

Belonging, Inc.

Quarter Four Report to the Board

June 30, 2026

Revs. David Williamson and Laverne March, Co-Executive Directors

Annual Letter

Because this quarterly report also marks the end of our first fiscal year, we wanted to begin by reflecting on the deeper story behind Belonging, Inc. before celebrating what we've accomplished this quarter. As we conclude this first year of Belonging, Inc., we look back with gratitude at the good seed that has been sown.

First, we remember where this work began. The idea of belonging did not begin with us. The story of belonging began long before us and will continue long after us—perhaps not in the form of a corporation, but always in the heart of the Divine and weaving its way into the fabric of churches, families, communities, businesses and the world where God is pleased to dwell.

David preached recently on Trinity Sunday about being made in the image of the Community of Divine Love revealed in God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer). It was a reminder of the theological foundation for our work.

- Cultivating communities of belonging is an expression of God's heart for the world.
- No one has all the gifts, and together we have all we need.
- Differences in culture can be recognized, understood, appreciated, and embraced as strengths for God's mission in the world.
- Unlearning and turning away from "better than/less than" thinking, behaviors, policies, and cultures is part of what it means to "repent and believe the good news."
- The good news is that God is among us, closing the distance within us and between us so that we may live justly with our neighbors.

These are the convictions that inspired the formation of Belonging, Inc. We will pass them on as long as we have breath and trust they will continue, in whatever ways are pleasing to God, long after we are gone.

Second, we remember those who invested in us. We are deeply grateful to have been given the opportunity to learn, practice, and pass on this model for cultivating communities of belonging. We are the fruit of a half-million-dollar investment by the Florida Conference of the United Methodist Church, which hired VISIONS, Inc. to train all Florida Conference clergy in 2012 and 2013. The tools we learned then are the same tools we are adapting today through our Cross-Cultural Hospitality Trainings, Pilgrimage Experiences, and Train the Trainer cohorts.

We are also the fruit of investments made through the Florida Conference UMC Development Fund. While serving as Co-Pastor at Grace UMC in St. Augustine, David sensed a calling to lead the church in answering the question, *How do we practice what we preach?* How do we become a church where everyone belongs? Laverne and David leaned into the work of antiracism, intergenerational ministry, LGBTQ inclusion, disability inclusion, and interfaith relationships, and the Development Fund supported David's evolution from Co-Pastor to Co-Executive Director of Belonging, Inc. Although the last grant of \$44,443 has now concluded, we continue

building on the strong financial and relational foundation those investments created.

During this quarter, Belonging, Inc. held our first fundraiser in partnership with Giving Day St. Augustine on May 6-7. We had a total of 24 donors and raised \$3,669 for scholarships to ensure diverse participation at our upcoming train the trainer event in September! We supported applications for Lilly Grants which may provide funding for our ongoing work in the Florida Conference UMC. We are hosting our first Community Appreciation Gala in St. Augustine on October 16 which will support funding for our January “Living the Dream - Building Strong Collaborative Teams” training.

We also have a Board of four dedicated volunteers: Vicki Pepper, Brian Pepper, Jennifer Smalls, and Rev. Dr. Simon Osunlana. We would not exist without their support!

All these things remind us that we exist because others have invested in us.

Third, we remember why this work matters now. In a climate of increasing isolation, fear, division, and growing opposition to diversity, equity, and inclusion, the work of Belonging is needed now more than ever. We are grateful to remind ourselves—and the world—that another way of living is possible: a way that is cooperative rather than competitive, connected rather than combative, and abundant rather than constrained by scarcity. This work can be uncomfortable and challenging, but it is always healing and life-giving.

With that, we celebrate the final quarter of our fiscal year and look forward with hope to what comes next.

Belonging, Inc. One Year Impact Summary

Ministry	Impact
Cross-Cultural Hospitality Trainings	420 participants
Pilgrimage Experiences	113 participants
Community Conversations	46 weekly Zoom gatherings (averaging 10–15 participants)
Consultations	11 churches and organizations
Panel Discussions & Public Presentations	3
Immigrant Justice Prayer Vigils	43 weeks of public witness at the Florida State Capitol
Guest Preaching	11 guest preaching engagements by Rev. David Williamson, in addition to Rev. Laverne March's weekly ministry

Throughout the year, Belonging served churches, organizations, and communities across Florida—from Jacksonville, Tallahassee, Perry, Gainesville, Leesburg, Spring Hill, Southwest Ranches, and St. Augustine to Montgomery, Alabama—while continuing to deepen relationships throughout the Florida Conference. In our first year, we directly engaged more than 500 people through trainings, pilgrimages, conversations, preaching, consultation, and public witness—continuing to cultivate communities where people experience God's reconciling love across differences. We are deeply grateful for the partnerships and investments that made this ministry possible.

Q4 Accomplishments

Cross-Cultural Hospitality One-Day Trainings

Three trainings were contracted by the Florida Conference UMC to support cross-racial and cross-cultural appointments. One was offered as a public training in Ocoee.

- Mariner UMC (Spring Hill) — May 1 and 11
- Trinity UMC (Tallahassee) — May 29
- Gray Memorial UMC (Tallahassee) — May 30
- Ocoee, Florida — May 2

St. Augustine Pilgrimage (May 15)

This was our first one-day St. Augustine Pilgrimage offered as a public event rather than through a church contract.

Northwest District Clergy Training (April 21)

Belonging was invited to teach Northwest District clergy two practical tools for cultivating communities of belonging: the Guidelines for Cross-Cultural Hospitality and the Culture Sharing Exercise.

Community Conversation

Our weekly Zoom gathering continues to provide ongoing education, encouragement, and leadership development for people committed to cultivating communities of belonging. During this quarter we met 13 times, engaging conversations about immigration, racism, and voter participation.

Giving Day Fundraiser (May 6–7)

During our first Giving Day campaign, Belonging, Inc. built partnerships with 24 people who raised nearly \$4,000 for scholarships to ensure diverse participation in our September Train the Trainer event in St. Augustine.

Immigrant Justice Advocacy

Belonging helped equip people of faith and conscience for immigrant justice advocacy in Florida by researching and sharing information that supported sign-on letters, emails, and calls to state legislators. Advocacy efforts included urging that the Emergency Preparedness and Response Fund be limited to natural disasters, calling for the closure of the Everglades Detention Camp, opposing the expansion of that detention model, and ending 287(g) agreements requiring city, county, and state law enforcement to collaborate with ICE.

Belonging also helped facilitate weekly Immigrant Justice Prayer Vigils every Sunday at 5:00 p.m. in front of the State Capitol. We celebrated the closure of "Alligator Alcatraz" in the Everglades at the end of June 2026.

Thanks be to God! The Tallahassee vigils continue as collaboration between ICE and state law enforcement continues, along with the operation of the detention center in Baker County.

Belonging was also invited to present at the Coronado Community UMC Theological Forum in New Smyrna Beach on June 18. The presentation explored faithful ways to show mercy and advocate for justice alongside our immigrant friends, families, and neighbors.

Grant Applications

Belonging devoted six weeks to helping facilitate a Lilly Endowment grant application for the Florida Conference related to exploring Christian practices with historically excluded communities.

We convened conversations with Florida Conference staff, clergy, and lay leaders as they considered pursuing this opportunity. We also connected the Conference with an excellent grant writer from First UMC Winter Garden, who partnered with Conference leadership to prepare the application.

If awarded, Belonging, Inc. intends to submit proposals to support the Conference's work of exploring hospitality, confession, evangelism, and reconciliation as Christian practices that address the spiritual questions and interests of historically marginalized communities, both within and beyond the church. Grant recipients will be announced in December 2026.

In addition, the same grant writer included Belonging, Inc. as a partner in First UMC Winter Garden's own Lilly grant application.

Guest Preaching

Rev. Laverne March continues to pastor and preach each Sunday at Living Waters Ministries in St. Augustine.

Rev. David Williamson preached on the following occasions:

- Lake Jackson UMC (Tallahassee) — April 12
- John Wesley UMC (Tallahassee) — May 31 and June 28
- New Horizon UMC (Southwest Ranches) — June 14
- Memorial service in Dunnellon — May 12

The memorial service honored Carson, a 33-year-old young man who had been part of the youth group at the Orlando church David and Carolyn planted. Carson was diagnosed with melanoma in February and died at the end of May. He and his family had not connected with a United Methodist congregation in Dunnellon after the local church disaffiliated.

Mentoring Conversations – Rev. David Williamson

David met regularly with clergy and individuals discerning ordained ministry, including:

- Rev. Jose Machado
- Rev. Elan Brown
- Mirhonda Sturdivant Silva

Volunteer Leadership – Rev. David Williamson

- Chair, Florida Conference UMC Order of Elders, supporting the Board of Ordained Ministry, Executive Committee, and Clergy Session planning
- Capital Area Justice Ministry Immigration Research Team (Tallahassee)
- Florida Conference Committee on Religion and Race
- Florida Conference Social Justice Committee
- Board Member, Methodist Federation for Social Action

Personal Growth – Rev. David Williamson

- Covenant Group gathering, St. John's Abbey, Collegeville, Minnesota (April 27–30)
- VISIONS peer supervision (April 17)

Looking Ahead

We are grateful for the opportunities already taking shape in the coming months:

- Lake Deaton UMC — Six St. Augustine Pilgrimages (four in October, two in November)
- Southeast District — Three Cross-Cultural Hospitality Trainings in August
- Northeast District — One Cross-Cultural Hospitality Training in July
- East Central District — One Cross-Cultural Hospitality Training (date pending)
- Institute of Preaching St. Augustine Pilgrimage — August 3–6
- Building Bridges Train the Trainer — September 4–7
- RIM Leadership Retreat — October 19–21
- Community Appreciation Gala and Fundraiser — October 16, supporting diverse participation in the upcoming Martin Luther King Jr. Weekend training in St. Augustine.

Appendix A

Belonging, Inc. Ministry Engagement Detail - 2025-2026

Summary of what FLUMC received from Belonging Inc as a result of their \$44,435 investment.

Trainings (12 entities impacting 420 people)

Cason UMC and Christ UMC at Leesburg, FL (30)
Pride on West Side St. Augustine, FL (12)
New Horizon UMC Southwest Ranches, FL (13)
Trinity UMC Gainesville, FL (200)
City Training St. Augustine, FL (16)
NW District Local Pastors and DCOM Perry, FL (25)
Mariner UMC Spring Hill, FL (30)
Trinity UMC Tallahassee, FL (30)
Gray Memorial UMC Tallahassee, FL (18)
Ocoee, FL (6)
NW District Clergy Perry, FL (40)

Consultations (11 different entities)

City of St Augustine Manager St. Augustine, FL
UMC Deacon Retreat Leesburg, FL
Residing Hope Sanford, FL
Plantation UMC Ft Lauderdale FL
A Long Talk with Kamal Carter
Neighbor to Neighbor Church Coalition Virginia
Puerto Rico Faith and Justice Kissimmee, FL
Florida Advocacy Days Tallahassee, FL
First Presbyterian Church Tallahassee, FL
John Wesley UMC Tallahassee, FL
Press Conference Immigrant Justice Florida Capitol Tallahassee, FL

Panel Discussions (3 engagements impacting 110 people)

Thurman Birthday Panel at Stewart Memorial UMC Daytona (70)
CCORR Immigration Justice Panel with Bishop Carcano (20)
Institute of Preaching with Rev. Magrey deVega (20)

Pilgrimages (8 engagements impacting 113 people)

FAMU Students St. Augustine, FL (8)
FUMC Winter Park St. Augustine, FL (12)
FLUMC campus ministries St. Augustine, FL(40+)
Coronado UMC St. Augustine, FL (18)
Florence French Book Group St. Augustine, FL (11)
FUMC Winter Park Montgomery, AL (8)
Gator Wesley St. Augustine, FL (7)
Open to Public St. Augustine, FL (9)

Community Conversation (46 Zoom sessions avg 10-15 participants)

Topics including Immigrant Justice
How to have effective cross cultural dialogue

Christian Nationalism
Antiracism
Non cooperation for changing authoritarian rise
Florida Legislature Advocacy
Voter Participation
Leader Development opportunities

Immigrant Justice

43 weeks of Vigils in front of State Capitol in Tallahassee, FL
Research and Distribution of information to people of faith and conscience for advocacy

Guest Preaching (11 engagements Rev. David Williamson)

Carabelle UMC
Crawfordville UMC
Trinity UMC Gainesville
Glen Julia and Greensboro UMC
Wesley Fellowship Jacksonville
Asbury UMC Orange Park
Lake Jackson UMC Tallahassee
John Wesley UMC Tallahassee (2X)
New Horizon UMC Southwest Ranches
Memorial Service Dunellon

Volunteer Work (Rev. David Williamson)

FLUMC Board of Ordained Ministry and Executive Committee
Florida Entrance Assessment Team
Conference Committee on Religion and Race
Social Justice Committee
Chair Order of Elders
Mentoring clergy
Capital Area Justice Ministries
Facilitate weekly Immigrant Justice Vigils

Continuing Education (Rev. David Williamson)

Non cooperation train the trainer - Freedom Trainers New Orleans
VISIONS, Inc. peer supervision
FLUMC Clergy Day Apart
Covenant Group retreats (2)

Belonging Inc Attained 501c3 in December 2025

In just our first year, Belonging, Inc. directly trained more than 500 people, convened nearly 50 learning communities, accompanied churches and organizations across Florida, and maintained a consistent public witness for immigrant justice. We are deeply grateful for the partnerships and investments that made this ministry possible.