



THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Dakotas-Minnesota Area

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Dear Friends in Christ,

Grace and peace to you from God, the source of all our blessings, as we prepare for our national Thanksgiving celebration and the Advent season.

On October 10, 2020 we met virtually for the Dakotas Annual Conference. Our theme was Be the Light: Live Hope! We explored our passion for outreach to the world's most challenged communities and explore more fully Jesus' missional imperative to heal a broken world.

Again, this year we received a Miracle Offering as an expression of our gratitude for God's extravagant blessings and to advance our mission "to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world."

So far, \$23,000 has been collected for the 2020 Miracle Offering. Our goal is \$60,000, to be shared equally among five of our signature missions in the Dakotas Conference: Bakken Oil Rush Ministry, Solar Oven Partners, Spirit Lake Ministry Center, Tree of Life Ministry, and Bakken Out-In-Faith Ministry. So, I appeal to each of our 250 congregations in the Dakotas Conference to join together through our annual Thanksgiving Offering to reach our goal and help support these essential mission ministries in the Dakotas.

Jesus instructs us to "let your light shine before people, so they can see the good things you do and praise your Father in heaven." The 2020 Thanksgiving Offering provides the opportunity to be the light and living hope for those crying out for love, compassion, justice and grace in their lives.

Our Dakotas Conference mission ministries serve thousands of people each year.

In the past year, the Bakken Oil Rush Ministry based in Watford City helped 5,045 families or individuals with clothing, work gear and household items.

Bakken Out-In-Faith Ministry continues to serve the people of Williston with a weekly meal and devotion. During the pandemic the number of families seeking assistance has grown by 25 percent and the meal is being served curbside.

Solar Oven Partners distributed ovens in the Dominican Republic with Gordon and Ardell Graner, natives of North Dakota. Ovens are also distributed in Sierra Leone and to the Navajo nation in Arizona. Solar Oven Partners has workshops to build solar ovens in Raymond, South Dakota, Montrose, South Dakota, and Rapid City, South Dakota.

Spirit Lake Ministry Center operates a food pantry, Shoebox Christmas, a summer program



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for children and youth, and a construction ministry. In the past year, Spirit Lake has reached more than 6,000 families and youth and hosted 426 Volunteers in Mission. The Journey at Spirit Lake, a newly formed worshipping community, continues to grow, with an average attendance of 50.

Tree of Life Ministry operates a soup kitchen, thrift store, and construction ministry. Last year the soup kitchen served or distributed 1,059,178 lbs. of food, a value of \$1,747,644.00. The thrift store provided 130,990 items including household goods, furniture, appliances, gently used and new clothing for babies, children, teens, men and women. VIM teams assisted with 24 home repairs to improve the health and wellness of residents. Tree of Life recently began a botanical garden to grow native plants such as black and gold currants, buffalo berry, chokecherry, and prairie red plums.

These ministries are struggling for support during COVID-19. I invite each of our 250 congregations to prayerfully consider a gift of at least \$250 to the 2020 Thanksgiving Offering. If we do, our light will shine brightly for all to see. Let us join our hands and hearts with each of these ministries, not only with our financial gifts, but also by volunteering and lifting them in prayer as they reach out to heal a broken world.

Additional information about the 2020 Thanksgiving Offering is available on the Dakotas Conference website at www.dakotasumc.org. Please invite the members and friends of your congregation to experience the joy of participating in this miraculous expression of Christ's light in the world. Jesus sent the Twelve out "to proclaim God's Kingdom and to heal ..." (Luke 9:2). Let us also go forth to bring healing to a broken world.

Your Thanksgiving offering is a gift that will bring honor to God. Thank you in advance for your extravagant generosity. Thank you for blessing the Lord as you bless others.

In Christ's love,
Bishop Bruce R. Ough
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