



2014 Annual Conference Summary Dakotas Conference of The United Methodist Church

Over 700 members and visitors of the Dakotas Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church gathered in Rapid City, South Dakota to create ***"Unleashed: Fearless, Spirit-Led Churches!"***

Bishop Bruce R. Ough, Dakotas-Minnesota Area, called for all those in attendance to "re-evangelize the Dakotas." Bishop Ough's episcopal address challenged all with the question, "Am I too late to get to know Jesus?" Ough said his generation and several others learned to avoid the "E" word and the vibrant, unabashed sharing of one's faith in Christ—and he acknowledged that it took time for him to realize that "as an evangelist of Jesus' Gospel, my core mission is to ... partner with God in transforming unbelievers to fully devoted disciples of Jesus to the glory of God and for the transformation of the world."

Rev. Adam Hamilton, founding pastor, Church of the Resurrection, Leawood, Kansas, led three teaching sessions at this year's conference, explored what it means to "lead beyond the walls" through effective leadership, inspirational worship and preaching, and intentional evangelism and outreach. Churches that are fearless and Spirit-led and have a future in the 21st century are the churches that do whatever it takes to be the body of Christ in the community and the world, Adam Hamilton told members of the 21st session of the Dakotas Annual Conference.

Rev. Karl Kroger, Grace UMC, Piedmont, South Dakota and Sheri Miester, lay member, Sioux Falls First UMC, Sioux Falls, South Dakota presented the 2013 Missional Report on behalf of the Dakotas Conference Common Table. Miester, reminded the conference of the "Journey Toward Vitality" and the four vision pathways of: Developing Missional Leaders, Equipping Missional Congregations, Extending Missional Impact and Generating Missional Resources. The 2013 Missional reported highlighted the accomplishments in each of the vision pathways.

- Five grants and programs for campus and young adult ministries
- Four new church starts
- Eight thousand attendees at camps this past year
- Eight churches involved in transformation through the Missional Church Initiative
- Hiring a Associate Director of Missional Impact
- Launching the Bakken Oil Rush Ministry
- Implementing a new apportionment formula

Several business items came before the members of the annual conference session. The body voted to engage in a capital campaign feasibility study in 2014. The study will investigate the readiness of the conference to launch a capital campaign with a focus on the vision pathway of "Equipping Missional Congregations." The conference will contract with Tyler Associates of Irving, Texas to conduct the feasibility study. The feasibility study will be submitted to the Common Table, the Equipping Missional Congregations Link, the Council on Finance and Administration, and the Extended Cabinet for review and approval. If approval is granted by each of these groups, the

recommendations of the study will be implemented in 2015.

A proposal to change the language within the "Rules and Policies" of the conference was approved. The focus of the changes was to align titles, positions, and the links with current practices and the strategic plan, "Journey Toward Vitality".

The approved budget for 2015 is \$4,258,000 in Apportionments and \$2,677,433 in Direct Billing to churches for a total of \$6,935,433. This is a decrease of \$49,538 from 2014. The 2015 budget designates: \$97,000 to enhance the efforts of the Missional Church Initiative (MCI); \$25,000 for the Capital Campaign Feasibility Study; \$25,000 for a coordinator of new church starts in the Bakken Oil Region; \$24,000 for a leadership incubator with a focus on Culture of Call and ministry as a career; \$25,000 additional grant money for campus and young adult ministry; and 0% premium increase in Health Flex.

Members attended preconference workshops that focused on creating "Fearless, Spirit-Led Churches" on Wednesday afternoon. Workshops included "Using Technology to Create a Ministry Partnership," "Creating the Capacity for Congregational Transformation," "Creating a New Congregation for a Mission Field," and "What Churches of all Sizes can learn from Embrace".

Over \$180,000 was collected to launch a new church in Kemare, North Dakota, a vital merger of two current congregations in Donnybrook and Kenmare, North Dakota. Bishop Bruce R. Ough, called for a Miracle Offering of \$100,000 and 5,000 items for the Bakken Oil Rush Ministry Mobile Thrift Store. Jim and Kathie Konsor, lay missionaries in Watford City, North Dakota operate the mobile thrift store and have already assisted over 500 individuals affect by the sometimes-inhospitable environment in the Bakken Oil Rush. Over 10,000 items were donated for the mobile thrift store. The offering, which far exceeded the Bishop's call, will help to make the new church in Kenmare, North Dakota a possibility.

The Celebration Banquet honored several clergy and lay leaders. Rev. Greg Kroger, was recognized as the outgoing Director of Ministries. Kroger also was the recipient of the Genesis Award for all of his effort and support of disaster response. Rev. Rebecca Trefz was welcomed as the incoming Director of Ministries. Five Jubilee Clergy were celebrated. Ray Wagner, deceased, was awarded the Francis Asbury Award.

The Denman Award for Evangelism was presented to Rev. Kermit Culver, Legacy United Methodist Church, Bismarck, North Dakota, Suzanne Thoreson, Legacy United Methodist Church, Bismarck, North Dakota, Jason Balster, Fargo Faith United Methodist Church, Fargo, North Dakota, and Ann Rienhiller, Southern Hills United Methodist Church, Sioux Falls, South Dakota.

Ron Olson was ordained. Jo Flesner and Alison McCormick were commissioned for the work of a deacon. Justin Iverson, Kori Lehrkamp, and Katie Rowen were commissioned for the work of an elder. The average age of those ordained and commissioned at this year's conference session was 37 years old.