

Nomination Form for
The Streams of Justice Award

Name of Ministry _____ Date _____

Address of Ministry _____

Contact Information for Ministry

Phone _____

Website _____

E-mail _____

Name of Person making Nomination _____

Address _____

Phone _____

E-mail _____

Briefly describe the ministry and its components of justice. (use extra pages if necessary)

What would the cash award be used for if this ministry is selected?

Please return form before March 29, 2016, to Rev. Rebecca Trefz, rebecca.trefz@dakotasumc.org or mail to Rev. Rebecca Trefz, PO Box 460, Mitchell, SD 57006.

The Streams of Justice Award

“But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.” Amos 5:24

The prophet Amos recognized that grandiose expressions of piety and religious fervor were no substitute in God’s view for simply doing justice and acting every day with righteousness – treating all people with equity and honesty. Pious songs and costly sacrifices were not acceptable coming from the hands of those in power who neglected widows and orphans and took advantage of peasants and foreigners. Thus he spoke rightly in God’s name that the corrupt leaders of his day should take away their empty songs of praise and instead listen to the roaring waterfall of God’s justice and righteousness. God cared about the lives of all people, and held those in power to high standards to care for those who were impoverished, excluded and marginalized.

The ministry of Jesus often expanded the boundaries of the reign of God to include and uplift people who were denied justice. The gospel according to Luke features a mission statement as Jesus quotes from Isaiah 61, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release for the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” (Luke 4:18-19) Jesus had compassion on those who were suffering and shunned such as the man with a dreaded skin condition (Mark 1), the man with the withered hand in the synagogue (Mark 3), the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4), the demon possessed foreigner (Mark 5), the woman with a flow of blood (Mark 5), the yearning and hungering crowds (Mark 6) to name just a few persons and instances. Jesus welcomed women among his followers (Luke 10) and lifted up children as examples of faith (Mark 10) – two groups of people often marginalized and oppressed in the dominant society of his day. Jesus told parables about justice and judgment such as Lazarus and the rich man (Luke 16) and the judgment of nations (Matthew 25).

The writer of I John reminds us that faith demands action. “How does God’s love abide in anyone who has the world’s goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses to help? Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action.” (I John 3:17-18) The people in the parable of the judgment of nations ministered to or alternately neglected strangers in need and were surprised to learn that as they had treated the least of their human family, they had treated Christ himself. Pious words and public displays of worship must be matched by deeds of mercy and justice. Biblical standards of justice move us to action that go beyond charity and compassion – necessary ingredients of faith and ministry, but incomplete without education, advocacy and empowerment.

Throughout the Dakotas Annual Conference there are ministries of justice taking place every day. They are occurring in local churches and conference agencies. They are helping people find their voice to speak out about their concerns and the ills that plague their communities. They are helping people move beyond dependency and despair. These ministries are helping people organize to gain respect, dignity and fair treatment. They are helping people to overcome fear and hatred, prejudice and racism, discrimination and exclusion, violence and greed. They are helping people to confront those who have denied them their rights, refused to recognize their worth, and/or unfairly burdened them. These ministries of justice are seeking to transform our world so that it more closely resembles the reign of God highlighted in the teaching and example of Jesus and the prophets.

The Peace and Justice Focus Team of the Missional Impact Link of the Dakotas Annual Conference would like to lift up and celebrate these ministries of justice taking place in our conference. *“The Streams of Justice”* annual award will call attention to a United Methodist sponsored program or event which has its main purpose to promote justice in our Annual Conference. Nominations for recipients will be accepted in the beginning of the year and the award presented at the next session of Annual Conference.

God is working in many ways and through many channels to bring justice to people in the Dakotas. The United Methodist Church sponsors ministries on Native American reservations, in communities (rural and urban) through local churches and outreach centers, and through statewide and regional organizations. Often these ministries feature programs that offer material assistance and spiritual support in addition to components of justice education, advocacy and empowerment. Any of these entities that includes a justice component and is predominantly staffed or directed by United Methodist members of the Dakota Annual Conference is eligible to be honored with *“The Streams of Justice”* award.

The award consists of a table-top fountain with name plate and a cash amount of \$500 for the use of the justice ministry selected. The fountain and name of recipient will be prominently displayed at Annual Conference, and then the fountain may be displayed at the ministry site until the following year when it will be passed on to the next recipient. The cash award is to be used by the honored justice ministry to support and promote its particular program and is intended as a one-time gift donation. A copy of the *“Poverty & Justice Bible”* (with relevant passages highlighted in orange) from the American Bible Society will be presented to the head of the organization receiving the award.

Nominations will be accepted until mid-April, and will be evaluated by the Peace and Justice Focus Team of the Connectional Link of the Dakotas Annual Conference. Criteria include (but are not limited to):

- Target population served by ministry
- Impact and effectiveness of ministry
- Alignment with Biblical principles of justice
- Duration of Commitment to ministry

Individuals or organizations may submit nominations. Funds will be disbursed only to churches, agencies or organizations and not to individuals. If in the event an individual is honored with the award, they may direct the cash gift to an organization of their choosing which promotes justice ministry.