

regional church conferences and to do some networking at the same time. We are stronger together rather than separate – let’s be willing to try something new!”

Northern Flow District Superintendent, Rev. Mike Weeden said, “I know I’m praying about this with anticipation and hope. It is clear to me that culturally we are in a season of change as it relates to the local church. We are also in a season of change denominationally. In this changed landscape we continue to learn that followers of Jesus need to think adaptively and be willing to experiment in order to find ways to reach people for Christ.”

Rev. Weeden expressed, “There are many similarities in the challenges our churches face in the different regions of our Conference. And, there are distinct differences in churches and sub-cultures, even within a region. This regional approach will enable us to be more responsive to the needs of Districts and regions of the Annual Conference as we seek to make Disciple of Jesus Christ in a shifting landscape. It enables us to intentionally work at pooling together the Spirit-fed ideas, practices, and giftedness of churches and lay-persons in our Districts to address these challenges. It will create opportunities for regional approaches to leadership and

congregational development. This will move us farther away from top down approaches to the needs of the Districts AND the local church. This plan has great promise to bring decision making closer to the local church.”

Rev. Weeden continued, “Some things will change. Some things won’t change: our Districts and District Offices will continue to serve as a vital communication and connecting hubs. We will continue to be intentional about equipping pastors, leaders, and churches to make Disciples of Jesus Christ for the Transformation of the world. We might even become better at it!”

Overall, this new model of leadership will provide the chance to increase our mission, recognizing the current reality, while addressing sustainability for the future. It will take some initial acclimation, as is true for any change; it is important to trust that God is calling us to stay focused on our mission.

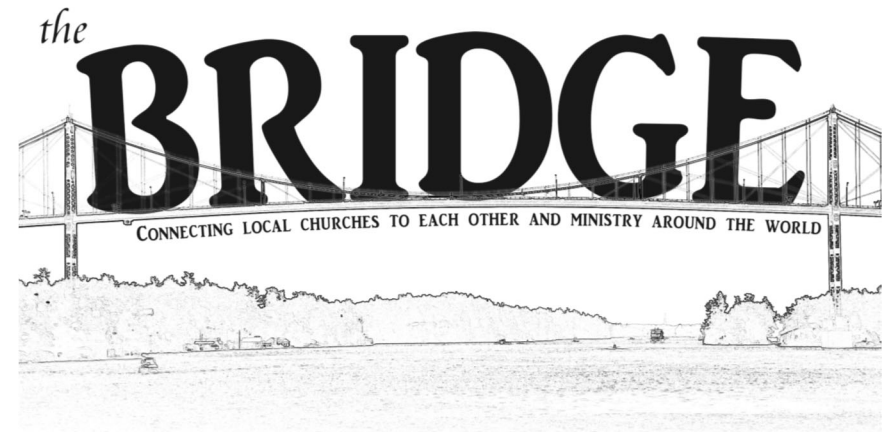
Visit <http://bit.ly/UNYRegionkeypoints> for key points of the new model of leadership.

Visit <http://bit.ly/UNYRegionsFAQ> to see some Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) about this new model of leadership. To have your question answered as a part of the FAQ send it to [questions@unyumc.org](mailto:questions@unyumc.org).

*The Bridge is a Conference Communications Ministry tool that delivers to local churches news and stories of ministry from around the Upper New York Conference and the world. For more news and stories visit:*

**[www.unyumc.org](http://www.unyumc.org)**

To learn more about the districts of the Upper New York Conference and the Regional Superintendency Plan visit <https://www.unyumc.org/about/districts>



The Upper New York Conference’s vision is to live the gospel of Jesus Christ and to be God’s love with our neighbors in all places.

## A look inside!

A new approach to the leadership of Superintendent

Page 2

# A new approach to the leadership of Superintendent

By Shannon Hodson, Writer/editor

The Upper New York (UNY) Conference will be instituting a Regional Superintendency Plan effective July 1, 2020. The plan was shared with District Committees on Superintendency at a Jan. 18 event. With the uncertainty of the future of the United Methodist Church as we approach General Conference 2020, it is imperative to keep focused on the mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

The new Regional Superintendency Plan will help the Conference more effectively live out this mission through creating deeper connections and more effectively using resources.

Rev. Nola Anderson, Dean of the Cabinet, said, “We are committed to lead faithfully and believe that this new model of leadership will provide an opportunity to increase our mission, recognizing our current reality while addressing sustainability for the future. We believe it is time to experiment with careful intention. We acknowledge there will be growing pains and even perhaps this may not work, but we are willing to give it a try – to experiment in faith. We will be committed to evaluation and adjustment if necessary, believing that with risk comes reward and greater clarity for the future.”

The regions that the UNY Conference will have are as follows:

- **Region 1** consists of the Albany, Adirondack, Northern Flow, and Mohawk Districts.
- **Region 2** consists of the Crossroads, Finger Lakes, Genesee Valley, and Niagara Frontier Districts.

- **Region 3** consists of the Oneonta, Binghamton, Mountain View, and Cornerstone Districts.

In meeting with the District Committees on Superintendency, Bishop Webb shared that his intention is to appoint the following DS’s to these respective regions:

- **Region 1:** Rev. Debbie Earthrowl, Rev. Abel Roy, and Rev. Michael Weeden
- **Region 2:** Rev. Nola Anderson, Rev. Vonda Fossitt, and Rev. Carlos Rosa Laguer
- **Region 3:** Rev. Nancy Adams, Rev. Suzanne Block, and Rev. Dr. Jeffrey McDowell

Visit <http://bit.ly/UNYRegionvideo> watch a video of Upper New York leaders explaining this plan.

## Saving resources

We are facing a shortage of pastoral leaders as faithful leaders move toward retirement and the number of new leaders being discovered, developed, and deployed has lessened. While the congregations of Upper New York have been faithful in their sharing of financial resources, we continue to struggle in many local congregations and at the Conference level to realize the financial resources necessary for the goals we have established.

Some of the resources saved by reducing the number of District Superintendents will be reallocated to create part-time Regional or District Associates that will be resource persons in every District or region to assist congregations in living the mission and having their needs met.

Visit <http://bit.ly/UNYDistrictRegionalAssociate> to read a full description of the role. The Associates will specifically help implement several strategies, including: providing leadership development for clergy, laity, and congregations; coaching and mentoring pastors and congregations; strategies related to the work of District Boards of Location and Building; as well as developing processes for providing pastoral care to clergy and clergy families.

UNY Treasurer Bob Flask said, ““The reallocation of funds will give more flexibility and support to District Superintendents to help address the needs of Districts through a regional approach.”

## Deeper connection

The Regional Superintendency Plan will keep the connections that you already have and allow us all to develop new connections as well. Under this plan, most of your current connections won’t change. Your District won’t change. Your District office won’t change. You will still have a District Administrative Assistant.

Teresa Wood, Oneonta District Administrative Assistant said, “The Bishop and Cabinet have given great consideration to this new plan we are about to embark on, and I see it as a positive way forward. We Administrative Assistants are committed to continuing to be a resource and will continue to support our local churches, to help this new plan go smoothly.”

What changes after July 1 is how your District is connected to other Districts. Your District will be linked with three other Districts to form a new region for the purpose of collaboration and support.



These new connections will help us continue to shift resources, decision-making, and responsibility closer to the local church where ministry happens in our Conference.

Adirondack District Superintendent, the Rev. Debbie Earthrowl said, “I see this (new plan) as an opportunity to make better use of our collective gifts, wisdom, and knowledge. Another powerful component of this new plan is the increased focus on reaping the blessings of our connection. Though we now publicize what other Districts and areas are doing, weekly prayer, and consideration about how we can best be a part of that, will no doubt, bear more fruit.”

Niagara Frontier District Administrative Assistant, Julie Maciejewski, said, “This is the perfect way to encourage more interaction between churches and Districts. We are United Methodists, so why not be united for special events between congregations, that may also happen to crossover between Districts? I enjoy getting to see people face-to-face at

*Continued on page 4*