

SCRIPT FOR INTRODUCTORY DVD

(* Indicates Slide Number)

(Words to the Leader: make this your own! Use language that will speak to your congregation. If you need to add interpretive information, please do so. If folks need to know where the churches are in the pictures, be ready to turn to the last page of this script. The names and places are listed in the Photo Credits. This is our gift to you to enable your congregation to be Born Again in your part of God's creation.)

***1- "Born Again in Every Place"**

***2-** The National Comprehensive Plan for Town and Country Ministry of The United Methodist Church

***3-** It is an Invitation:

- To view town and country churches as assets;
- To dream of energized, faithful, effective congregations in every place to make disciples for the transformation of the world;
- To yearn for effective lay and clergy leadership for the renewal of effective ministry to communities in every possible place;

***4-** To envision thousands of United Methodist disciples serving in town and country settings, motivated by the love of God to take up the cross of self-denial, be freed for joyful obedience, committed to making disciples and making a difference in their communities, so as to rekindle the historic fires of holiness of heart and life.

***5-** If you can dream in faith, it can happen!

***6-** Across the United States, many United Methodist town and country congregations effectively make disciples for Jesus Christ and creatively minister to their local communities and the world beyond.

***7-** Imagine what will happen when these more than 20,000 churches with 2.9 million members in the United States renew and

***8-**enlarge their visions of ministry,

***9-**are supported and resourced for such work,

***10-** and are affirmed in their importance to the church and its transformative work for the Kingdom of God.

***11-** It is possible that the renewal and revival of the church will flow from town and country congregations to the rest of the world!

***12-** Most town and country churches were founded from the desire of local people for a local Christian community. Across the years, numbers of them have unfortunately become more focused on the maintenance of the church family and facilities than on the Church's mission, and many have passively drifted into patterns of stagnation and survival.

***13-** By trying to save their own lives, they have forfeited their vitality.

***14-** At the same time, many rapid changes are occurring in town and country settings, including the loss of thousands of family farms; the changing face of agricultural production; the growth of ethnic/migrant populations; the emerging challenges of forestry, mining, fisheries, and other industries such as small manufacturing and prisons.

***15-** Patterns of use and control of rural land; the prevalence of severely depressed economies with high unemployment; and environmental issues such as soil conservation, water quality, and hazardous waste disposal.

***16-** Such changes have an effect on and often frighten town and country congregations:

- “Is there a tomorrow?”
- “How do we learn to reach out to new people?”
- “How do we – laity and clergy – get the kind of training we need for effective ministry in OUR time and place?”
- “Can we get quality leadership appropriate to our cultural setting?”

***17-** “How is God at work in the changing world around us?”
“What does God want of us?”

***18-** As town and country churches have struggled with these realities, those who work with them in the district or annual conference are tempted to view these congregations as problems.

- “What pastoral leadership can these churches afford?”
- “What pastor can we appoint to this charge whose gifts and abilities will fit well with the needs and opportunities present?”
- “Can we help financially to sustain this congregation’s ministry even if they have not always been able to pay their apportionments?”

***19-** “What resources or leadership should the annual conference invest to revitalize this church’s mission and ministry?”

***20-** The Action Plan for the National Comprehensive Plan for Town and Country Ministry of the United Methodist Church invites town and country congregations, and the church as a whole, to be “born again in every place.” This is an invitation to join a movement, to explore the riches of history and tradition, to examine the current community contexts, and to be open to the fresh movement of the Spirit of God.

***21-** To be transformed for renewed and effective ministry in the places God has called us all to live and to serve.

***22-** This is also an invitation to join a nation-wide community of learners and teachers, an invitation to those who are willing, to share their attempt to foster renewal, experience success, or failure, learn from it and share their learning with others for their encouragement.

***23-** So, Why Is This Relevant To YOU?

***24-** This presentation and your participation in the six sessions which follow are the latest steps in a journey that began in 1996, as a group of rural people who cared deeply about the faithfulness and effectiveness of rural churches proposed to the General Conference that a Comprehensive Plan for Town and Country Ministry be developed for the United Methodist Church in the United States.

***25-** The proposal was adopted, and the plan, *“Born Again in Every Place”*, that was subsequently developed was presented to the 2000 General Conference and adopted. The 2000 General Conference also mandated that a plan be developed to implement the *“Born Again in Every Place”* report.

***26-** That Action Plan was approved by the 2004 General Conference, and was delegated to the General Board of Global Ministries for implementation and funding through its Office of Town and Country Ministries.

***27-** Action for implementation is being carried out in three arenas of the church:

***28-** First: The general church where the infrastructure of relationships and technology is continuing to be developed for engaging in the teaching/learning/ sharing way of life. This will include:

***29-** the creation of a logo;

***30-** The logo begins as a quilt layout which signifies the importance of putting the pieces together to create a new whole that is greater than the sum of the parts. The upper corners are windmill blocks in four colors of green, the color of growth; the grapes and wheat are products of the land and sacramental elements of community. A butterfly signifies renewal and endurance of fragile life. Centered in the logo is the cross and flame, reflective of the church as central to the theme of the National Comprehensive Plan for Town and Country Ministries. *“Born Again in Every Place”* graphically depicts the renewal theme with strong emphasis on the word *“again”*.

***31** -A website that is interactive, has resources for downloading, links to other sites and will keep pace with the developments of implementation;

- A database of best practices, case studies, examples, resources and statistics; Protocol and procedures will also be developed for both the website and the database.
- A Town and Country Advisory Team made up of practitioners of town and country ministries from across the country is meeting two times per year to provide guidance and leadership to the implementation of the Action Plan. Staff members from boards and agencies will assist in facilitating the implementation.

***32-** Second: Jurisdictions and Annual Conferences

***33-** Meetings with:

- Cabinets,
- Connectional ministries leaders
- Jurisdictional groups to introduce the *“Action Guide for the Local Church”* for connecting, networking, resourcing and linking to engage in a Teaching/Learning/Sharing way of life.

- Leadership for meetings and gatherings will be given by members of the
- Advisory Team or the Office of Town and Country Ministries

***34-** Thirdly: Local churches

***35-** Engage in a Teaching/Learning/Sharing way of life

- for the making of disciples
- for the renewal of the local church
- for the Church to be *“Born Again in Every Place”*
- Local church leaders use the “Action Guide for the Local Church” for reflection and discernment

***36-** General Board of Global Ministries Directors, Directors of other Boards and Agencies, Ministry Cabinets and town and country leaders act as referral channels

***37-** The Action Guide for the Local Church is offered to local church and district leaders as a beginning step toward the revitalization of the whole church. As clergy and laity work and worship together as partners in town and country ministry, it is the hope of the authors that God’s Spirit will again move among the people of Christ in every place, bringing a new birth of love and joy in ministry and fruitfulness in mission.

***38-** How to Use this Action Guide:

The Action Guide is intended for use by local church and district leaders, lay and clergy together, to find the next steps that need to be taken toward renewal and revitalization. It is designed to lead participants in “worshipful work.”

***39-** Worship, prayer and other spiritual formation disciplines accompany study, reflection, discussion and planning. Each session will contain some of the same elements, while also having opportunity for new ideas, information or application. For the sessions to be meaningful, it will be essential that participants relate their own setting and its realities to the issues, examples, and experiences of ministry presented. You will need to find points of contact with your rural culture and the meaning or what is behind the stories. It will be up to you to “bring it home.”

***40-** The General Outline for each session is:

***41-** Gathering and call to worshipful work – Be sure everyone knows everyone else by name, and are comfortably seated where they can see each other. Share any joys or concerns from the past week. Agree to take part to the best of the ability of each.

***42-** Litany of Vision – Speak this piece aloud at each session to anchor the group’s work in hope and faith.

***43-** Hymn – Sing or say aloud the hymn suggested, as a way of uniting hearts and minds in a common faith journey.

***44-** Devotional – Read aloud the scriptures suggested, and have someone present the devotional thoughts printed in the resource. Spend time in silent reflection and also in group response to the scripture and devotional text.

***45- Experience of Ministry** – Look together at the experience of effective ministry that is offered. Talk together to clarify what issues and questions the example raises.

***46- Rumination** – Use the questions listed to guide a group discussion of what the Experience of Ministry teaches or has to say to you in your situation. Pray together for insight into God's will for your church, in response to the experience of others.

***47- Closing Hymn** – Use one of the hymns suggested as a way to bring the group toward a harmonious closure.

***48- The Lord's Prayer** – Pray together for God's will to be done on your part of God's earth, as it is in heaven. Feel free to include other prayers during this time, along with a prayer of blessing as group members part.

***49-** You are beginning a new journey of faith, firmly rooted in God's promises and faithfulness that has been sustained by that great cloud of witnesses through the years of the life of your congregation. Those who have been involved in the journey that is the National Comprehensive Plan for Town and Country Ministry, wish you God's blessing as you enter this time of reflection and discernment. May you know the power of God's Spirit at work in your midst!

PHOTO CREDITS

- 1 New Meadows United Methodist Church, New Meadows, Idaho, Oregon-Idaho Conference
- 2
- 3 Beverly United Methodist Church, Red Bird Missionary Conference
- 4 Tractor Rally, State Capitol, Salem, Oregon, Oregon-Idaho Conference
- 5 Cherokee United Methodist Church, Western North Carolina Conference. Photo by Sharon Leatherman
- 6 Milton-Freewater United Methodist Church, Oregon-Idaho
- 7 "Cementing" basketball court by Wenatchee First UMC and Woodinville Bear Creek at Wilbur Memorial UMC, White Swan, Washington, Pacific Northwest Conference. Photo by MarLu Scott.
- 8 Yakima Nation Dancers and Drummers express appreciation for the new basketball court by hosting a mini pow-wow, taught the Friendship Dance and shared a meal. Photo by MarLu Scott.
- 9 Town and Country Advisory Team Members. Photo by Paul Wiley
- 10 Rural Chaplains Association Certification Service, Chugiak, Alaska, Alaska Missionary Conference. Photo by Gary Locklear.
- 11 Hinton Rural Life Center Small Membership Church Workshop, Dotham, Alabama, Northern Alabama Conference
- 12 Lyons United Methodist Church, Oregon-Idaho
- 13 Walton United Methodist Church, Walton, New York, New York Conference
- 14 Prison, Rural New York
- 15
- 16 Paw Paw United Methodist Church, West Virginia, Baltimore-Washington Conference. Photo by Sharon Leatherman
- 17 Lake Huron Retreat Center, Port Huron District, Detroit Conference.
- 18 Mill Creek United Methodist Church, Clay County, Red Bird Missionary Conference
- 19 Wallins United Methodist Church, Red Bird Missionary Conference. Photo by Tim Crawford
- 20 Vacation Bible School, Stratton-Kirk United Methodist Churches, Rocky Mountain Conference. Photo by Judy Hill
- 21 Black Soil District, Russia
- 22 Town & Country Advisory Team Members. Photo from Paul Wiley
- 23
- 24 United Methodist Rural Fellowship Executive Committee circa 1996. Photographer unknown.
- 25 Town & Country Advisory Team Members. Photo by Paul Wiley
- 26 2004 General Conference gathered for plenary. Photo by John C. Goodwin
- 27
- 28
- 29 Logo design by Wanda Eichler, Pigeon, Michigan, Detroit Conference
- 30
- 31 River Baptism. Cal-Nevada Conference. Photo by Ernesto Trevino
- 32
- 33 Town & Country Advisory Team. Photo by Paul Wiley
- 34
- 35 Luau, Stratton United Methodist Church, Rocky Mountain. Photo by Judy Hill
- 36 General Board of Global Ministries Directors. Photo by Mary Beth Coudal