

Dear members and friends of Dakota United Methodist Churches,

Grace and peace to you in the name of Jesus Christ.

Across the Dakotas Conference and throughout the world, God continues to call the people of the United Methodist Church to a deeper place of authentic faith and thoughtful discipleship so they might love boldly, serve joyfully, and lead courageously. We continue to seek ways to invest our time, talent and treasure in this common mission and vision. This year, I invite United Methodists across the Dakotas to participate in a shared act of generosity through our Miracle Offering, **“From the Wellspring: Faith that Learns, Love that Serves.”**

From the beginning of the Methodist movement, learning has been central to faithful discipleship. John Wesley believed that growth in knowledge and growth in love belong together—that we learn not simply to know more, but to love more and to live more fully into God’s call. Learning shapes disciples, forms leaders, and strengthens the church for the sake of the world.

The Miracle Offering supports this vision in two important and connected ways. One half of the offering will support the **Endowment for Theological Education in Africa, Europe, and the Philippines**, helping United Methodists outside the United States access theological education and prepare for pastoral leadership. Our gift will be a part of the worldwide Miracle Offering that will support a bold goal: **endowing 500 theological scholarships in perpetuity** for emerging clergy leaders in Africa, Europe, and the Philippines. Today, fewer than 5% of pastors outside the United States hold a master’s degree in theology, compared to more than 71% within the U.S. The scholarships supported through this offering will equip a new generation of women and men for pastoral ministry in some of the most challenging missional contexts.

The other half will invest in education and training for laity across the Dakotas Conference, equipping everyday disciples for faithful leadership and ministry in their local contexts. We see the Spirit moving in people in our churches, calling them to respond in bold, joyful and courageous ways. This fund will seek to remove financial barriers to these laity accessing the education, training, and tools that will help them respond faithfully in their churches and communities.

Investing in lifelong learning is like planting a tree: its roots grow deep, its branches spread wide, and future generations enjoy its shade and fruit. As our Annual Conference scripture, Philippians 4:9, reminds us, *“Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice.”* Learning finds its fullest expression when it is lived out—in love, service, and joyful obedience. Education becomes discipleship when it is practiced.

As United Methodists, we have embraced a shared vision to **Love Boldly, Serve Joyfully, and Lead Courageously**. This offering embodies that vision. We love boldly by supporting leaders around the world. We serve joyfully by investing in lifelong learning for all God’s people. And we lead

courageously by giving generously toward a church that continues to grow, adapt, and respond to God's call.

Generosity and joy abound when leaders give their best and the people follow the example of their leader's generosity. I invite pastors, lay leaders, and congregations to lead with that spirit—teaching, modeling, and celebrating generosity as an act of discipleship.

The hymn “Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee” reminds us that God is “giving and forgiving, ever blessing, ever blest,” and that God is the “wellspring of the joy living, ocean depth of happy rest.” My prayer is that this Miracle Offering will be received not simply as a financial appeal, but as a spiritual invitation—to embody the generous image of God that is within us, and to draw from the wellspring of the joyful living, so that love might flow outward into faithful learning and joyful service.

Thank you for the ways you continue to nurture disciples, serve your communities, and share in God's work across the Dakotas and around the world.

With gratitude and hope,

Bishop Lanette Plambeck

Bishop Lanette Plambeck
Resident Bishop
Dakotas-Minnesota Episcopal Area
The United Methodist Church

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