



THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Dakotas-Minnesota Area

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March 25, 2018

Dear Members and Friends of Dakotas United Methodist Churches:

Grace and peace to you on the journey with Jesus toward the cross and the Easter celebration.

We are less than three months from the 25th session of the Dakotas Annual Conference. This is also the 50th anniversary of the formation of The United Methodist Church. Our theme for this conference session is *Discover Joy: Live Deeply!* Rev. Olu Brown, founding and senior pastor of Impact Church in Atlanta, Georgia, will be our conference teacher as we explore how to live more fully – more deeply – into Jesus’ missional imperative to love God and neighbor.

One of the most meaningful ways we express our love of God and neighbor is through our annual Miracle Offering. The offering will be received on Friday morning, June 7, during our morning worship. I invite each of our congregations to begin praying and preparing to participate in yet another miraculous expression of God’s love in action.

John 15 serves as the principle scriptural inspiration for our conference’s theme. Jesus, in speaking to his disciples during this portion of his farewell discourse, reminds them and us that he chose and appointed us to go and bear much fruit – fruit that will last. The **2018 Miracle Offering: Called—One Word, Many Ways** is a fruit-bearing activity that will have lasting impact on every church and each one of us across the Dakotas Conference. I invite you and your congregation to be a part of this lasting impact in two ways.

The first way is through inviting and committing to walk alongside individuals in your congregation who you believe God is calling to use their gifts for God’s Kingdom purposes. As you prepare for the 2018 Annual Conference, I invite you to be in prayer about where you see the Spirit moving in your church, or your sphere of influence and who you see God calling to a next step of faith. Maybe it is someone you see with gifts for leading others in discipleship. Maybe it is someone you sense God is calling to impact their community or their workplace. It could be someone you believe God is calling to pastoral ministry.

Next, I encourage you to allow the Spirit to speak through you as you share with them how you see God calling and working. It often just takes one word of confirmation and encouragement to affirm the call that someone may already be hearing in their heart.

Then, I urge you and each person attending annual conference to bring one or more names of persons you would like to lift up to God. As part our **2018 Miracle Offering: Called One Word, Many Ways**, we will lay those names upon the alter during worship and join together in praying for God to break through in their lives. Imagine over 1000 persons being lifted in prayer; imagine how the Holy Spirit will flood their lives; imagine how God will be honored.



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Finally, I ask you to consider inviting a youth or young adult from your church who you believe is being touched by God to accompany you to our Annual Conference session, perhaps as a delegate, or simply to experience the ordination service or to attend some of the youth/young adult activities.

The second part of the **2018 Miracle Offering: Called One Word, Many Ways** will be a financial gift to equip churches, groups or organizations to live out a *Culture of Call* beyond our Annual Conference session. The financial offering will provide the funding for *Culture of Call* grants to equip leaders with resources so they can create opportunities to cultivate a *Culture of Call* within their church and community. Imagine what a \$100,000 Miracle Offering could do to advance a *Culture of Call* in every Dakotas United Methodist congregation. The *Culture of Call* grants will:

- Encourage and equip churches, districts, campus ministries and other agencies to provide opportunities for children, youth, and adults to discern God's voice, explore their gifts, connect with a mentor, nurture their spirits and find community support.
- Spur imaginations and provide resources to leaders throughout the Dakotas Conference to consider ways that they might cultivate conversations about call in their communities.
- Help you connect individuals or groups within your sphere of influence to an event or opportunity to explore of God's call upon their lives and how they can actively live it out and share it with others.

The bulletin insert and poster enclosed with this letter are to assist you in inviting the members and friends of your congregation to experience the joy of participating in the **2018 Miracle Offering: Called One Word, Many Ways**. Additional information about the offering is available on the conference website at www.dakotasumc.org.

Thank you for being a generous fruit-bearer and desiring to live deeply and joyfully as stewards of the Gospel and all of God's good gifts.

Yours in Christ's Love,

Bruce R. Ough

Enclosures: Bulletin Insert
 Poster