



THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Dakotas-Minnesota Area

Bishop Lanette Plambeck
Resident Bishop

October 15, 2026

Dear Beloved in Christ,

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

Through the prophet Jeremiah, God speaks to the people in exile: *“Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you ... and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.”* — Jeremiah 29:7

What a powerful word for us as United Methodists across the Dakotas Conference. Jeremiah reminds us that our lives are bound together. When our neighbors flourish, we flourish. When a community grows stronger, the whole body is strengthened. When we invest in the welfare of others, we discover that God is also forming us more deeply in love, generosity, and joy.

That was the spirit behind our 2026 Annual Conference theme, “Created to Serve Joyfully.” It is also the spirit I invite us to embody as we support the work of food sustainability at Spirit Lake Ministry (SLM) for this year’s Thanksgiving Offering.

During the 2026 Annual Conference, SLM Directors, Kim and Paulette Paulson, shared some of the ways they are supporting food sustainability on the Spirit Lake Nation Reservation and their dream of having cattle that would become a source of meat for members of their community. Throughout this past summer, mission teams from across the country helped cultivate the seeds of this vision. They dug fence posts, built fencing, planted, weeded, harvested, and helped prepare the way for something more. What began as one faithful step — “Let’s do fencing, because that’s what we can do right now” — soon opened into new possibilities.

As they continued to share this vision, a neighbor offered to donate a cow to be processed into hamburger for families connected to *The Journey*, the worshiping community at Spirit Lake. This was an unexpected answer to prayer. Then another anonymous donor offered to cover the processing costs. Through these gifts, hundreds of pounds of meat can be shared throughout the year—week by week, meal by meal.

As God continues to open doors, the Paulsons are faithfully taking one step at a time towards this larger vision, including a plan to provide an ongoing meat source by purchasing two or three bred heifers, calving them out, and running them with their neighbor’s herd. They are partnering with the tribal land-grant college and North Dakota State University Extension to teach nutrition and food preservation and working to secure funding for food dehydrators.

Spirit Lake's vision for food sustainability and seeking the welfare of their community is also deeply connected to Native tradition and identity. In the Ministry Center garden, children learn where food comes from by watching it grow. They taste green beans fresh from the vine and discover that healthy food can be joyful. They learn about the "Three Sisters" — corn, beans, and squash — a Native agricultural practice in which each plant supports the others. In that sacred wisdom, we see a beautiful image of community: each gift strengthening the whole.

This is the heart of Jeremiah's invitation. We do not seek the welfare of our neighbors from a distance or from a place of superiority. We seek it because God has woven our well-being together. As Spirit Lake grows stronger — as families are nourished, children learn, mission teams serve, and Native traditions are honored — the Dakotas Conference is strengthened too. We become more faithful. More connected. More joyful. More fully the body of Christ.

This Thanksgiving, I invite you and your congregation to give generously to the Thanksgiving Offering in support of Spirit Lake Ministry Center food sustainability. Your gift helps nourish families, welcome mission teams, grow gardens, preserve food, support ministry partnerships, and strengthen a hopeful future.

Friends, this is what it means to serve joyfully: to seek the welfare of our neighbors, to trust that our flourishing is bound together, and to join the Spirit's work already unfolding among us.

With thanksgiving and hope,

Bishop Lanette Plambeck

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

Gifts to the 2026 Thanksgiving Offering can be mailed to:

Dakotas Conference of the United Methodist Church

1331 W. University Ave., P.O. Box 460

Mitchell, SD 57301

Online donations can be made through the link to this QR Code:

