Dear Friends,

I hope your year is off to a great start. As we look forward to what’s ahead in 2020, I want to provide a quick update on the United Methodist Health Ministry Fund’s work. It seems hard to believe that a year has already passed since we celebrated $70 million in grantmaking with the launch of our new visual identity and website.

Over the last year, we continued efforts to improve access to care and ensure sustainable financing for health care, particularly in our rural communities. Last year, we were excited to receive a HRSA grant to advance quality in rural health care settings. We also launched a project to ensure a complete count of all Kansans in the 2020 Census, with special focus on southwest Kansas. In the coming months, please be sure to be counted. Millions of dollars in funding for health care and our rural communities depends on all Kansans participating in the upcoming Census.

We continue to focus on early childhood development programming and policies. We have convened stakeholders, policymakers and partners in an effort to support our most valuable asset – our children. There is a great deal to be proud of – from improved breastfeeding initiation and duration rates to state investments in evidence-based home visiting programs like the Attachment and Biobehavioral Catch-up (ABC) program.

Our Healthy Congregations program is growing. Nearly 100 churches are working to improve congregational and community health through the program. Our special grant opportunities like the Neighboring Movement and rural bike share program are generating excitement and activity in our communities. Last year, the Healthy Congregations Retreat and Intersections of Faith and Health Conference fostered learning and sharing on issues central to building healthier communities.

Looking ahead to the rest of 2020 and beyond, we are excited to continue to partner with you to improve the health and wholeness of Kansans. Together, we will have a healthier future.

Best,

David Jordan,
President
Expanding Medicaid coverage to 150,000 Kansans remains a top priority of the Fund. An overwhelming majority of Kansans, led by the Alliance for a Healthy Kansas, and a bipartisan majority in Legislature are rallying behind the cause. Governor Kelly and so many others championed the issue over the last year, including at this March 19 gathering. With a bipartisan agreement in place, we are hopeful this is the year!

Funding is critical to sustaining rural health care and the continued viability of our rural communities. Central to funding is ensuring every Kansan is counted in the decennial Census, which takes place this year. The Fund is supporting Kansas Appleseed’s efforts to ensure hard to count communities in southwest Kansas are included. Kansas Appleseed’s Blanca Soto and Health Fund President David Jordan, both named to Kansas’ Complete Count Committee, are pictured here in December as part of a social media campaign to highlight the importance of ensuring every Kansan is counted.

As part of its long-standing work to improve health and well-being in rural Kansas, the Health Fund sponsored season 2 of My Fellow Kansans, a podcast series produced by Kansas News Service. Through the 6-part series, host Jim McLean explores rural Kansas to discover what the future holds for rural communities across the state.

Within a month after the October launch of the podcast, more than 36,000 visitors had accessed the series online.

The Health Fund has continued serving in the important role of convener. In February we convened nearly 75 early childhood leaders from throughout the state to help inform our early childhood work and share lessons learned from their work with policymakers.

Our work, in collaboration with many partners throughout the state, has resulted in promising gains in breastfeeding initiation and duration rates. In the past year, Kansas experienced a 20% increase in 6-month exclusive breastfeeding, moving from 27th to 11th among states. The efforts were recognized by Governor Kelly as she declared August as Breastfeeding Awareness Month. We were proud to be at the proclamation signing.

North Carolina has long been viewed as a leader on supporting early childhood development. To explore highlights of their system, the Health Fund sponsored a learning trip to North Carolina in November for key members of the Kansas legislature and agency staff.

Takeaways from the trip have provided an invaluable roadmap for how to set Kansas children up for success.
In November, the **Intersections of Faith and Health Conference** brought together more than 85 health care professionals and community members to Salina from across Kansas and Nebraska. The event included exploration of the profound health impacts of social isolation and loneliness, and how the health and faith communities can combine strengths, partnering to address this and other issues to build healthier communities for all.

**The Healthy Congregations Retreat** brought 110 participants to Rock Springs 4-H Center in late April to explore new ways congregations can help improve key health factors – in the places we live, learn, work, and pray – which affect health far more than what happens in the doctor’s office.

Members of our board and staff attended **The GIH Annual Conference on Health Philanthropy** in Seattle. This is the largest gathering of health funders in the country, representing a unique opportunity to connect with experts and like-minded peers, like Surgeon General Dr. Jerome Adams (pictured here).

In 2019, Katie Schoenhoff was promoted to Director of Programs, Kristine Dean and Jeff Gamber both celebrated 20 years of service, and Dashinika Poindexter joined the staff as Program Coordinator. The passion of the entire Health Fund team is reflected in their hard work and dedication to improving the health of all Kansans.

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Staff member and former board chair **Janet Hamilton** retired from our team in June 2019. After a battle with cancer, she passed away in December. Janet was a dedicated member of the United Methodist community and a tireless advocate for health and access to care. Although she is no longer with us, her legacy of caring and service continues through the many lives she touched.

Over the last year, our board has worked hard to update our governance framework and strengthen our grantmaking impact.
COMING UP IN 2020

- **Community Conversations on Rural Healthcare**
  Dates and locations vary, visit www.healthfund.org for details

- **National Census Day - April 1**
  In mid-March, look for official Census Bureau mail detailing how to complete the 2020 Census online, by phone, or by mail. Ensuring all Kansans are counted is vitally important.

- **High 5 For Mom & Baby Expansion – Early April**
  Our breastfeeding initiative in Kansas hospitals will be announcing a program expansion soon

- **Healthy Congregations Retreat – April 24-25**
  The theme of this year’s retreat for Great Plains United Methodists is Strengthening Families, Congregations, and Communities. Visit www.healthfund.org to register.

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For more details, view the report online at www.HealthFund.org.