



Theme: The theme of this year's annual conference is "Living Generously Unleashing God's Gifts." We will celebrate the ways in which we are answering God's call to use resources of all kinds to live out the scriptural imperatives to grow in love of God and neighbor, reach new people, and heal a broken world.

Bishop's Episcopal Address: Bishop Bruce Ough wants Methodists in the Dakotas to be more intentional in their manure spreading—metaphorically speaking. In his episcopal address to open Annual Conference 2016, Ough reflected on the model of living generously set forth by Jesus in (Luke 13:6-9). In this parable, a gardener lobbies for the life of a fig tree that has not borne fruit in three years. He offers to spread manure on the soil in hopes that, with one more year, the tree will bear fruit. But this is not a particularly "churchy" story, Ough notes. It's filled with earthy and even crude language that highlights the parable's meaning. "Be fruitful or perish," he said. "The message is clear."

10,000 Hour Miracle Offering: At morning worship on Friday, June 10, 2016, Dakotas United Methodists celebrated what God is doing in and through them. They also committed over 18,000 hours of service to Dakotas Conference ministry project. The 10,000 Hour Miracle Offering, called for churches to have at least 10 people commit to at 10 hours of service to one of these conference missions: Bakken Oil Rush Ministry—Watford City, Out in Faith Oil Rush Ministry—Williston, Dakotas Camp and Retreat Ministry, Solar Oven Partners, Tree of Life and Spirit Lake Ministry. A cash offering of over \$56,000 was also collected. The money will be used to help fund the Elisha Project. The total of the 10,000 Miracle Offering is expected to grow. Churches and individuals can send pledges and donations to JoAnn Schlimgen, Dakotas Conference UMC, PO Box 460, Mitchell, SD 57301.

James Harnish lessons in living generously: To Jim Harnish, it's not about the money—except when it is. Speaking during the teaching sessions to the Dakotas Annual Conference on Friday, Harnish identified generous living as the issue that will most clearly define who we are as followers of Christ. "Salvation is never just about money," Harnish said. "But it is never about anything less than money." The mission of the church, he reminds us, is not to raise money or pay apportionments. It is to make disciples.

2016 Missional Report: The Dakotas Conference is living out the three scriptural imperatives: to grow in love of God and neighbor, reach new people and heal a broken world. That's the message that Sheila Dailie, incoming chair of the Common Table gave to members of the 23rd Annual Conference Session. The message was part of the opening plenary session as the Common Table reported on the progress that has been made and highlighted the 2015-2016 Missional Report.

Thrive Campaign reaches \$3.5 million: Attendees at the 23rd Session of the Dakotas Annual Conference celebrated the generous giving of individuals and churches to Thrive: Strength for Today, Hope for Tomorrow, a capital campaign. Over \$3.5 million has been pledged to date with more commitments to still come in. Thrive is a capital campaign to start new churches, strengthen existing churches and raise up the next generation of leaders.

Ministry Festival: If you're going to celebrate shared ministries, why not have a real party? This was the thinking behind the Ministry Festival, held on Thursday evening of Annual Conference. After the conclusion of the business sessions, conference attendees gathered to eat, play games, and celebrate some of the most vital shared ministries of the Dakotas Conference. One Way Up (Canton UMC), ministries with youth took center stage. Camping, youth, and CCYM (the Conference Council on Youth Ministries) presented various awards and told stories about their work.

Recognizing clergy: On Friday evening at a Celebration of Life in Ministry Service, we remembered United Methodist friends and colleagues who have died over the past year, honored clergy who are retiring, and celebrated those who were commissioned and ordained. We remembered seven clergy and four clergy spouses that passed away this year. We honored nine retiring clergy and we celebrated two clergy who were commissioned and three clergy who were ordained as elders.

Legislation: We approved the 2017 budget of \$4,361,252 amount of at a slight decrease of -0.05% compared to the 2016 budget total of \$4,365,000. Other legislative items approved include: a resolution to join as a coalition partner with South Dakotans for Responsible Lending, rule changes that allow for changes in ministry teams, the selection of the site for Annual Conference for 2017-2020, Camp and Retreat Ministry and lay leadership and quadrennial elections.