One way in which TMF stewards potential is by investing in leaders, with an expectation that the dividend to be paid is in their purposeful outcomes and increased courage and effectiveness.

**THE FORMATION OF LEARNING COMMUNITIES:**

One platform we provide takes the form of a learning community, meeting regularly with a facilitator over a minimum of two years, strengthening leaders for deep change.

**Filters by which we form groups:**

- Gathering leaders who are in positions to leverage change in their own settings and in the larger landscape of the church’s mission
- Addressing adaptive rather than technical or pastoral issues
- Aligning our learning agenda with the identified needs of annual conferences and local churches

**Expectations which guide our formation of groups:**

- Instilling an expectation of impact beyond the participant’s current setting
- Engaging primarily in vertical learning, moving from information to praxis
- Providing exceptional facilitators and outside resources to stimulate conversation and growth

**CURRENT TMF GROUPS**

**Reversing the Field Group**, facilitated by Carole Somers-Clark, comprised of senior pastors who are committed to engaging their mission field in a way that understands the church as an integral part of the gifts and assets already available in the community, rather than the provider of such resources (began meeting in 2017)

**Ministry with the Poor Group**, facilitated by Carole Somers-Clark, comprised of leaders who are deeply committed to the work of making disciples among those who make less than $30,000 and helping congregations engage in ministry with those living in asset poverty

**Entrepreneurial Pastors Group**, facilitated by David McNitzky, comprised of younger pastors appointed to larger congregations in order to encourage an entrepreneurial spirit in their leadership for the church (ongoing, under their own initiative)

**Executive Pastors Group**, facilitated by Mike Bonem, comprised of executive associates in larger churches who have responsibility for implementing deep change in and through their church

**Deep Change Group**, facilitated by Mike Bonem, comprised of executive associates in larger churches who have responsibility for implementing deep change in and through their church

To work for change in the church through facilitating conversations of courage, learning and innovation among leaders.
Second Chair Leaders Group, facilitated by Mike Bonem, a third group comprised of executive associates in larger churches who have responsibility for implementing deep change in and through their church

Worship Leaders Group, facilitated by David Wilson, comprised of leaders who have responsibility for non-traditional worship in their church and focused on how music and worship can facilitate reaching beyond the walls of their church

Bishops Conclave, facilitated by Gil Rendle, comprised of the SCJ active Bishops for the sake of creating balcony space to focus on leadership in a changing environment

First Year SCJ District Superintendents, facilitated by Lisa Greenwood, focusing on understanding the role of a Missional Strategist

Continuing SCJ District Superintendents, facilitated by Lisa Greenwood, focusing on living into the role of a Missional Strategist

Texas Large Congregation Senior Clergy, facilitated by David McNitzy, focusing on the unique role of the senior leader of a large church and on providing balcony space for peer learning and support

President’s Advisory Council, comprised of lay persons from across Texas and New Mexico for the purpose of expanding the purpose, generosity and courage conversations

Board of Ordained Ministry Leaders, facilitated by Lisa Greenwood, comprised of SCJ Board of Ordained chairs and selected leaders for the purpose of re-envisioning their work in light of the needs of a changing landscape

A Conversation among Large Church Pastors, facilitated by Bishop Janice Riggle Huie and Lisa Greenwood, comprised of leaders of churches striving to stay focused on the mission of the church while maintaining a wide diversity of perspectives under one umbrella; the initial meeting was March of 2017 with anticipation of another meeting in 2018.

“The kingdom relationships built within this group have truly been the most formative of my ministry! This group has changed the way I see the world, how I live in ministry, how I experience God, and ultimately how I pray.” - Sarah Squires, Ministry with the Poor Learning Community member and Executive Director, Wesley-Rankin

Dave Wilson, facilitator, with Worship Leaders Learning Community
LEARNING PROJECTS:

Another platform we provide is learning projects, which may take the form of a one-time event/conversation or an ongoing experiment for the purpose of learning around a significant issue facing the church’s ability to live out its mission. These projects are often the place where TMF engages its own learning agenda.

CURRENT LEARNING PROJECTS

Legacy Church Project: In the first year of this project, two annual conferences, Upper New York and Cal-Nevada, were tasked with creating a model for effectively closing churches within their conferences while conserving conference resources — staff, time or money. A National Network Team, comprised of non-TMF staff, helps resource and connect participating conferences, as well as to gather learnings, which can be shared with other conferences. In July of 2017, TMF hosted a learning event, facilitated by the National Team, comprised of six additional conferences who have committed to creating a new cohort.

The Work of Religious Social Entrepreneurs: TMF is exploring our role, as an edge organization, in identifying and encouraging the work of religious social entrepreneurs and “intrapreneurs” (ones who drive positive change within an existing organization) who are already cutting new paths for faith communities and discipleship outside of the limits of the organized church. We are learning all we can about the arena of religious social entrepreneurship and exploring the notion of TMF as a platform for learning and networking so that those who are doing this work might find space and resources to flourish and move the church (and, therefore, the Gospel) beyond the edges of its current reach.

This work is an extension of what was begun with the Forum on Wesleyan Potential, a TMF-hosted event in December of 2015.

TMF is collaborating with Angie Thurston and Casper ter Kuile (who were speakers at the Forum and are the co-authors of “How We Gather,” “Something More” and “Faithful”). TMF hosted a gathering in January 2017 of denominational leaders from 11 faith traditions. The purpose of this gathering was to explore the appropriate role of denominations in the realm of religious social entrepreneurship and innovation. The monograph, entitled “Faithful,” highlighting both the challenges and opportunities for traditional institutions and denominations in the arena of innovation, was released in June of 2017 with the intent of providing a tool for conversations and learning.

In July, TMF participated in a gathering, hosted by the Fetzer Institute, of other traditional foundations and funders who find themselves facing both the challenges and potential of supporting innovation on the edges of the church.

Outcomes and Metrics: For the past four years or so, TMF has engaged in the work of helping leaders, congregations and conferences name and measure outcomes. It is some of the most difficult work we have experienced, and yet it is vital for the church’s ability to direct...
resources and steward potential. In August 2017, TMF hosted an intensive learning lab related to this metrics and outcomes work. A national leadership team (BT Williamson, Texas; Hector Burgos, New Jersey; Lovett Weems, Wesley Seminary in DC; and our TMF team, Bishop Janice Riggle Huie and Lisa Greenwood) worked to gather 15 annual conferences from across the nation to participate in this deeper learning around outcomes and how to measure progress and direct resources.

**Reversing the Field:** A significant paradigm shift is occurring in the realm of congregational engagement with its mission field, as the language and practice of Asset Mapping and the related notion of Toxic Charity are challenging inherited patterns of church mission work. TMF’s Ministry with the Poor group and the new Reversing the Field group both provide platforms for leaders to engage in peer learning and exploration of the issues and potential that exists in this arena, all for the sake of deep change in their own context and in the larger church. In Leadership Ministry at TMF, we see this arena as an ongoing part of our learning agenda.

**Year-round Stewardship Pilot Project:** A collaboration of TMF & Horizons Stewardship to give churches a platform for peer learning and resources by which they might establish a year-round stewardship process in their church for the sake of creating a culture of generosity. In 2016, seven churches from the North Texas Conference were involved and all but one are reporting positive shifts in their discipleship and stewardship practices, as well as in the generosity of their congregations. Currently, eight churches in the El Paso District of the New Mexico Conference are engaged in this work, and TMF Area Representatives are planning new projects in other conferences in Texas.

**Hispanic Ministry:** As the demographics shift in the United States and particularly in the south central region, the United Methodist Church cannot be faithful to its purpose without directing additional resources and attention toward ministry with Hispanic and Latino persons. This ministry is as varied as ministry with Anglo persons, or any other ethnic demographic, and yet we have tended to relegate it to a “program” of the church and often combined the efforts with ministry with the poor. In October, TMF facilitated the Bishops and teams from each of their conferences in a conversation around ministry with Hispanic/Latino persons.

This initial conversation, called Encuentro, was held in the Rio Grande Valley of Texas along the border in order to expose participants to the diversity within the Hispanic population, including varying levels of economic status and assimilation into the culture. The bishops and their teams sought to gain a better understanding of who the church is trying to reach, when it comes to the Hispanic community, and why. At the same time, TMF gained a better understanding of this edge of the church’s ministry and the bright spots, assets and resources available for this adaptive issue.