

**New staff position:** The Dakotas Conference is so dedicated to missions that, last year, Mike Flowers accepted a new position: Associate Director of Missional Impact. In that role, he facilitates opportunities to help the conference and its churches fulfill our Gospel imperative to heal a broken world. As we continue to find new ways to help those in need and heal a broken world, we will focus on meeting the basic and spiritual needs of God's children.

**Bakken Oil Rush Ministry Mobile Thrift Store**

A very successful Mobile Thrift Store ministers to those who desperately need assistance in transitioning into an extremely expensive and often inhospitable environment. This ministry is also enabling them to build trust and position the United Methodist Church for the launch of a new worshipping congregation.

**\$20,000** worth of goods distributed

**208** households assisted

**624** individuals assisted



**Minot Flood Recovery:** On June 24, 2011, the Mouse River overflowed its banks, and floodwaters rushed in at 75 miles an hour, ravaging homes and Faith UMC in Minot, North Dakota. UMCOR and the Dakotas Conference provided more than \$250,000 to assist in the rebuilding of homes and to establish the Welcome Table in Minot. Rev. Debra Ball-Kilbourne, Faith UMC and several volunteers led the Resource Agency Flood Team (RAFT) case managers to work with flood survivors, from 2011 to present. In addition, more than 500 homes have been repaired or rebuilt. There are an additional 20 homes to rebuild during the 2014 summer.

**2013 Blizzard Atlas:** High winds and extreme snowfall hit the Black Hills region of South Dakota in October 2013. Thousands of livestock perished. Ranchers lost their entire herds. Through a special appeal and the Thanksgiving Offering, \$20,000 was donated to help recovery efforts.

## ▶ Generating missional resources

All of our conference's mission and ministry are made possible thanks to apportionments.

**▶ 2013 highlights include:**

**Pension funding**

At the end of 2013, the Board of Pensions found itself with an excess of funds as a result of: 1) the faithful payments of our churches, 2) averaging a 14% return on invested funds over the last five years, 3) low health insurance claims from, on average, healthier pastors, and 4) the funding plan that was adopted in 2009 to guide investment decisions.

Therefore, **\$316,164** in rebates was issued to churches that were served by a pastor on the pension and/or health plan.

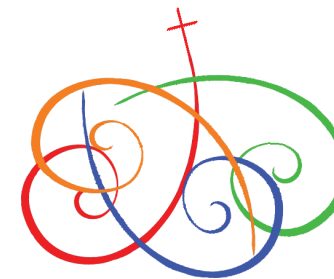
**General church apportionments:** In 2013, the Dakotas' general church apportionments are up 3.7% from the previous year. Apportionments are a reflection of our growth and the economic growth in North and South Dakota. In 2013, the Dakotas Conference had the second highest percent increase. Excluding missionary conferences, Dakotas has the highest overall increase over the past five years with a 5.7% increase.

**Connectional giving:** 90.4% of apportionments was received which was slightly above our 10-year average. 98.2% of pension and health apportionments and direct bills was received. This is the highest percent received since 2000 and 1.1% higher than our 10-year average. In addition, \$890,684 in special gifts was received to support a multitude of ministries from the Bakken Oil Rush Ministry to UMCOR to Special Sundays. This is the highest amount of special gifts received since the outpouring of support of the 2010 Haiti Earthquake.



# 2013 Missional Report

## Our Journey Toward Vitality



The Dakotas Conference is on an intentional journey to become a more adaptive, more fruitful, more faithful expression of the kingdom of God. Our vision is for every congregation to become a vital expression of the scriptural imperatives to grow in love of God and neighbor, reach new people, and heal a broken world. There are four pathways we are following on this journey:

-  Developing missional leaders
-  Equipping missional congregations
-  Extending missional impact
-  Generating missional resources

## ▶ Developing missional leaders

As we continue on our Journey Toward Vitality, developing bold spirit leaders is the conference's key focus.

**▶ Clergy leadership development**

**Dakotas Licensing and Lay Ministry School:** The third annual Licensing and Lay Ministry School took place at Living Waters Retreat Center in July 2013. Our priority is to develop lay leadership to serve in a variety of lay leadership roles in the local church. A total of 30 participants attended from seven different conferences. The week-long school is one step in the process of becoming a local licensed pastor (LLP) or certified lay servant minister (LCM). The process begins with discernment. Before attending the school, candidates attend Module I training.

**Church of the Resurrection (COR) Leadership Institute:** Each fall COR Leadership Institute involves 2,000 church leaders from across the world for three days of inspiration, worship, fellowship, and practical ministry ideas. The Dakotas Conference has sponsored attendance at the Leadership Institute by providing transportation, lodging, and some meals. In 2013, 53 participants from the conference journeyed to Leawood, Kansas for Leadership Institute. This is the third year the Dakotas Conference has sponsored this event.

**By the numbers** **32** completed Module I in the past year | **5** participants completed licensing and lay servant ministry | **8** scheduled for licensing and lay servant ministry school in 2014

**▶ Other leadership development activities**

**Young Adult and Campus Ministries:** This group works to support local ministries in churches and on campus that help create younger missional leaders. Four grants were distributed including North Dakota State University (Fargo Faith UMC), South Dakota School of Mines and Technology (United Campus Ministries and Rapid City South Maple UMC), and Black Hills State University (Spearfish UMC).

**Forward: Bold Spirit Leaders event:** In September, over 90 conference and ministry team leaders came together for a day-long discussion about our Journey Toward Vitality. This provided an opportunity to dialogue and dream about how we engage in the vision and strategic plan that God is revealing to us as an annual conference. The event will become annual, with the second one planned for September 2014.

**200** number of students who actively participate each month in Bible study, fellowship events, and service activities

## ▶ Camping and retreats

The Dakotas Conference has three camps: Lake Poinsett Camp on the south shore of Lake Poinsett in east central South Dakota, Storm Mountain Center in the Black Hills of South Dakota and Wesley Acres Camp and Retreat Center located north of Valley City, North Dakota. The Dakotas Conference camps offer programs for every age (pre-kindergarten through adult), and more than 8,000 people participated in 2013. The goal of Dakotas United Methodist Camps is to provide a Christ-centered ministry which provides places apart where all people can experience God's grace and love and grow in discipleship."

### Focus on leadership development

Developing bold, spirit, missional leaders is one of the strategic pathways the Dakotas Conference has embarked upon as it seeks to equip vital congregations. Camping and Retreat Ministry is an integral part of developing missional leaders as demonstrated by the number of clergy and laity that state their call to ministry was nurtured by camping.



### Levers for growth

In an effort to focus more intentionally on leadership development and the development of a life call of ministry camping has been engaged in an ongoing consultation process with Kaleidoscope Incorporated. Kaleidoscope made four recommendations, which will be considered and discussed by the Board of Camping:

- Claiming a clear role for camping in the future with discernment and alignment of Conference initiatives/pathways.
- Identifying the ministry vision and goals for participants including measurable outcomes for participants and impact of ministry on local churches.
- Developing a sustainable operational model that moves toward an acceptable balance of fees and gifts.
- Defining a structure that can be nimble, empowered and active to include a governance policy board.

Kaleidoscope worked with the Camping Task Force (current members of the Board of Camping and Retreat Ministries, seven additional participants from around the Conference and site directors).

## ▶ Equipping missional congregations

Starting new churches and revitalizing existing churches are two of the key ways in which we reach new people and equip churches to help members grow in love of God and neighbor.

### ▶ 2013 successes include:

**New churches and multi-site ministry:** In recent years, the Dakotas Conference has successfully launched specific strategies and steps to support development of new faith communities and targeted revitalization of existing congregations. The video and worship link between Legacy UMC in Bismarck and the Moffit UMC is one of the many creative partnerships emerging to bring new life and vitality to smaller congregations. A "church within a church," the Rapid City Korean Church is a fellowship that meets and worships at Rapid City First UMC.

**Embrace:** In just seven years Embrace (Sioux Falls) has not only grown to be the highest attended congregation in the Dakotas Conference, but is also being recognized this past year as the fourth fastest-growing church in the country. Embrace received additional conference resources in the past to create the technological capacity for Embrace to go multi-site. An online campus and new worship site was successfully launched in Tea.

**Encounter:** This is a second campus of Cornerstone UMC in Watertown. More than 200 people attend Encounter, a contemporary worship, with a "round table" discussion. While there is no direct conference funding going into this effort, the experiences of this highly fruitful multi-site venture are providing valuable learning for further church plants elsewhere in the Dakotas.

**Fusion:** Worshiping on the campus of Dakota Wesleyan University, Fusion began as a second site of First UMC, Mitchell and is now on track to become a second, chartered United Methodist congregation in that community. Fusion has the unique distinction of being a faith community formed in direct relationship with a university while seeking to reach the broader young adult community in the Mitchell area.

**The Gathering:** With a focus on reaching young adults in the Fargo/Moorhead area, The Gathering meets in a theatre in downtown Fargo. The ministry was initiated as a partnership between Fargo First UMC and the Dakotas Conference. The Fargo/Moorhead region is one of the fastest growing areas in the country among communities of similar size, plus it has a young adult population that is vibrant and burgeoning.

**Missional Church Initiative (MCI):** MCI is an extremely intentional approach to providing leadership development and creating congregational transformation. A major outcome sought in MCI is the launch of a fresh, new lifecycle of fruitfulness within a local congregation. This includes pastoral training, congregational self-study, mystery worshiper reports, a resource refocusing seminar, a weekend consultation, consultation report, report adoption through a special, church conference, and prescription coaching. This year the eight engaged congregations are Sioux Falls First UMC, Fargo First UMC, Watertown First UMC, Pierre First UMC, Huron First UMC, Celebration UMC, Spearfish UMC, and West Fargo Flame of Faith UMC. In future years, approximately five to eight additional congregations will join the process annually.

### Signs that our efforts are making a difference

2,045 average weekly worship attendance in churches planted

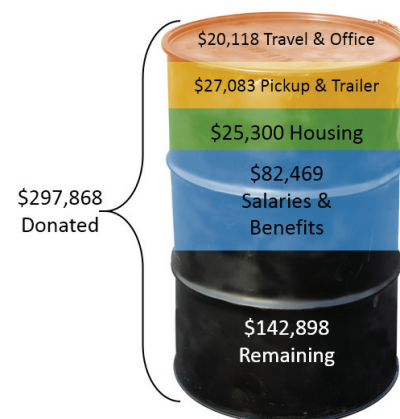
2.3% growth in average weekly attendance since 2010

## ▶ Extending missional impact

The Dakotas Conference has a strong history of supporting missions and missionaries, and many local churches give of their time and resources in order to help those in need both near and far.

### ▶ Bakken Oil Rush Ministry is launched

In 2013, the Bakken Oil Rush Ministry began after a successful Miracle Offering, resulting in more than \$290,000 at the annual conference in Bismarck, North Dakota. The vision of the ministry is to: "Touch Lives with Jesus' Love while Expanding the Kingdom of God and the United Methodist Presence in the Oil Rush of North Dakota." Year one highlights:



**Outreach in Watford City:** Jim and Kathie Konsor, lay missionaries go to Watford City and launch a mobile thrift store. The remade, 29-foot trailer moves from place to place to distribute needed clothing and household items. Several fellowship events such as game night and spaghetti feed were held connecting over 200 individuals

**Church and Community worker in Williston:** Katie Petersen arrives in Williston January of 2014. Out in Faith ministry begins. A satellite campus on the northwest side of Williston is being considered.

**Several locations identified for new faith communities:** Through partnership with the General Board of Discipleship's Path One congregational development initiative, and consultant Paul Nixon, several locations have been identified for new faith communities, restarts and revitalization projects.