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Forward Thinking to Develop New Digital Tools

NASHVILLE, November 2018 – The United Methodist Publishing House (UMPH) assembled a group of over 50 clergy and church leaders for an intensive three-day assessment of current and future use of digital resources. The group is a subset of the 63-member advisory panel representing churches of many sizes and types, and they gathered at UMPH’s Nashville headquarters November 12-14 as part of a year-long project of systematic research in ministry applications for digital media.

Pastors, worship leaders, and educators examined prototypes of digital resources providing feedback about content, presentation, and ways to access resources. Panelists met with product developers for a deep dive into questions about what content is most useful and needed by local churches. Utilizing the Design Thinking process, UMPH prioritizes empathy and interaction with customers as an essential step in fashioning solutions that meet their needs.

Arthur Jones, pastor at St. Andrew United Methodist Church in Plano, Texas noted, “The Publishing House has made a concerted effort to get really raw, blunt, and honest feedback about how they’re engaging our local churches. They’ve done a great job since the 18th century. It’s really nice to see them evolving and leveraging what we currently need, and providing a tool to meet those needs.”

Panel member Matt Rawle, lead pastor at Asbury United Methodist Church in Bossier City, Louisiana said, “Using this kind of technology really expands and reproduces what I’m trying to do personally in small groups. It helps us curate and cultivate an experience that I know people will trust and share, which is important.”

“Time with forward-thinking leaders helps us imagine new media offerings for both emerging ministries and existing congregations, finding new ways to connect with people,” said Susan Salley, Associate Publisher for Ministry Resources and Christian Living Books.

Abingdon Press and Cokesbury, two arms of The United Methodist Publishing House ministry, are collaborating to deepen their understandings of customer needs related to digital resources by employing interviews, focus groups, surveys, and the 63-member advisory panel of local leaders.

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