike. We need to organize and participate in writing the legislation. But we must ignore the hurt, clamor, and noise and join forces with our allies to become catalysts for change.

How can you be a part of this movement? Consider attending the National Fellowship of Local Pastors & Associate Members National Gathering September 9-11, 2025 Jumonville Camp & Retreat Center Hopwood, Pennsylvania. Your registration includes your annual membership dues. If you are the

Chairperson of your conference Fellowship, the Board of Ordained Ministry typically allots funding for the trip via conference funding.

We need *You!* A strong fellowship creates a strong dynamic within our annual conferences and General Conference as well. The power of our collective voices directly correlates to the overall strength of this organization. May God continue to provide us with hope, lead us in love, and empower us with His Spirit as we follow Jesus into the world and live as resurrection people.

*Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me. **John 12:26***

Rev. Kenny Lee

Executive Team Associate Member Board

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