

Grace and peace to you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

As we gather for Charge Conference in 2025, I offer this State of the Church report as a testimony to God's faithfulness, a record of our shared ministry, and an honest reflection on where we stand as a congregation committed to loving God, loving our neighbors, and making a difference in the world.

This past year was one of clarity, courage, and spiritual growth for Hilldale UMC. In the aftermath of the 2024 General Conference, our congregation navigated financial challenges, strengthened leadership structures, expanded community partnerships, and renewed our focus on discipleship. Through it all, God has continued to shape us into a church that not only worships faithfully on Sunday but actively seeks the transformation of Clarksville throughout the week.

Hilldale's spiritual life continues to deepen in meaningful ways. In 2025, we leaned into our identity as a United Methodist congregation shaped by grace, guided by Scripture, and rooted in the Wesleyan way of discipleship. Throughout the year, we focused intentionally on becoming more rooted in our life of discipleship—rediscovering the practices, commitments, and rhythms that form us into a people shaped by God's grace.

As 2025 began, we saw worship attendance normalize. New faces, new energy, new volunteers, and new possibilities emerged each week. While we hoped our financial picture would also stabilize, starting the year with three consecutive weeks of online worship—combined with the loss of several giving units following the 2024 General Conference—created a steep deficit. This required us to dip into reserves and reevaluate the budget for 2026.

One of Hilldale's greatest strengths continues to be our commitment to serving Clarksville in tangible ways. The question often asked in churches—*"Would the community notice if we were gone?"*—can be answered with a confident and joyful yes here at Hilldale. Clarksville would notice, because Hilldale shows up.

In 2025, we continued and expanded our missional engagement through:

- **Fuel:** providing weekend food for schoolchildren
- **Good Neighbor:** emergency assistance for families in crisis
- **The Little Pantry:** supporting low-barrier food access
- **Urban Ministries & Loaves and Fishes:** extending compassion to our unhoused neighbors
- **Habitat for Humanity:** sponsoring the home of David, Tasha, and Trinity
- **Meals on Wheels:** hosting and supporting expanded meal delivery from our facilities
- **The Red Cross:** designating our Christian Life Center as an emergency shelter for local disasters

These ministries and partnerships reflect who we are at our best: a church that meets real needs with real grace.

This year required us to face financial realities with honesty and faith. Giving remained steady compared to last year, but we continue to face a notable gap between projected income and actual giving. Trends across the Tennessee-Western Kentucky Conference confirm that we are not alone; many congregations are experiencing similar challenges due to changing giving patterns, demographic transitions, and broader economic pressures.

Hilldale's financial picture in 2025 included:

- Lower-than-anticipated pledge fulfillment
- A decline in cash reserves
- The need to align staffing costs with current realities

These realities led to difficult but necessary conversations with staff and adjustments to our structure. And yet, we have reason for hope. Our small group conversations have helped the congregation understand our financial reality more deeply. Many leaders have committed to increasing their pledges, and we continue to explore innovative ways to support our budget beyond Sunday morning giving. Our focus has been to help the congregation understand that stewardship is not about meeting a budget but about shaping hearts toward generosity and investing in God's mission.

Hilldale's campus continues to be an asset for ministry and community partnerships. With increasing facility usage, we are developing a more comprehensive approach to:

- Long-term maintenance
- Space utilization
- Sustainability in HVAC and lighting systems
- Exploring revenue-generating uses for underused land

These conversations are not simply about buildings; they are about the mission God is calling us to steward.

Hilldale is entering a season of renewed possibility. We are not defined by scarcity; we are propelled by calling. Looking ahead, our vision is clear and compelling:

**To be a community where people are known, loved, growing, and sent into the world as disciples of Jesus Christ.**

To live into this vision, our priorities for 2026 include:

- **Launching the One by One campaign**, where we will collect 1,700 stories from our community
- **Strengthening our Invitation Culture**, with intentional hospitality training and sustained outreach to newcomers and unchurched residents

**Expanding our Missional Presence**, building on One by One to cultivate relational evangelism and compassionate service

- **Achieving Financial Stability**, aligning staffing and ministry costs with sustainable revenue and increasing recurring giving
- **Growing Intergenerational Ministry**, empowering children, youth, and adults to lead, learn, and serve together
- **Enhancing Community Partnerships**, especially with the Red Cross, Meals on Wheels, local nonprofits, schools, and civic organizations

Hilldale's future is not behind us. Our future is unfolding right now, through the Spirit's work in and through the people of this church.

Hilldale UMC is becoming the church God is calling us to be—one prayer, one act of generosity, one invitation, one touch of grace at a time. We are not the same church we were a decade ago, and we will not be the same church a decade from now. We are a church in motion, led by the Spirit, shaped by God's grace, and committed to loving Clarksville with the heart of Christ.

As we step into a new year, I remain grateful to serve alongside you. The road ahead requires courage and creativity, but it is filled with hope. God is at work here. And for Hilldale United Methodist Church, the best is yet to come.

In Christ,

Rev. Dr. Jefferson M. Furtado,  
*Senior Pastor*