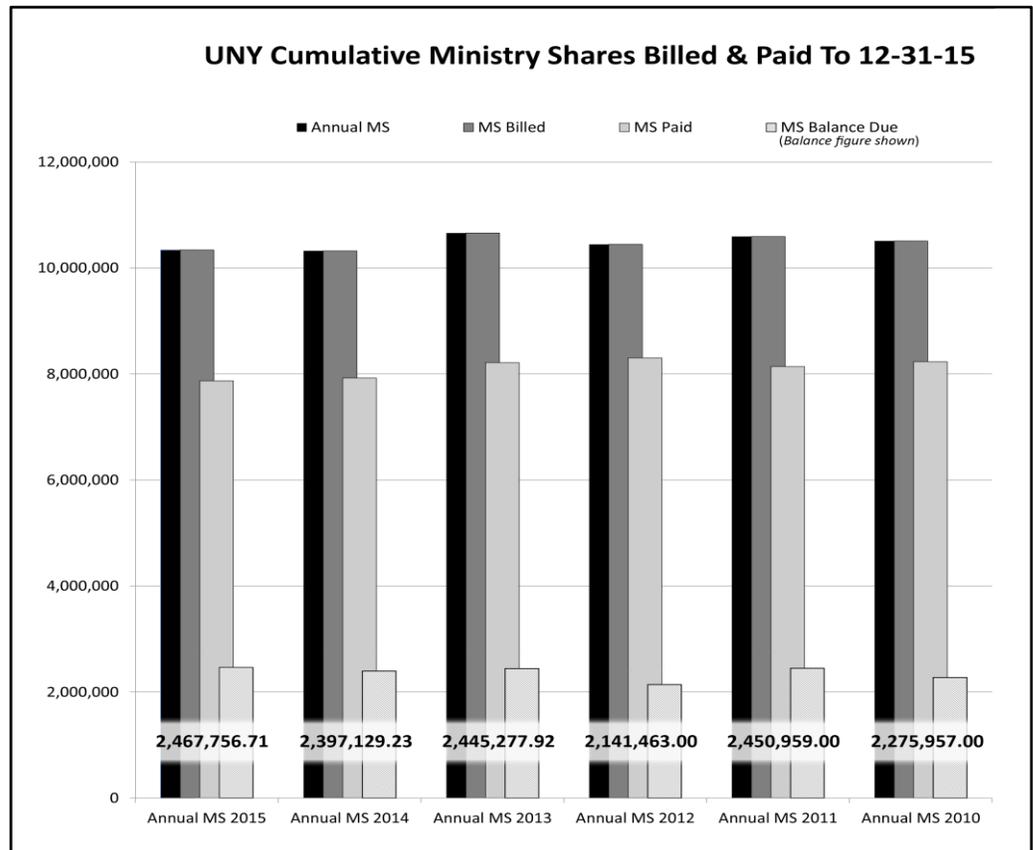


The Challenge in the Upper New York Conference

Since its formation in 2010, the Upper New York Conference has struggled to fully fund its Connectional Ministries through the Ministry Share giving of its local churches. Each year, more than \$2 million is left uncollected, forcing the Conference to scale back ministry plans and underpay its commitments to the General Church and other ministry partners. The Conference continues to explore and implement strategies to address this challenge by reducing conference spending and increasing local church giving.

The graph at right illustrates this challenge:



How has the Conference reduced spending? The Conference has sought to do this in three ways:

1. Staffing: The largest Conference expenditure is for staffing (salaries and benefits). Since 2013, the Conference has reduced staffing by 13 full-time equivalents – a 17 percent reduction

	2016	2015	2014	2013
#FTE - Episcopal Office	1.5	2	2	2
#FTE - Syracuse Conference Office	22.75	25.25	25.25	25.75
#FTE - District Superintendents and District Administrative Assistants	18.75	18.75	19.25	19.25
#FTE - Camp & Retreat Centers	20	22.5	28.75	28.75
#FTE - Media Resources Center	1	1	1	1
# FTE -Total	64	69.5	76.25	76.75

2. Spending Plan: The Conference has controlled expenditures in other areas by limiting or suspending spending by teams and programs:

- Since 2013 the Conference Executive Staff Team and District Superintendents have only received 1 pay increase. Additionally, there will not be an increase in 2017.
- Ministry Share allocations to Camp & Retreat Ministries were reduced by \$75,000 for 2016 and will be reduced by \$86,000 in 2017 through the realignment of summer camp programs and reducing staff at multiple sites. Actual spending by Camp & Retreat Ministries decreased by \$130,000 in 2015.
- Conference team spending has been capped at approximately 35-40 percent of budgeted amounts since 2013.
- Equitable Compensation grants to assist struggling churches to meet minimum clergy salary requirements have decreased since 2013, from \$425,000 to \$225,000 in 2016.
- Spending in 2016 will be reduced by \$448,000 by suspending funding to Conference support of campus ministries, ministry oversight team grants and the New York State Council of Churches. New ways to continue these ministries are being explored.
- Utilizing the new District Leadership Team structure, district grants in the amount of \$10,000 per district are now being used to support ministry at the local church level.

- General Church Apportionment payment levels are set annually to reflect expected Ministry Share collection levels. Payments were set at 70 percent for 2016 and 65 percent for 2015 resulting in reduced payments of apportioned amounts by \$582,000 in 2016 and \$676,000 in 2015. That has resulted in the Upper New York Conference not meeting its commitment to the General Church.

3. Ministry Share Budget: The Conference Ministry Share budget has also decreased by \$639,970 or 6 percent since 2013:

Year	Ministry Share Budget	\$ difference from previous year	% change
2013	\$10,718,402		
2014	10,323,781	-\$394,621	-3.68%
2015	10,340,348	+16,567	0.16%
2016	10,079,236	-261,112	-2.53%
2017, proposed	10,078,432	-804	0%

Why are we buying and renovating a Conference Center when we can't afford to fund the ministries we agreed to support?

The funds that are being used to buy and renovate the new Conference Center in Liverpool are designated funds resulting from the sale of buildings from Upper New York's predecessor Conferences. These funds cannot be used towards the Ministry Shares budget, and over time this new Conference Center will realize a cost-savings for the Conference versus the other options explored.

What does the revenue picture look like? Since 2010, the Conference has received between 76 percent and 78 percent of the Ministry Shares apportioned to local churches. Below are the results for 2015:

% Ministry Shares Paid	# of Churches	Ministry Share Ask	Paid	Balance Due
100% Paid or More	602	\$5,869,670	\$5,906,160	(\$36,490)
	116	\$2,111,736	\$1,454,139	\$657,597
Paid 49% to 25%	68	\$1,120,488	\$399,024	\$721,464
Paid 24% to 1%	59	\$750,216	\$4,113,359	\$636,857
Did Not Make a Payment	51	\$488,328	-	\$488,328
Totals	896	\$10,340,438	\$7,872,681	\$2,467,757

What is being done to increase local church giving?

- District Superintendents have undertaken group and one-on-one meetings with church leaders to explore ways to support and advise congregations to promote, sustain, and improve Ministry Share giving.
- CF&A, Board of Pensions, and Trustee Teams have directed special attention to understand and develop strategies to improve the financial health of our churches.
- The Ministry Shares Toolbox, available at www.unyumc.org/resources/ministry-shares-toolbox, continues to be improved and expanded to help local churches share the story of ministry done through connectional giving.
- Every congregation not paying 100 percent of its ministry share will develop a one- to three-year plan to pay 100 percent.
- Conference staff are available to assist churches in their understanding and questions that may arise.
- Efforts are being made toward better use of our statistical information to understand how churches are prioritizing their financial resources.

What can local churches do to restore ministry funding?

The most important initiative churches can undertake is to fulfill 100 percent of their Ministry Share benevolence. The ministries reduced or cut in the spending plan are still in the budget. The funds are just not there to support them. If your church can even make a modest percent increase, it makes a real difference when combined with other churches doing the same.

- If those churches that paid less than 100 percent in 2015 can improve their giving by a minimum of 10 percent this year, that would yield a minimum of \$505,897 in additional dollars.
- If those churches that faithfully gave 100 percent can increase their giving between 3-10 percent, that would yield between \$152,000 and \$506,389 in additional dollars.