GLOBAL MINISTRIES
General Board of Global Ministries
THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Global Ministries to commission EarthKeepers for environmental stewardship
47 new Global Ministries EarthKeepers will launch creation care projects in the U.S.

October 27, 2026

ATLANTA - Global Ministries will commission 47 new EarthKeepers during an online service on Tuesday, November 10 at 8 p.m. ET. This service will affirm the 2026 cohort in their call to the ministry of creation care and bless their work in their communities. The service will be livestreamed at EK 2026 Commissioning.

Global Ministries EarthKeepers is a training program designed to equip United Methodists in the United States for environmental stewardship. Participants discuss theology, United Methodist resources, project planning, and anti-racism, and then use what they learn to develop an environmental project for their churches and communities. The program supports people looking to turn an idea into action and those who want to deepen an existing ministry. They then develop plans in conversation with peers, troubleshoot ideas, and share strategies.

2026 marks the 10th anniversary of the EarthKeepers program, with more than 500 people trained. This year's cohort trained online and in-person in Decatur, GA, represents 23 annual conferences and all five United States jurisdictions. Participants include clergy, laity, annual conference staff and agency staff.

"Even as we celebrate a decade of Global Ministries EarthKeepers, we recognize that the damage to God's creation is worsening every year," said Roland Fernandes, general secretary of Global Ministries and General Board of Higher Education and Ministry. "As this year's EarthKeepers catalyze projects in their communities, I call on all United Methodists to deepen their commitments to ensure the flourishing of our common home."

"Amid temperature rise, cataclysmic weather, and desecrated lands, EarthKeepers across the United States provide theologically grounded local leadership on pressing environmental concerns," said Rev. Jenny Phillips, director of Environmental Sustainability. "They are a remarkable example of faithful action in the face of growing crisis."

This is the tenth year that the commissioning service has been held online, allowing EarthKeepers nationwide to participate along with their family, friends and church communities. The service will be led by Bishop Robin Dease, resident bishop for the Georgia Episcopal Area.

Headshots of the participants are available for annual conference communications use at: EK 2026 Commissioning

The next training is in New Orleans, LA March 11-14, 2027. Details at http://umcmission.org/earthkeepers.

The 2026 Global Ministries EarthKeepers reside in the following conferences

Alaska
Teri Inch

Arkansas
Wendy Shoffner

Baltimore-Washington
Julie Sharpe

California-Pacific
Laura Prather

California-Nevada
Rev. Angel Rivero

Desert Southwest
Debra Pallack

East Ohio
Robert Catchpole
Mark Hrabe
Jasen Pekalla
Erianne Raib-Ptichkin
Shannon Sefcik

Florida
Saniye Kazan

Georgia
Gayle Chimo
Janeé Freeman Dranberg
Rev. Angela Gilbreath-Rivers
Rev. Jacqueline Harmon
Anne Hicks
Karen Kelley
Michelle Kunce
Lynn Pugh
Yolanda Reid-Wheeler
Cassie Ruiz
Beth Sexton
Carlynn Sharpe-Ehui

Great Plains
Rev. Daniel Norwood

Greater New Jersey
Urmila Malvadkar
Albarka Wakili

Horizon Texas
Rev. Patrick Hoffman

Michigan
Stephanie Diep
Denise Messina

Minnesota
Diane Fortney

Missouri
Millie McDowell

New England
Rev. Mary Miller

New York
Renee C. Airhuoyo
Rev. Andrea Davidson

South Carolina
Rev. James Brown

Susquehanna
Kendra Jones Mabon

Virginia
Maria Baker

West Ohio
Candace Rhoill
Kathy Shea

Western North Carolina
Karlah Burton
Mandy Cummings
Carol Weaver
Thelma Wright

Wisconsin
Jose Dubon
Lisa Gildersleeve
Rev. Lori Lossie

Photos are available at: EK 2026 Commissioning

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About the General Board of Global Ministries of The United Methodist Church
Global Ministries is the worldwide mission and development agency of The United Methodist Church. Founded in 1819, Global Ministries today supports more than 200 missionaries in over 60 countries, including the United States. It has personnel, projects, and partners in 110 countries. Learn more about Global Ministries by visiting http://www.umcmission.orgor by following http://www.facebook.com/GlobalMinistries and www.twitter.com/UMCmission.

Media Contact: Susan Clark, media@umcmission.org