

United Methodist Publishing House sells campus for \$24.5 million

by [Sam Hodges](#) in the [November 3, 2021](#) issue



The parking lot of the United Methodist Publishing House in May 2020. (United Methodist News/Mike DuBose)

The United Methodist Publishing House announced on October 4 that the sale of its Nashville property has been completed, at a price of \$24.5 million. The lakefront campus was sold to R2, a Chicago-based real estate investment firm.

UMPH is the denomination's oldest continuous entity, dating to 1789. However, recent decades have seen it contracting along with the denomination's US membership.

In 2012, UMPH announced that it would be closing all of its brick-and-

mortar Cokesbury bookstores. In 2014, the agency sold its downtown Nashville property and moved operations to the lakefront campus outfitted with state-of-the-art digital technology.

When the COVID-19 pandemic closed churches in March 2020, UMPH's sales plummeted—including for vacation Bible school and Sunday school materials. The agency underwent layoffs while also shifting to remote operations. For April 2020, sales were just 64 percent of what they had been a year earlier, and the next few months weren't much better.

By May, UMPH had reached a tentative agreement with R2.

Though most employees continue to work remotely, UMPH is leasing space in the United Methodist Communications building, on Nashville's 12th Avenue South, for core information technology and financial services.

Brian Milford, UMPH's president and publisher, said sales picked up somewhat this spring, but when the delta strain caused COVID infection rates to rise again, church participation and UMPH sales both faced setbacks.

"Sales are directly linked to the rate and magnitude of return to in-person worship, Sunday school, and other congregational activities," he added.

The agency expects final accounting for the fiscal year will show a nearly \$3 million deficit. —United Methodist News Service