

**Dakotas Annual Conference
June 6-8, Bismarck, North Dakota**

Over 500 members of the Dakotas Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church gathered in Bismarck, North Dakota to create ***“Unleashed: Bold, Spirit Leaders!”***

Bishop Bruce R. Ough, Dakotas-Minnesota Area, called for all those in attendance to listen and feel the WHOOSH of the Pentecostal spirit. Bishop Ough’s episcopal address challenged all with the adaptive question, “What do we do now? If we are to ensure that offering Christ is our very heartbeat, permeating and shaping everything we are and do, then we will need to give full-blown expression to Jesus’ imperatives to:

- cultivate spiritual vitality,
- reach new people, and
- heal a broken world.”

Rev. Sue Nilson Kibbey, Director of Connectional and Missional church initiatives for West Ohio Annual Conference, helps churches look outside themselves and into the community and to open their hearts and eyes to their neighbors. Through her experience helping “stuck” churches to develop spirit-filled and compassionate ministries, she’s developed “five breakthrough practices of the missional church,” which she presented to conference members on June 7.

Rev. Ray Baker, Chair and members of the Dakotas Conference Common Table presented several key elements the Common Table has considered this year. Sheri Meister, Sioux Falls First United Methodist Church, Sioux Falls, South Dakota described “The Journey Toward Vitality” which provides the Conference with a road map for the future. A panel facilitated by Vicki Renner, Britton United Methodist Church, Britton, South Dakota explained a proposal to change the method of apportionment. Rev. Keith Nelson, Sakakawea District Superintendent, Bismarck, North Dakota presented the Bakken Oil Rush Ministry Plan.

Several business items came before the body. Three resolutions: death penalty, human trafficking, affordable and sustainable health care were considered and affirmed. A new method of apportioning based on operating income and direct billing each church or charge for health and pensions costs was approved by the members of the twentieth session of Dakotas Annual Conference. The body also affirmed the constitutional amendments from General Conference 2012.

A proposal to move the Annual Conference Session to two different college campuses was defeated. A rotation between South Dakota and North Dakota, east and west will be the continued pattern for the Dakotas Annual Conference Session. The 21st Session will be June 5-7, 2014 at the Ramkota in Rapid City, South Dakota. The 22nd Session will be held in Fargo at a site to be determined.

The approved budget for 2014 is \$4,250,000 in Apportionments and \$2,735,895 in Direct Billing to churches for a total of \$6,985,895. This is a decrease of \$331,859 from 2013 or 0.4%. The 2014 budget designates: a \$228,163 decrease (23%) in the defined benefit cost; Pension Direct Bill Transition Grants; a focus on Culture of Call and ministry as a career; Camping, Youth, and Campus Ministries focusing on leadership; a Missional Church Initiative (MCI); the hiring of an Associate Director of Missional Impact; and General Church Apportionments paid in full.

Members attended preconference workshops that focused on creating missional leaders *to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world* on Wednesday afternoon. Workshops included “Building a Culture of Call in the Local Church” Covenant Discipleship in the Wesleyan Model”, and “Developing a Culture of Call to be in Mission with Others”.

Over \$262,000 was collected to launch the Bakken Oil Rush Ministry. Bishop Bruce R. Ough, called for a \$100,000 Miracle Offering to be collected at the Celebration Banquet on Thursday, June 7. Jim and Kathie Konsor, Cornerstone United Methodist Church, Watertown, South Dakota feel a call to open and lead a ministry center in Watford City, North Dakota. The offering, which far exceeded the Bishop's call, will help to make the ministry center a possibility.

Ten retiring clergy were honored during the banquet. Five Jubilee Clergy were celebrated.

The Denman Award for Evangelism was presented to Rev. Adam Weber, Embrace United Methodist Church, Sioux Falls, South Dakota, Rev. Scott McKirdy, Spearfish United Methodist Church, Spearfish, South Dakota, Karrie Miller, Rapid City First United Methodist Church, Rapid City, South Dakota, and Mollie McCaskell, Rapid City Knollwood Heights, Rapid City, South Dakota.

Amy Marie Atkins, Thomas E. Bowsher, Mark Walter Britton, Mark Jerald Gronseth, Gwen Mader, and Sara Lamberson Nelson were ordained. Clay Michael Lundberg, Rob Salmonson, and Peggy Stempson were commissioned. The average age of those ordained at this year's conference session was 41 years old.

Membership stands at 36,592, down 140 from the previous year. Worship attendance stands at 20,511, up 369 from the previous year. Church-school attendance (Sunday morning statistics only) stands at 5,992, down 125.

—Doreen Gosmire, Associate Director of Communications, Dakotas Conference