



# Transcript

## *Means of Grace*

### Episode 51

**System:** Welcome to Means of Grace, a podcast produced by the Western North Carolina Conference of the United Methodist Church.

**Caroline Wood:** Thank you for joining me today on Means of Grace, a podcast for the Western North Carolina Conference. I'm with David Snipes, President and Executive Director of the [United Methodist Foundation of Western North Carolina](#), and also Caroline Cox, Director of [Reynolds Ministries and Programs](#) for the Foundation. Today we're going to learn about the ministry and programs of the United Methodist Foundation of the Western North Carolina Conference. Welcome, David.

**David Snipes:** Thank you, Caroline. It's great to be with you.

**Caroline Wood:** Thank you. Same here, David. Tell us about you.

**David Snipes:** I think that what I would really like people to know about me is that I am quite unique, right, Caroline Cox?

**Caroline Cox:** One word for it.

**David Snipes:** The reason I say that, Caroline Wood, is because I'm a second career cost accountant turned ordained minister. And so I am not one of those people that knew from early on that I was going to be a minister. And so therefore, I kind of talked about my life before call and my life after call. And we actually won't talk much about life before call. However, I can tell you that having an undergraduate degree in business administration with a concentration in management and almost having a double concentration in management and



accounting, it fits perfectly. My educational background fits perfectly with the work of the Foundation.

So the reason I share that with you - when I came to the foundation, you did not see as many second career people and especially second career people with that background that I just described. And so I think that certainly God called me at the right time to the right place, and I am most grateful for that. So that's what I would want people to know. From that point of view, I think from a very basic point of view because, as we all know, we get older, we retire, we move on. I am a husband of a supportive spouse and the father of two beautiful daughters, one of which that is actually in ministry herself. And so I am grateful for my life out beyond the Foundation, certainly.

**Caroline Cox:** I see the presence of God and the decisions that were made. I came to the foundation in 2015, started in a different role and eventually transitioned over into the area of Reynolds Ministries and Programs. And now I look back and see my past experiences and how they help me complete this job the way that it exists now and, you know, you could almost say that it must be part of some big plan. So I am married to a man named Brian. We live in Huntersville, North Carolina just not too far down the road from the Foundation office and so far, we're joined by a fur child, a dog named Caddy. But I'm happy to share that we will soon be joined by a human child this fall. We're expecting baby number one!

**Caroline Wood:** Oh my goodness. Congratulations! And something some people may not know about you is that you're a preacher's kid.

**Caroline Cox:** Yeah, born and raised in the United Methodist Church. My dad, Paul Thompson, acknowledged a call to ministry when I was maybe four, five, or



six years old. And he has served several churches in the Western North Carolina Conference and is currently appointed to Huntersville United Methodist Church.

**Caroline Wood:** David, how far back do your Methodist roots go.

**David Snipes:** I was born prior to the merger of the EUB and the Methodist Church, and so; but I was baptized and raised in Cooleemee United Methodist Church after 1968.

**Caroline Wood:** I love working with you guys, and that's why I wanted to have you on the podcast. I want to get into the Foundation a little bit. And so David, I took a look at the website and found a quote from you. And it says, "The ministry of the Foundation is more than money. It's about relationships. It's about faithfulness and recognizing the blessings that God has given us to grow the church. It is for this reason that I believe so strongly in the mission of the Foundation to build the church for generations to come." What does that mean, "to build the church for generations to come?"

**David Snipes:** Well, I think it, and I say this plainly and simply, and I think it's because we try as a Foundation staff, as well as our different teams and board of directors, to live it out. And what that means is kind of multifold, so to speak. So many times people think about the Foundation being about managing money or giving away money. And, yes, managing money, helping churches and related institutions be good stewards and grow that money through market gains, that hopefully builds the church. You know, we make loans to churches when they're expanding or acquiring property and of course, the idea is that those facilities will house ministry that will grow the church.

But we do more than just the money aspect of it. We do the, what I call, the personal one-on-one. Let's take the individual and help them grow and better



understand who they are, as one called by God to do ministry at this time and in this place. And this time and this place would be their time and place, whatever their ministry setting is. And so Caroline, through the Reynolds Ministries and Programs, you know, we have several leadership development programs that help people better understand their capacity for leadership in a ministry setting.

And so when you take that - taking the individual, helping them understand who they are as a leader and how to maximize and leverage those gifts and graces that they have for ministry and then you look at the financial side of it, our hope is that all that we do helps to bring to fruition the Kingdom of God and what God has called us to do not only individually, but corporately. So when we talk about building the church for generations to come, that's what we're talking about.

And if you look at our broader mission statement, which, by the way, is our litmus test for everything that we do. If an idea comes to the table, the first thing we say is how does this relate to our mission? And if it doesn't fit, then we believe God might be calling someone else to that, and we pass on it. If we can answer affirmatively, then we go for it. But we invest in churches and institutions, being the Conference. We managed money for your office, Caroline Wood.

**Caroline Wood:** Thank you.

**David Snipes:** You're welcome. Is a pleasure to be in partnership with you. But we manage money for the retirement communities, for the colleges and universities, you know, the Children's home, Crossnore, United Methodist Men and Women, districts, all of the different institutions. But we invest in individuals, churches and related institutions, and innovation. And so when we talk about innovation, we are looking for ministries that step outside the box of the norm



and try to fulfill that goal or that mission of building the church. So, I realized that is not the elevator ride answer to your question. But hopefully it's good enough.

**Caroline Wood:** That's perfect. Caroline, you talk about cultivating leaders who make disciples and David mentioned some of those leadership development programs. Can you tell us more about that, please?

**Caroline Cox:** As David was suggesting, the Foundation is a multifaceted ministry. There's a lot of different things that we get to do, and we're probably most known for the management of finances and material resources. But another area that we are really proud of is our leadership development offerings. Primarily, those are our Reynolds Ministries offerings. Those were established and funded by Royce and Jane Reynolds of Greensboro, North Carolina many years ago. We started with a grants offering that still exists today. We added a program called the Reynolds Program in Church Leadership, sometimes referred to as the certificate program, which is also still in existence. And over the years we've added several others including the Reynolds Leadership Academy for Evangelism and Discipleship. At one point, we had a similar academy established for campus ministers, and one of our more recent offerings that we're really proud of is the Reynolds Academy for Ministry Management. So in all of those we seek to empower pastors, especially in the Western North Carolina Conference; and many of them we try to teach pastors to look within themselves for their own spiritual gifts, how they can use those to be better leaders of the church. In the Reynolds Academy for Ministry Management we hopefully provide pastors with an opportunity to learn some skills and management practices, which are things that they would not normally learn in a seminary education. And then one of the best things that we do is, I think sometimes, simply put pastors together in a



room. There's so much that can be learned from one another, wisdom shared and even just occasions to laugh together and share experiences and relate to - pastors can relate to their peers, which is an opportunity not often given. So we're really proud of those offerings. We're always looking to grow and expand them.

We're so thankful that Jane Reynolds continues to be a very close partner, guide us and shape what we're able to do. And although Royce Reynolds passed away in 2020, his legacy is well documented. He was very clear on what he expected of us, and we cling to his vision that he had for growing the Kingdom of God by empowering the leaders of the church and enabling ministry through financial support.

**Caroline Wood:** Of course, we're so thankful for Royce and Jane and their vision, the vision that they had so many years ago in their support. Now there are two flagship offerings for the leadership development that you have as part of the Reynolds Ministries. There's the certificate program, and then there's the evangelism and discipleship offering. Can you tell us and help me understand the difference?

**Caroline Cox:** Yeah, absolutely. So those are probably the two leadership offerings that people are most familiar with. Those who refer to it as the certificate program are pointing to the Reynolds Program in Church Leadership. So that that is our oldest leadership development offering, one that we carry out in partnership with the Center for Creative Leadership. They have an office in Greensboro, North Carolina. And that is a unique offering because we're actually able to offer that, not only to pastors in our conference, but actually to five other conferences at this point - Virginia, South Carolina, North Georgia, Florida, South Carolina, the eastern half of the state, the North Carolina conference and then, of course, our own.



So in that program we get folks together four times over a span of about ten months. We look for pastors who have already demonstrated leadership capacity, high capacity to be strong leaders, and this is really an opportunity for them to step away from their local church, have some intentional time to not only hear about best leadership practices, but really focus on who God has called them to be and what gifts they have been blessed with that are unique to them that they can tap into.

So in that program, we actually carry out a lot of that work and training and education through personality assessments. Each participant is actually offered an executive coach that they can work with over those ten months. Of course, all of these things are paid for from the Reynolds Ministry Fund, which is a huge gift.

We've actually looked at the numbers, and this is an investment of about \$10,000 to \$12,000 per participant. So again, that's coming from the generosity of Royce and Jane Reynolds. But it's a major gift that we think has blessed over five hundred pastors over the years.

And then he referenced, something that people call the leadership academy. The full name that we use is the Reynolds Leadership Academy for Evangelism and Discipleship, and this is really a unique offering that was very much inspired by something that Royce Reynold practiced in his own career, in the car dealership industry. The idea is basically to get leaders together in a room to share those best practices, share their experiences and learn from one another.

Through that program, participants have the opportunity to occasionally travel around the country and in the past, sometimes even internationally. They're taken to see churches that are really on fire and growing, not only in membership numbers, but also an outreach. And then those pastors glean what they can, take



it back to their local congregation, sometimes implement ideas that they've seen and sometimes just walk away with inspiration to keep on with what they've been doing.

A huge focus of that program though is pure learning and accountability. So we put those participants into small groups. Ask them to spend intentional time with one another. And we actually identify mentors who have gone through the program before and serve as guides for those participants as they walk through the program.

**Caroline Wood:** Caroline, I expect that over the last six years that you've gotten to know many of the pastors in the Conference, and from these five conferences around the country. Can you share maybe a story that you've seen of transformation?

**Caroline Cox:** I have so enjoyed getting to know all of the pastors that have gone through the programs during my time that I've been involved, and something that is just so obvious is our pastors really do feel called. That is such unique language to ministry. That's not something you just here in every industry, if you will, for lack of better phrasing. But our pastors feel called, and yet they are also different. All pastors bring different experiences and different gifts, so it's interesting to watch the transformation that happens sometimes.

One of the more obvious things is, you know, someone may walk in claiming to be an extrovert or introvert and have different comfort levels of, you know, socialization and the way that things are done. But we all need connection, and we all appreciate the opportunity to be, you know, understood by others who have sometimes similar experiences. So again, you know, I point back to the unique chance that we have to enable peer learning and just peer connection.



That is one of the things that often leads to the most transformation. Just as shared conversations and their shared experiences.

**Caroline Wood:** There's a ripple effect that happens with shared experiences.

What have you seen happen in churches?

**Caroline Cox:** You know immediately, my mind goes to some of the effects of the Reynolds Academy for Ministry Management. You know, those pastors, as I said, are learning skills and teachings and ways of thinking that in most cases are very new to them. So they return to their congregations with this enthusiasm, the spark of excitement, and what we really enjoy is that they carry that back to the other staff members of the church. They carry it back to their lay leadership. And we have found that we have even gotten emails and phone calls from the folks at those churches saying, "Well, we don't know what you told our pastor, but he or she sure is excited. So something happened and thanks for that."

Eventually through that program, we decided that it may be beneficial to pull in some of those key folks from the local church. So for one session, we asked the pastors if they would bring along a few guests, maybe one person from their staff and then a few key lay leaders from their church to share in what they're experiencing, what they're learning and then take it back to the church. So it has an even greater impact.

**David Snipes:** Yeah, it kind of relates to our, the Foundations broader world of United Methodist Foundations, and not only for the leadership programs that Caroline mentioned that, some of the programs that I think you're getting ready to transition into the conversation - we have become a role model for many United Methodist Foundations throughout all of United Methodism, and they turn to us and say, "Hey, what are you doing? How are you doing it? Can you help



us do it?" Or they either listen to what we have to say, and then they go and try to plant that ministry within their context. So that's another ripple effect that goes beyond just the clergy that we actually reach through those leadership programs.

**Caroline Wood:** That's a far reaching ripple of the ministry of the Foundation. That just blows my mind.

**David Snipes:** Right. People just think about what we're the United Methodist Foundation of Western North Carolina and they're focusing on that particular geographic region. But we have a positive influence on Methodism in many other places because of what we do and how we do it.

**Caroline Cox:** Caroline, I think one other piece of evidence that we look to the supports that we do have this ripple effect and it is exponential growth that comes from these offerings is, we often receive grant applications from folks that have gone through the various Reynolds Ministries offerings. And you can see the dotted line, we draw it back from the grant application and the ministry initiative that is proposed to something that participant experienced during their time in the program. We can often see the direct connection to the moment that they were inspired, that then lead to something new being created or something being reinvigorated.

**Caroline Wood:** Can you share a story?

**Caroline Cox:** Yeah. So I recall, one great example is, you know, as I mentioned through the Reynolds Leadership Academy for Evangelism and Discipleship, those participants do have the opportunity to travel regionally, sometimes around the country and occasionally even beyond the United States borders and often our participants find that some of the most vital and fruitful ministries are ones that reach out to populations on the margins. So we then see grant



applications that reflect that same idea. It may lead to initiatives that reach out to folks experiencing homelessness. We see a lot of applications that relate to care for children and vulnerable populations, even children with differing or unique abilities. And we can look back to those moments of inspiration where those pastors saw how it was working at different churches in different ministries.

And so we're thrilled to see that and part of what's fascinating and inspiring is that the Holy Spirit is at work, too. You know, we try to set up plans that we think are going to be wise. But sometimes we do show up at a ministry location and are surprised by what we see. So that's a beautiful aspect of what we get to do, too.

**Caroline Wood:** It was almost a year ago when the pandemic hit and the Foundation was in a position to really help churches and pastors. Caroline or David, please share about that.

**Caroline Cox:** Yeah, I'll start David, and you feel free to jump in. But honestly, that is one of the things that I am most proud of as a staff member and team member of the United Methodist Foundation. We do have these established long-term offerings, but we are a dynamic and changing organization that has the ability to adapt and respond to the needs of the Western North Carolina Conference in the United Methodist Church. So COVID, while tragic, provides this perfect example and opportunity where we could think creatively and respond to needs with the assets that we have.

Another story of perhaps the Holy Spirit at work, the Reynolds Ministries team sat down together in early 2020, reviewed grant applications, knowing that there was a certain number of dollars that we could give away. And at that meeting, I will tell you that the Reynolds Ministries team prayerfully considered



every application and were ultimately led to the decision to leave some dollars on the table, which is a rare decision for us. We always like to make sure those dollars are put to work, and we know that Royce Reynolds would want that to happen.

That being said in that moment, the team, perhaps inexplicably, decided to leave some dollars on the table, and within a matter of weeks, COVID hit the United States and very soon after, the state of North Carolina and we were then able to go have a conversation with Jane Reynolds and say, “We still have these dollars available. What do you think about, you know, acting very pragmatically and making sure these dollars are distributed to churches that are quickly adapting to the needs of virtual worship? Let's get these monies out the door to do good in a way that's needed right now.”

So I almost get chills when I tell that story, I'm looking back, it is so interesting how we made those decisions. But after those dollars went out the door, we received so many letters and emails and calls just expressing great thanks, especially from pastors and church leaders who felt exasperated by the need to adapt so quickly. This was just the biggest gift to them, a lifeline almost and again, we acknowledge that thanks, but we also turn it over to Royce and Jane who are ultimately the ones who enabled this to happen.

**Caroline Wood:** It's such an honor for me to be involved with the foundation. I get to sit on the board by virtue of my position with the Conference, and I come out of those board meetings after having heard about the ministry so excited and inspired. You know, there are things we haven't even touched on today. So David, what else should we make sure that people know is available through the Foundation?

**David Snipes:** I'll piggyback on what Caroline said. This podcast could go all



afternoon, and especially if we included stories. But, you know, some of the things that we try to emphasize and once again this goes back to building the church for generations to come. We really encourage every church and related institution to create permanently restricted endowments that will help fund ministry and perpetuity. You can't ask for a better connection for building the church for generations to come than to fund ministry forever. So we have a lot of churches out there that have created endowments. Some of them are very specific and therefore unfortunately can't be used because they are so specific. So one of the things that we encourage churches to do is to create what's called a general endowment fund that would then cover a broader territory of ministry within that particular context.

And we will be glad to sit down and help the church leadership create that documentation. We literally have been from the very first utterances of "Let's create an endowment," going all the way to, "Let's be there and show up when they present it and get it approved for the church conference or whatever they call their governing body at any particular church."

And I'm going to kind of skip over the fund management part of it because that, you know, the nutshell of that is we invest money in socially responsible ways in an effort that institutions, churches will be the best stewards of the money that they possibly can be, and therefore generate income to fund ministry for generations to come, so that relates specifically. Some of the other things that I wish people knew about and I think it's kind of one of those things like I learned in seminary. Tell them what you're going to tell them. Tell them what you told them. Tell them, and you know that that series of you have to tell people the same thing over and over again before it really sinks in. And we tell this story, so



I'll tell it again. We make loans for churches. Our interest rates are competitive. But the thing that we hear repeatedly that really people are passionate about is that when you invest in the UMF Development Fund and a loan is made to First Methodist Church wherever, it's United Methodists helping United Methodists, you're keeping it in the family. It's kind of the idea of we're all in this together. So let's try to help one another the best we can. And that program had a record breaking year last year in the number of loans that were closed. Since the beginning of that program in 2006. So apparently people are hearing about it.

Another loan program that we have relates to clergy debt. And this is one of those programs that is a model throughout United Methodism. We are in partnership with Lily and Wespeth and the Duke Endowment, and basically what that program does is it receives applications, anonymously by the way, from clergy and that are appointed in the Western North Carolina Conference, and after an assessment is done of their financial situation, we will take their debt. We will pay it off and refinance it through the Clergy Debt Reduction Loan Program and - get ready for this - the interest rate is 1.5%. So you've got some people that have student loans in excess of 6%. They have credit card debt in double digits, interest rates, and we are paying that off, and we're only charging them 1.5%. So that was also in partnership with the Western North Carolina Conference Board of Pensions and Health Benefits, as well. They seated that originally because they wanted it to make a positive difference in the life of a clergyperson.

Well, and it goes back, Caroline, to what we were talking about earlier, about we believe that that program is as much about individual stewardship as it is about leadership development. Because we know that when clergy are under the pressure, financial pressure, that has a negative effect on their ability to



minister in their ministry setting. And so the goal is to try to relieve them of that pressure so that they can be freed up to focus on other things; and at the same time, you know, sometimes clergy, it can be a tragic situation, a health situation with a family member. I mean, it can be any number of things that cause a clergy to fall into this stressful financial situation. And so part of that program as well is to not only help them get out from under that; but also, if there are growing edges that they might have related to personal stewardship and finance then we will set them up with a certified financial planner, we will set them up with a mentor to help hold them accountable for their spending. All of those things, in other words, to help them better themselves and more fully live into their call.

So if you see it all, and I know this is a podcast and nobody can see my fingers right now, but it's all intertwined, and it all connects together, at least in my twisted mind. It all fits together. I'm not sure if it does.

**Caroline Wood:** You know, and there are other ways, too. I think of scholarships. The Foundation invests in students through scholarships.

**David Snipes:** Caroline Cox and I were just talking about that this morning. There is an announcement that will go out through the Western North Carolina Conference E-News this week related to the Dollars for Scholars program through the United Methodist Higher Education Foundation in Nashville. And what that program does is it is a matching fund scholarship that the Foundation participates in for any United Methodist student from Western North Carolina attending a United Methodist college or university. And they have to apply through UMHEF, and then if they are approved by UMHEF then we give \$1000 and the institution gives \$1000, UMHEF gives \$1000 and then normally their local church gives a \$1000, so they end up with a \$4000 scholarship. By the time it's all



done, we call it Quadruple Your Dollars for Scholars.

UMHEF is United Methodist Higher Education Foundation. UMHEF, they're based out in Nashville. UMHEF handles all of that process. So if a United Methodist student attending a United Methodist college or university, wants to apply, then they need to go through UMHEF, and then UMHEF notifies us as to basically how much we need to cut the check for. And so I am pleased to tell you, Caroline asked this yesterday, "So how much money do we have for this?" So we have \$30,000 this year, earmarked for what we call Quadruple Your Dollars for Scholars. So that means thirty students from Western North Carolina, no matter what United Methodist institution they're attending, if they qualify, they will be able to participate in that. So we're touching thirty different students' lives ranging from freshman in college, all the way up to adults who may be second career in seminary, attending Candler School of Theology or our Duke Divinity School or SMU, wherever.

**Caroline Wood:** Another program is the Certificate for Church Treasurers.

**David Snipes:** Caroline, that is an example of how God calls us or plants a seed. And literally, it took years. It took years to get that thing off the ground. But luckily, to use the seed analogy, we didn't plant something else or pave on top of the ground where that seed was planted. Years ago, right after I came to the Foundation, our then Conference Treasurer, Bill Wyman approached me about offering a program for certification of church treasurers, and we never could get it off the ground for various reasons. I mean, there were other areas of emphasis that took precedent whenever we would get to the point where we thought we were going to move forward.

And so I continued. As Bill retired and actually came to work at the Foundation



for a year, and Jennifer Barton was our Conference Treasurer, and then now Mark King, I kept talking about it. And Mark King was ready to go with it. He had had the same idea and had a passion for that. And having served as a church treasurer in his capacity as minister of administration and finance executive pastor work. So we created it. Well, lo and behold, we created it and we started it in 2020 and halfway through it, the pandemic hit. And so we had to put it on hold as we regrouped to look at how we would offer this. We receive feedback from the participants, you know, what would you be willing to do? Would you be willing to go virtual?

And what's interesting is initially the people weren't interested in going virtual until they realized this is going to go on longer than we thought. So we finally were able to conclude the second half of our first ever Certificate Program in Church Treasury in November. We started off with twenty three participants. By the time we graduated them, we had seventeen. And basically what they did was they learned the legalities behind church treasury. They learned some of the basics about opening accounts and what kind of accounts you should have, all the way through how do you read an income statement and the balance sheet? We talked about accounting for contributions. We talked about stewardship programs related to fundraising, raising the money for the annual budget. We covered all sorts of HR issues and whether you pay a pastor and provide them with the W2 or not, you know, all of those things. And the response was so overwhelmingly positive, even with the break mid-year that we just now have introduced a new application period for this year's version and it actually starts next month, whether we're ready or not, it's going to start next month virtually so.

**Caroline Wood:** David, how do we go about getting connected with the



foundation to join in or with some of, or all of, what's happening there?

**David Snipes:** I think listen to this podcast and take notes would be first; but no, you know, when I think about when I came to the Foundation in February 1st of 2002 was my first day on-site. We didn't even have a website. I created the first website that the Foundation had sitting at my office on Shamrock Drive. That website, we have obviously made some changes since February of 2002, and our website is filled with valuable information not only about what we provide, the ministries that many of which we've talked about today, but also just valuable resources for helping people be better stewards and to offer just good ministry in their particular setting. So I would encourage everybody to go to [www.umfwnc.org](http://www.umfwnc.org). You can also link from the conference website.

We have a Facebook page that we keep current. I mean, almost daily, we're putting posts on there about things that are taking place, whether it's an application deadline or process or information about a program and registration coming up. We also put out several print publications, as well as we do mass emails that are targeted to, say for instance, when we just announced the application process or the registration process for the Certificate Program for Church Treasury, we were able to go in through the database and pick out those church treasurers that are effective January 1<sup>st</sup> of this year, serving in that capacity to see if they wanted to participate.

So if you're interested in any of the grant processes, that comes out of Caroline Cox's office. She also has an associate director, Lane Smith, who assists her in the process of whether it's grant applications or leadership development program applications. But, you know, we're a small enough house. You call one of us and we'll get you to the right person.



**Caroline Wood:** I have learned so much today, and I hope our listeners have to. I want to thank you both for this time and for all that you do to build the church for generations to come. Thank you.

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