



THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Dakotas-Minnesota Area

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Dear Friends in Christ,

We are in the holy season of Lent. Come, let us walk in the light of the Lord, that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths.

We will very soon be gathering in Fargo, North Dakota for the 22nd Session of the Dakotas Conference. Our theme for this conference session, "God's Vision, Our Mission-Unleashed" will launch us into a focus on missional impact. Rev. Jorge Acevedo, our conference teacher, will challenge us to unleash God's vision for our missional imperatives: growing in love for God and our neighbor, reaching new people and healing a broken world.

I am calling, again this year, for a Miracle Offering to be received at the 2015 Conference Session in Fargo. I invite each of our 250 congregations to begin preparing, even now, to participate in another miraculous expression of God's love in action.

*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because the Lord has anointed me.
He has sent me to preach good news to the poor,
to proclaim release to the prisoners,
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to liberate the oppressed,
and to proclaim the year of the Lords' favor.*

Luke 4:18-19

These are the words Jesus read from the prophet Isaiah in his hometown synagogue following the 40 days he spent being tempted in the wilderness.

This is Jesus' inaugural statement of his mission. "Today, this scripture has been fulfilled just as you heard it." And, it is Jesus' "Great Call" to unleash God's mission. As followers of Jesus, we are also anointed (baptized) to share Christ's mission to preach good news to the poor, to liberate the oppressed and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor – **to heal a broken world.**

To heal a broken world is one of Jesus' core missional imperatives. And, it is clearly related to Jesus' other core mission imperatives to love God and neighbor and reach new people.

The 2015 Miracle Offering will go to support The United Methodist Church's remarkable Imagine No Malaria Campaign. United Methodists are committed to bring an end to death and suffering from malaria.

Unlike many other diseases that are awaiting a cure, malaria was eliminated in the U.S. in the 1950s. However, in Sub-Saharan Africa, malaria continues to kill a person every 60 seconds. But there is hope! Imagine No Malaria is part of a global partnership and together with our partners our generation can beat malaria once and for all. Through Imagine No Malaria and the predecessor Nothing But Nets campaign we have cut the death rate from malaria in Sub-Saharan Africa in half!



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United Methodists with key partners, including the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, have set out to raise \$75,000 million to eliminate malaria. A goal we intend to reach by the 2016 General Conference. To date, we have raised just over \$65MM of our \$75MM goal. Together, we can eliminate malaria!

I am asking that we set a goal of \$100,000 for our 2015 Miracle Offering. This amount will insure the Dakotas Conference is a key partner in achieving our goal.

If each of our 250 congregations raises \$500 we will exceed our goal. Last year the average cash gift to our Bakken Oil Rush Miracle Offering to launch a new faith community in the Kenmare region was \$800. Imagine the miracle we will experience if the Holy Spirit prompts a similar response in 2015!

Obviously, the capacity of our congregations varies greatly; some will do much more and others will do less. In God's economy, the size of the gift is not as significant as being a joyful and generous giver. *"For if the eagerness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has – not according to what one does not have."*

(II Corinthians 8:12)

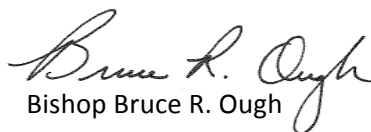
The Miracle Offering will be received at worship on the morning of June 5 in Fargo. For additional information regarding our 2015 Annual Conference Session, the Miracle Offering and the current status of the Imagine No Malaria campaign please visit the Dakotas Conference website at www.dakotasumc.org and click on the 2015 Annual Conference link and the 2015 Miracle Offering link. The link includes resources that can assist you in inviting your congregation to participate in the Miracle Offering.

I pray that we might all have the spirit of the Macedonian churches: *"They voluntarily gave according to their means, and even beyond their means, begging earnestly for the privilege of sharing in this ministry to the saints."*

(II Corinthians 8:3-4)

Thank you for you for unleashing God's vision to heal a broken world.

Yours in Christ's love.


Bishop Bruce R. Ough