



Theme: The theme of this year's annual conference is "Encounter the Spirit—LIVE Expectantly!" We celebrated the ways in which we are inviting others to become disciples of God and how we are living our lives in ways that are

far beyond our imagination to grow in love of God and neighbor, reach new people, and heal a broken world.

Bishop's Episcopal Address: Bishop Bruce Ough's Episcopal Address on Friday morning encouraged the Dakotas Annual Conference to live expectantly by claiming and putting into practice the dynamics that led to vitality, growth, and missional passion in the primitive church. "Our journey toward vitality is producing much kingdom fruit," Bishop Ough said. "There are many signs our congregations are growing in our capacity to love God and neighbor, reach new people, and heal a broken world." As evidence of this fruitfulness, he pointed to metrics drawn from Robert Schnase's *Five Practices of Faithful Congregations*.

Kids Count Miracle Offering: At morning worship on Friday, June 9, 2017, Dakotas United Methodists celebrated what God is doing in and through them. They also committed over 12,000 hours of service to local schools. The Kids Count Miracle Offering, called for churches to have members pledge volunteer hours in their local schools. Cash offering of over \$46,000 was also collected. The money will be used to help fund grants to local churches for school partnerships. The total of the Kids Count 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.

Dotson urges us to focus on the "why": "Deep within us is a desire for purpose," Rev. Junius Dotson, General Secretary of Discipleship Ministries said. Many churches have lost focus because they are building roads to nowhere. We have mistaken activity for accomplishment." Junius Dotson's goal in his Friday morning teaching was to give church leaders a way to take the inspiration from annual conference home in practical ways—beginning with the "why."

2016-17 Missional Report: There are 36,000 United Methodists in 250 churches who are creating a culture of call, multiplying disciples, connecting with neighbors, and understanding God's abundant giving. The Dakotas Conference is experiencing growth in worship attendance for the sixth year and is home to Embrace Church, the fastest growing United Methodist Church in the country.

Sheri Meister, director of the Dakotas United Methodist Foundation introduced Diane Owen, who will serve as the project manager for the \$1 million Lilly

Grant received by the Dakotas-Minnesota Area. Meister also thanked and celebrated with attendees the success of Thrive: Strength for Today, Hope for Tomorrow, capital campaign. Individuals and churches have pledged over \$3.5 million and \$1.2 million has been collected.

Festival in the park: An atmosphere of fun and fellowship was present as attendees at the 24th session of the Dakotas Annual Conference spent the evening at the park. A picnic dinner was served. The praise team from Fargo Frist African provided music. Lawn games were available. One of the feature activities was the volleyball match challenge between the cabinet and the Conference Council of Youth Ministry (CCYM). CCYM challenged the cabinet to a match. It was a challenge of athleticism and financial pledges

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

Legislation: The 2018 budget was approved at the twenty-fourth session of the Dakotas Annual Conference in Bismarck, North Dakota June 8-10, 2017. The 2018 budget amount of \$ 4,418,773 was approved at a slight increase of 1.3 compared to the 2017 budget total of \$ 4,361,252. There is a 5.4% decrease in the cost to churches for pensions and insurance in the 2018 budget. The overall budget for 2018 will see an expected decrease of 1.5% or \$108,546. There are very few changes from 2017. The Board of Pensions has approved moving to the HealthFlex Exchange in 2019. Thrive funds of \$220,00, are available in 2018 to spend on establishing new churches (\$155k), coming along side existing churches to enter a new era of growth (\$32k), and raising up and developing leaders (\$33k).

Voted on the proposed constitutional amendments for the United Methodist Church. The results of the voting will be reported in 2018.

Kristen Krogman was elected Conference Secretary for 2017-2020.

New names of the four districts of the Dakotas Conference were approved — Northeast (formerly Eastern Sunrise), Northwest (formerly Sakakawea), Southeast (formerly Glacia Lakes) and Southwest (formerly Prairie Hills).