



In 2021, Bishop Laurie Haller, called for the creation of a Task Force for the Continuing United Methodist Church in the Dakotas. This group was charged with the task of deep listening across the Dakotas Conference for the purpose of clarifying and articulating the vision and values shared by churches and pastors across the theological spectrum who wish to remain in covenant connection, believing that our diversity enhances our movement and our witness to the world. This intentional listening and conversation happened with those who would consider themselves conservative, progressive, and centrist. It happened in churches in large communities and in rural areas; settings with primarily older adults as well as campus ministry settings; gatherings with youth and with the LGBTQ community. They asked questions about what was important to them as followers of Jesus, what needs they saw in the community that the Church should address, what they valued about being United Methodist and what their vision for the future was. Information from the Values Discernment workshops was considered, seeking common value themes among congregations across the Dakotas.

Below is a summary of the draft of the vision and values document as of Annual Conference 2022—a sincere attempt to put into words what we heard as Dakotas United Methodists shared their hearts and their hopes:

Values and Vision Statement for the Continuing Dakotas United Methodist Conference

Dakotas United Methodists value following Jesus in a Wesleyan way. They value the understanding of God's prevenient, justifying, and sanctifying grace that comes through the power of the Holy Spirit. They also value the framework of the Wesleyan Quadrilateral—the primacy of Scripture, the importance of Christian tradition, our God-given ability to use our reason and intellect, and the importance of learning from those moments when we or others experience the Holy Spirit moving in our lives and through the Church.

Dakotas United Methodists are also passionate about being ON mission and IN mission together. That looks like deep, intergenerational connections and relationships that bridge differences. That value looks like being the church in town that will “marry and bury anyone” and welcomes everyone to the Lord’s Table. And it also looks like serving, sacrificing, and being sent into the world as members of the body of Christ who need one another and who are stronger when we work together to build the Kingdom of God on earth, as it is in heaven, starting in our local communities and spreading around the world.

*With these values in mind, and considering the hopes and dreams that were shared,
we offer a vision for the Continuing United Methodist Church in the Dakotas.*

It is a vision of growing in love of God and neighbor that looks like walking alongside others to share the “Why” of our faith so they can find theirs; wrestling with hard questions and trusting in the power of the Holy Spirit to guide our understanding of Scripture and faithful living; and experiencing effectiveness in ministry through the growth of the Fruit of the Spirit and the selfless, sacrificial love of Jesus.

We envision a renewed spirit of experimentation and innovation to reach new people in ways that are more expansive and inclusive. This will include new models of leadership – bi-vocational, team ministry, digital networking, hub-church relations, etc. – that help people use their gifts and encourage churches to step out of their comfort zone into a new chapter of ministry. It will mean models of church that create opportunities for belonging and becoming that connect with people who haven’t always felt welcome inside our church walls.

We envision continuing to live this missional spirit of partnering with God in ways that bring healing to a broken world. This healing looks like building bridges through living in the tension of divisions and learning how to embrace diversity and the mutual sanctification that comes through navigating differences. It looks like churches working to support each other in addressing specific challenges in their community or the world. And it looks like a posture of humility that knows we each need to experience healing and transformation in our own hearts, mindsets, and actions.

**The detailed document draft can be found on the Conference workbook page on the Dakotas Conference website [HERE](#).*