



Dakotas Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church
2015-2016 Missional Report



Grow



Reach



Heal



How to use this report

We hope you share this report with people in your congregation to remind them that all United Methodist churches in North Dakota and South Dakota are united through shared mission and ministry and to show them what we are accomplishing together. Here are some suggestions of ways to use/showcase this report:

- Put a copy out on a table or attached to a bulletin board that's in a prominent location
- Highlight a few pieces of information or testimonies from the booklet as you report back on the 2016 annual conference session
- Discuss our three gospel imperatives (grow in love of God and neighbor, reach new people, and heal a broken world) in worship while highlighting some of the ways your congregation is living them out and sharing (from the report) ways other churches and our conference are embracing them
- Share information from the report at an adult forum, and use it as an opportunity to discuss how your church can plug into or benefit from our connectional system in new ways
- Share the report the next time you discuss apportionments in order to help your congregation see how their apportioned dollars are used for mission and ministry in the Dakotas and beyond
- Share the report with your congregation's youth, and ask them about their hopes and dreams for the future of the United Methodist Church in the Dakotas



Table of contents

Dakotas Annual Conference: Who we are	4
Scriptural Imperatives and Journey Toward Vitality	5
<i>GROW IN LOVE OF GOD AND NEIGHBOR</i>	
Kids are the kingdom at Beresford Zion UMC	6
Creating joy and love for Jesus	7
Breakthrough prayer inspires new spirit	8
Conference youth ministry reaches hundreds	9
Area camps unite	10
New staff for leadership development	11
Lay servant ministry team and leadership reorganized	11
<i>REACH NEW PEOPLE</i>	
First African worship	12
New church starts	12
Embrace launches St. Croix campus	13
New church-planting leader	14
Zion UMC builds and grows	14
Reaching young adults	15
Church renewal and revitalization	16
<i>HEAL A BROKEN WORLD</i>	
Warmth of spirit	17
Recycle 605	18
Dollars help raise up the next generation of leaders	19
Mission grants	20
Dakotas Conference missions make a difference	21
Apportioned giving & Second Mile giving	22
Dakotas United Methodist Foundation	23

 Who we are

We are
36,000

United Methodists in about

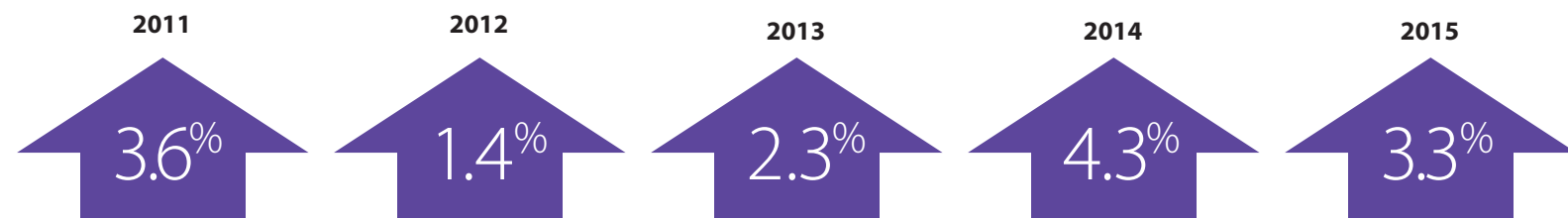
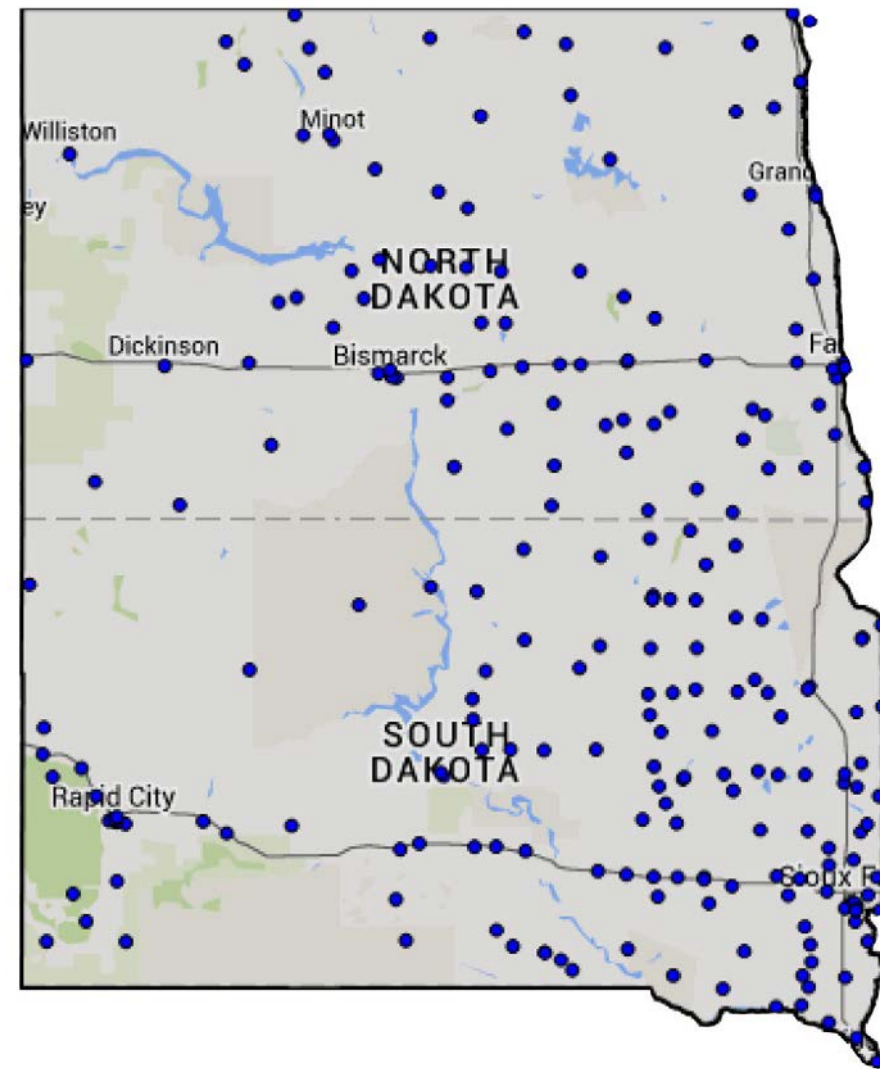
250

congregations that continue
to grow in number.

We are located in cities,
large and small, across the Dakotas.

The Dakotas Conference is one
of the only conferences in the United
States that is growing. The conference has
experienced five continuous years of
growth in worship attendance.

This map shows the location of our churches



 Our shared journey

SCRIPTURAL IMPERATIVES: WHAT WE'RE DOING

Our mission is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

The Dakotas Annual Conference is focused on three gospel imperatives that help us fulfill this mission:



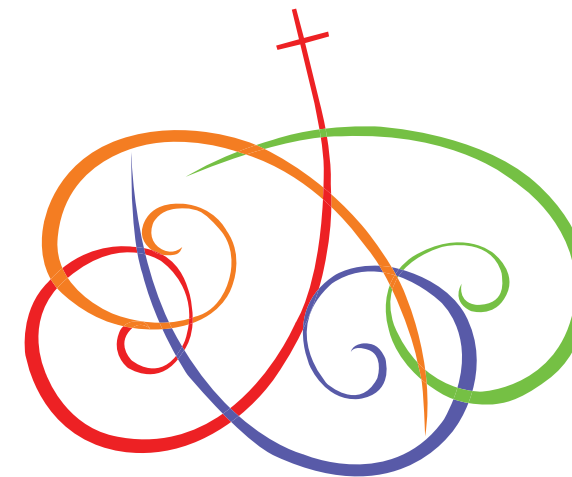
**Grow in Love of God
and Neighbor**
(the Great Commandment,
Matthew 22:37-40)



Reach New People
(the Great Commission,
Matthew 28:19-20)



Heal a Broken World
(the Great Proclamation,
Luke 4:16-21)



JOURNEY TOWARD VITALITY: HOW WE'RE DOING IT

Our Journey Toward Vitality is a strategic road map that outlines the paths we're taking to achieve our mission. As a conference, we aim to increase the capacity of the conference, districts, and churches by:

- Developing missional leaders
- Equipping missional congregations
- Extending missional impact
- Generating missional resources

While much work remains, there are daily signs of fruitfulness and Holy Spirit breakthroughs across our conference, some of which are celebrated in this booklet.

KIDS ARE THE KINGDOM AT BERESFORD ZION UMC

Did you know that I come here everyday and God does too," said one 4-year old. Children learn that God loves and cares for them on a daily basis at Beresford Zion UMC.

Kids are coming, learning, and experiencing the kingdom every day at Beresford Zion UMC at Kids Crossing. Kids Crossing is a state-certified daycare for infants through school-age children and a preschool program.

It all started with prayer. A small group was studying "Unbinding the Gospel" and using Mark Batterson's "40 Days of Prayer." The Holy Spirit started moving and soon the entire church was saying a prayer to reach out to the entire community, especially young people and families.

The idea to start a preschool and daycare at the church got a nudge from God when several small daycare providers in the community and a major preschool/daycare at another church decided to close. In April 2015, Christina Quartier, a member of Beresford UMC and preschool teacher, asked the trustees and others at the church, "What about the church offering a preschool and daycare?"

Four months later, in September, more than 20 kids were coming to the church for Kids Crossing. By November, the church had worked diligently to install fire alarms and smoke detectors, upgrade the kitchen, and much more to open a state-certified daycare. Today, more than 40 kids come through the doors.



CREATING JOY AND LOVE FOR JESUS



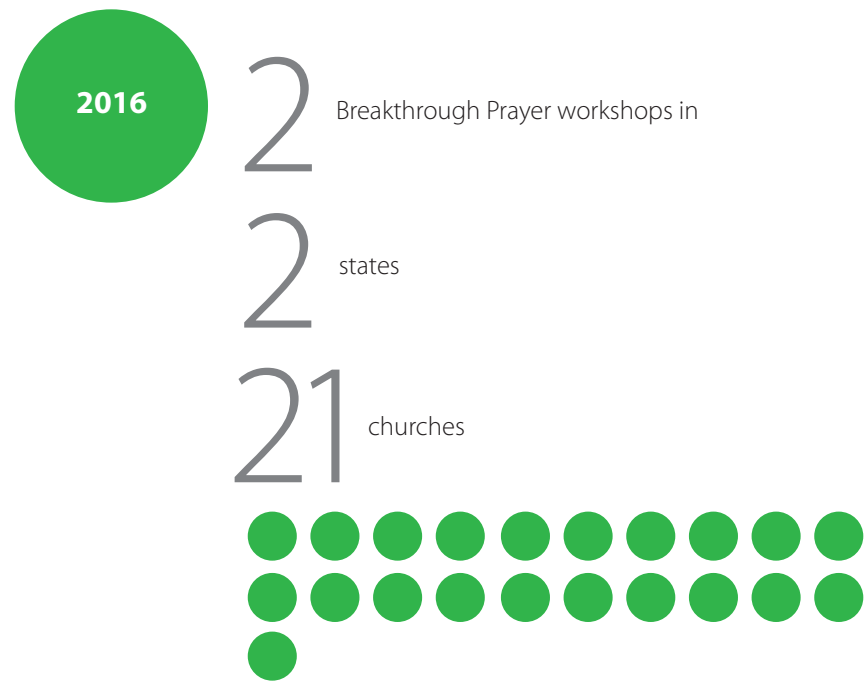
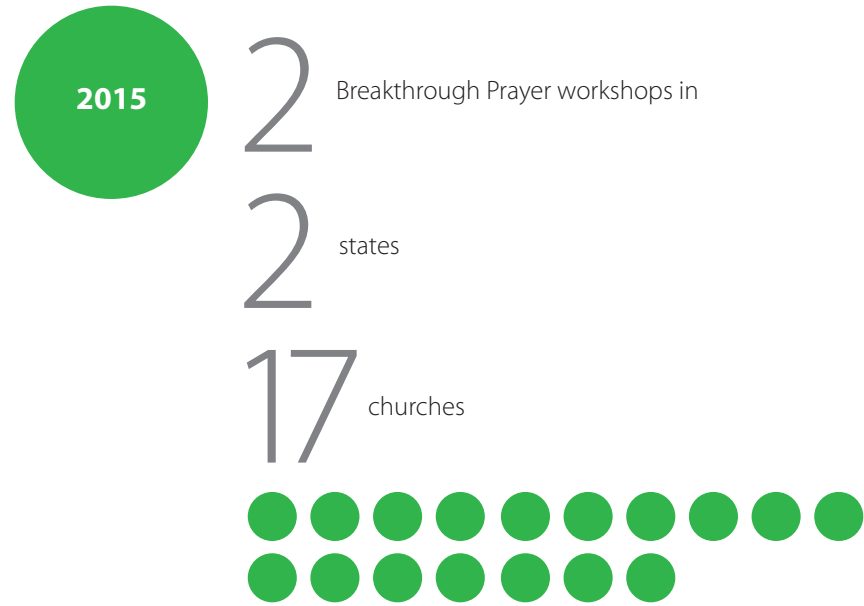
Blunt, Highmore, and Harold UMCs are anything but quiet on Wednesdays. At 3:45 p.m., laughter and noise from 40 elementary-age kids fill their space with song, dance, laughter, learning, and love for Jesus. More faces arrive for a meal and worship at 5:45. Then it is time for the high school and middle school youth groups to gather. Well over 100 people come through the doors each Wednesday to share the love of God. That is more people than registered members of the churches.

KWOW (Kids Worship on Wednesdays) and WOW (Worship on Wednesday) are part of an effort of the three-point charge to reach new people in rural communities in central South Dakota.

The three small churches have a combined membership of fewer than 100. The congregations are small but act bold. In 2015, Blunt, Highmore, and Harold UMCs raised more than \$9,000 to send more than 40 kids to a UMC church camp. Any child who wanted to go to camp was sent. "A true act of love for the kids and God," said Pastor Kori Lehrkamp. "We want to reach beyond our church to everyone in the community."

BREAKTHROUGH PRAYER INSPIRES NEW SPIRIT

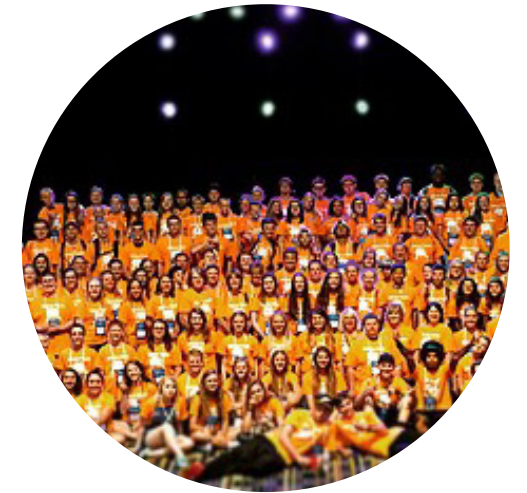
Going on a bike ride? Why not ask for prayer? Grand Forks Wesley UMC is part of the second cohort of Missional Consultant Church Initiative (MCCI). Breakthrough prayer, a powerful, whole-church effort, led to more than 30 churches and thousands of people praying for the congregation last year. Howie Baird, the pastor at Grand Forks Wesley, biked the community, asking churches of all denominations to pray for Wesley as its members discerned what God was calling them to do.



CONFERENCE YOUTH MINISTRY REACHES HUNDREDS

Youth15

The Dakotas Conference had a huge presence in Orlando, Florida at YOUTH15—**240 youth** and adults from across North and South Dakota traveled to reach out in mission and be inspired to “Go On.” **One in every 20** of the 5,000 who attended YOUTH15 were from the Dakotas Conference. Dakotas youth spent three days and collectively contributed more than 3,000 hours of service at places like Camp Challenge, which serves children and adults with special needs, and the Community Food and Outreach Center. Flat Bishop Ough traveled to Orlando too and was spotted in many places, including on the main stage making announcements.

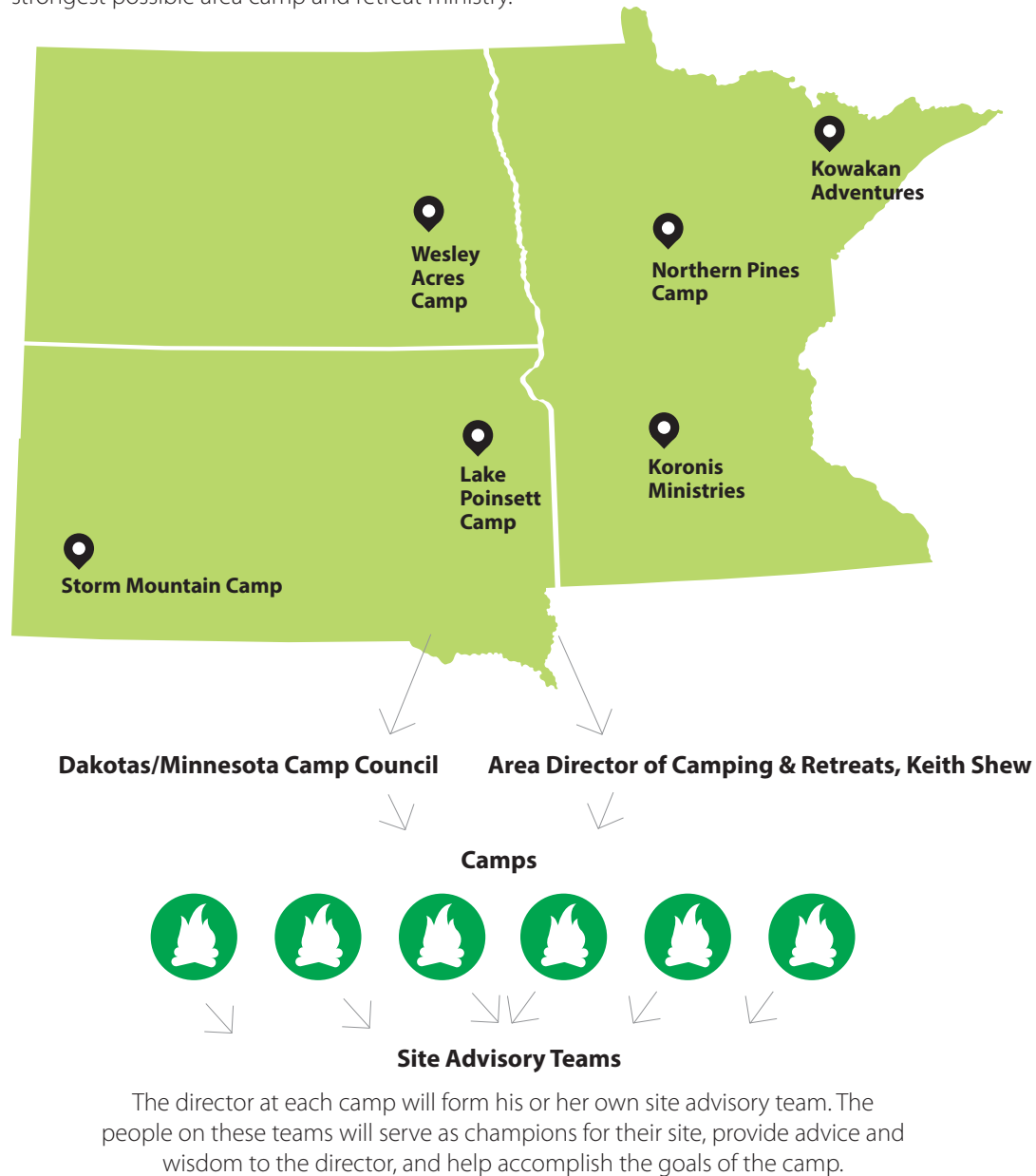


DAK Youth 15

What happens when **300 youth from 34 churches**, one bishop, one band, one splat artist, one queen, one brainiac, and one comedian/entertainer/musician/ventriloquist/actor meet in Aberdeen, South Dakota? It’s a recipe. You stir all the ingredients together and get DAK Youth 15—a recipe for successfully inspiring hundreds.

AREA CAMPS UNITE

In early 2016, the Dakotas and Minnesota Conferences' camp and retreat ministries came together and formed an area-wide council. This arrangement expands the camping-related offerings for each conference and allow the conferences to share best practices to create the strongest possible area camp and retreat ministry.



The Dakotas and Minnesota conferences' camp and retreat ministries are combining their strengths and leadership and coming together to form a joint governance team. This new arrangement will expand the camping-related offerings for United Methodists in each conference and allow the conferences to share best practices to create the strongest possible area camp and retreat ministry.

Keith Shew has been named area director of camp and retreat ministries, and Glenda Gerlach was selected as camping office coordinator. Keith began the 2015-2016 year as interim director of Camp and Retreat Ministries and quickly proved that the capacity of his relational and leadership skills and extensive camping operational knowledge were enough to lead the entire Dakotas-Minnesota Area. Glenda Gerlach is providing communications, marketing, and relationship-building.

Camping by the numbers

People attending camp

2015: 1,778

2014: 1,759

Churches that sent kids to camp

2015: 86%

2014: 81%

Total user days:

2015: 15,286

2014: 13,832

2015 conference camperships (camp scholarships) given out:

103 totaling \$12,774

2014 camperships (camp scholarships) given out:

62 totaling \$8,326

NEW STAFF FOR LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT



Deb Kjerstad



Taya Swanson

Deb Kjerstad has been named the director of leadership development, and Taya Swanson has been named leadership coordinator for the Dakotas Conference. They will work with supporting the Board of Ordained Ministry, Elisha project, Compass clergy peer learning groups, Conference Council of Youth Ministries, and Lay Servant Ministries.

"I seek to lead a program to develop and equip church leaders to bring more people to Christ."
—Deb Kjerstad, director of leadership development

LAY SERVANT MINISTRY TEAM AND LEADERSHIP REORGANIZED

The leadership model for Dakotas Conference lay leadership has been redefined. Laity will serve in leadership at a district and conference level. Two conference co-lay leaders will be elected as well as district co-lay leaders. The model will allow for more involvement of laity in key leadership roles and expand our reach across our large geographic area.

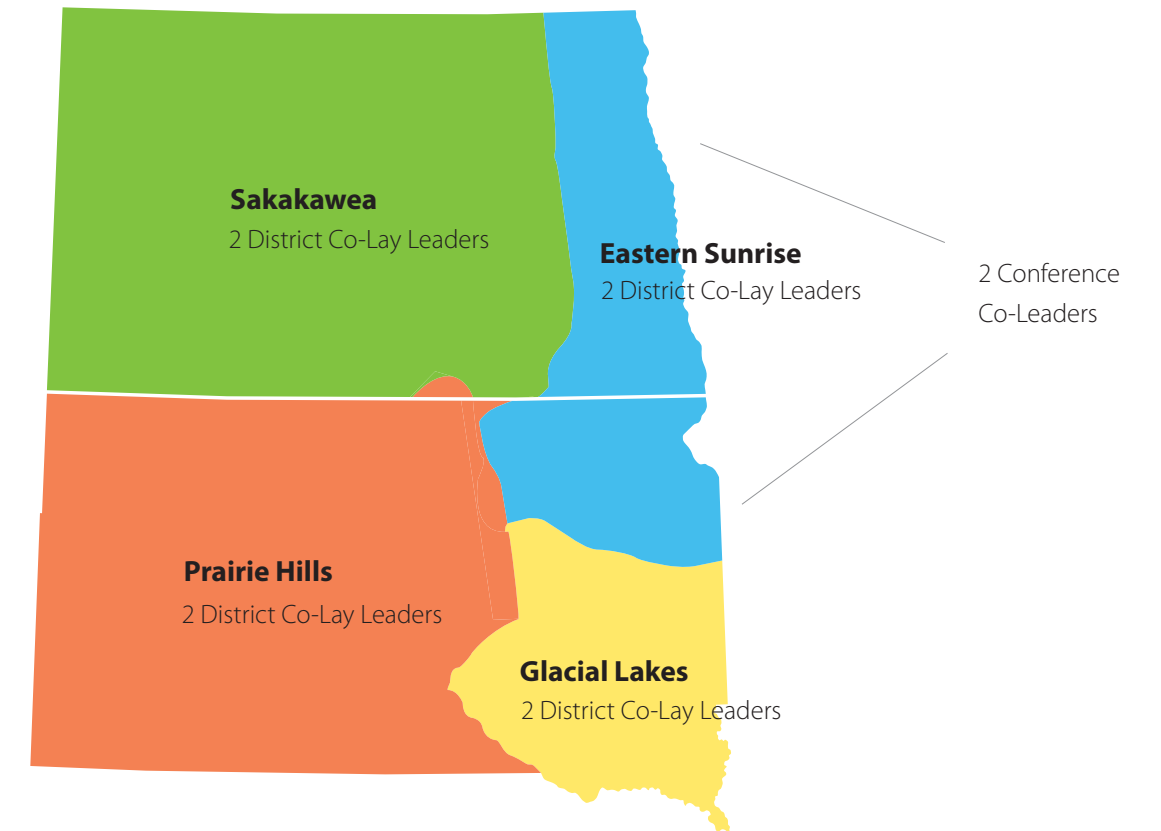
Lay Servant Ministries by the numbers:

4

discernment retreats

30

participants



FIRST AFRICAN WORSHIP



Hundreds of immigrants from various African nations have come to Fargo, ND for jobs. They have found a warm welcome at Fargo First UMC. Each week, more than 100 people gather to worship. Pastor Abednego Thomas leads worship, which can last two to three hours, depending upon the amount of joyous singing, dancing, testimonies shared. "This is not like the worship that most people in North Dakota are used to," said Pastor Thomas. "We can be loud and we do not sit still!"

First African is a new church start that hopes to become an independent United Methodist Church in the Fargo area. The group began worship at West Fargo Flame of Faith and outgrew the space so Fargo First offered space.



NEW CHURCH STARTS

FEASIBILITY: Years 1-2

First African (Fargo, ND)—satellite of Fargo First UMC; Renew (Kenmare, ND)—new church start; Watford City (ND)—new church start

VIABILITY: Years 2-5

Embrace Summit Avenue campus (Sioux Falls, SD)—multi-site campus of Embrace Church; Fusion (Mitchell, SD)—collaboration with Dakota Wesleyan University; The Gathering (Fargo, ND)—new church start

SUSTAINABILITY: Years 5-7

Embrace Tea and online campus (Tea, SD)—multi-site campus of Embrace Church; Encounter (Watertown, SD)—satellite of Cornerstone UMC

EMBRACE LAUNCHES ST. CROIX CAMPUS

Embrace Church has expanded to a fifth campus in Lakeland, MN. The St. Croix campus launched November 8, 2015 with two worship services and 438 people in attendance.

Embrace's new campus is located inside of what used to be St. Croix Valley United Methodist Church. Members of that congregation, which had become older and fewer in recent years, voted in August to discontinue and give their building to Embrace so that Embrace could launch a new campus there. The heroes of this story are the people of St. Croix Valley United Methodist Church in Lakeland. They were willing to give over everything—who they are, what they have, what has been sacred and meaningful to them—for the sake of reaching the next generation.

LifeWay Research in September 2015 named Embrace Church, based in Sioux Falls, SD, as the **10th-fastest growing church** in the United States. This is third year in a row that Embrace has made the list. In 2014, Embrace was named 58th-fastest growing church overall. In 2013, the church was 40th overall (fourth greatest percentage gain).



- Sioux Falls 57th St.
- Sioux Falls Summit Ave.
- Sioux Falls Tea
- Embrace Online
- St. Croix, Lakeville, MN



NEW CHURCH-PLANTING LEADER

Ben Ingebretson, who has extensive church-planting experience, was hired in January as director of new church development for the Dakotas-Minnesota Area.

His role will involve:

- Identifying and assessing potential church planters
- Creating a strong training and coaching system
- Seeking out areas ripe for new churches
- Walking alongside church planters and congregations ready to birth something new



"I come with a conviction that churches are best positioned to plant churches... It's not about what the conference is dreaming for you. It's about what you're dreaming for your community."

"Every church ought to plant at least one church to replace itself and one church for the sake of the kingdom."

ZION UMC BUILDS AND GROWS



Four miles west of the small town of Colfax, ND stands Zion UMC amidst the fields and farms. Several churches in the area have decided to close. Zion could seat a maximum of 70 people in the pews. Worship attendance started to decline but members began to dream about the future and creating a church that would be inviting to neighbors.

Members brainstormed and went through 24 different plans before they settled on a church expansion project that would provide a home for worshippers of the younger generations. The plan was approved, and the remodeling began in spring 2015. Members volunteered to work on the construction team, and by April 2016, the project was complete.

The result: an increase in worship and a new vitality. The worship space is beautiful but the faith and leadership of the members of the church is what will live on well into the future.

REACHING YOUNG ADULTS

Young adult and campus ministries continue to work to support the local ministries in churches. Ten grants for ministries involved with young adults and campuses were awarded to great ministries. Here's a list of them, and how the funding will be used:

- United Campus Ministries (UCM) at South Dakota School of Mines and Technology is ministering through Bible studies and weekly meals. The UCM team has developed projects to spread God's love through a "Spread the Love" campaign and through service projects in Rapid City.
- Brookings First UMC is working to reignite campus ministries with the South Dakota State University Campus.
- Methodists on Campus, a student-led organization, is seeking to reach out to those from Wesleyan traditions on the campus of the University of North Dakota in Grand Forks.
- Groton UMC is connecting to young adults in Groton and students at Northern State University through intergenerational programming and leadership.
- Beresford Zion UMC is continuing to create space for young adults and especially young parents to fill leadership roles in the new AWANA program.



- Bismarck Legacy UMC is working to connect to young people through technology, media, and a new worship service.
- Madison UMC connects to the students at Dakota State University through a chaplain to the football team and other on-campus ministries.
- South Maple UMC continues to connect to the South Dakota School of Mines and Technology football team and meal program, providing a home away from home for these students.
- Spearfish UMC continues to minister to students at Black Hills State University through small groups and events on campus.
- Dakota Wesleyan University provides ministry through student leadership, worship, services, and learning throughout the year.
- Highmore UMC is connecting with young adults through a targeted worship service called WOW, Worship on Wednesday.

CHURCH RENEWAL AND REVITALIZATION

The Missional Church Consultation Initiative (MCCI) and Journey Renewal are programs for congregational intervention through which the conference partners with a church to help it launch a new lifecycle of ministry.

The MCCI / Journey Renewal Process



The MCCI 3 Cohorts / 15 Churches

MCCI Cohort One

- Fargo First
- Huron First
- Pierre First
- Sioux Falls First
- Spearfish

MCCI Cohort Two

- Grand Forks Wesley
- Madison
- Rapid City First
- Valley City Epworth
- Watertown First

MCCI Cohort Three

- Bismarck McCabe
- Brookings First
- Fargo Faith
- Jamestown First
- Sioux Falls Asbury
- Sturgis

Journey Renewal Cohort One / 6 charges / 9 Churches

- Arthur
- Burke-Herrick
- Mandan
- North Sioux City The ARK
- Presho-Kennebec-Reliance
- Wahpeton Evergreen

WARMTH OF SPIRIT

Dakotas winters can be cold, but United Methodists across the Dakotas are providing warmth and the spirit of love to children and families living on reservations through the Shoebox Christmas program. Each year, Mike and Libby Flowers from Spirit Lake Ministry gather Christmas gifts in the form of toy- and snack-filled shoeboxes from churches, and distribute them to six reservations.

In South Dakota, the Crow Creek and Pine Ridge reservations and the Enemy Swim School near Sisseton received gifts. In North Dakota, the Spirit Lake Nation, Turtle Mountain, and Standing Rock reservations received gifts, as did three homeless shelters. In Minnesota, the Red Lake Reservation received gifts.

Aberdeen North Highland UMC collects Shoebox Christmas gifts from several area churches to deliver to Enemy Swim. Volunteers from North Highland sort through the donated gifts, make sure all items are age-appropriate, and deliver the gifts to the children. Up to 70 percent of the children at Enemy Swim and across the reservations would not receive a Christmas gift if it wasn't for the Shoebox Christmas program.

Spirit Lake Ministry Center distributed the gifts at a Christmas party. Families gathered for a meal of turkey and all of trimmings, fellowship, and the gift giveaway. "If we come out and show that Jesus loves you and we act like Jesus loves you, it is far better than just saying the words 'Jesus loves you,'" said Mike Flowers.



RECYCLE 605



recycle605 

A bike can be a blessing to someone who does not have another mode of transportation. Kevin Brady, a member of Vermillion First UMC, chose a bike as his first mode of transportation. "I bike everywhere," he said. "It is a great way to get around, even in the winter." His love for bikes and giving has prompted Recycle 605—a mission project of Vermillion First UMC in cooperation with the Barking Dog Cycling Club and others throughout the community of Vermillion, South Dakota.

The objective of Recycle 605 is to refurbish abandoned bicycles and provide them to those in need. So far, the group has collected 40 bikes to refurbish and distribute. The repairs to the bikes will be made through funds from a mission grant received from the Dakotas Conference Extending Missional Impact Link.

"We hope to fix up the bikes and distribute them," said Brady. "There has been tremendous support for this ministry." The idea for the ministry started with an e-mail that landed in the wrong inbox. Captain Cad Passick of the Vermillion Police Department received an e-mail intended for the police department in Vermilion, Ohio, not Vermillion, South Dakota. The content of the message was about a proposed bicycle cooperative in the Ohio city.

The same day he received the e-mail, Passick forwarded it to Kevin Brady, ride director of Vermillion's Barking Dog Cycling Club. The bicycle program described in the e-mail would allow officers "to keep them right here where they can benefit our own community," instead of sending the [recovered] bicycles away.

DOLLARS HELP RAISE UP THE NEXT GENERATION OF LEADERS



Rev. Jeff Lathrop is working on completing his master of divinity at Sioux Falls Seminary while serving as a pastor in the Dakotas. Lathrop is challenged by the financial commitment that is required to complete his seminary education.











The cost is especially challenging to Lathrop and his wife, Holly, who endured a wave of life-threatening illnesses and accidents in their family. Jeff and Holly's son, Noah, was born in 2011 with complications that resulted in large medical bills. Additionally, Holly was the victim of a serious farming accident and their youngest son, Izaiah, was born in May 2015 with critical health issues.

The average debt of seminary students across the United States is \$43,000. The Dakotas Conference is able to provide scholarship and grant dollars for seminary costs through the endowments and other funds managed by the Dakotas United Methodist Foundation and distributed by the Dakotas Conference Board of Ordained Ministry.

More than

\$80,000

in scholarships and grant dollars was distributed to 10 students in seminary education in 2015-2016

- 
Alyssa Quade
Asbury Theological Seminary
- 
Lucas Boomsma
Boston University School of Theology
- 
Autumn Krueger
Candler School of Theology
- 
Nicole Anderson
Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary
- 
Melissa Gall
Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary
- 
Jordan Louks
Garrett-Theological Seminary
- 
Valerie Hummel
Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary
- 
Michelle Slott
Sioux Falls Seminary
- 
Jeff Lathrop
Sioux Falls Seminary
- 
Sarah Beth Green
United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities

MISSION GRANTS

The Missional Impact Link boldly stepped out in offering grants to churches in order to encourage them to try something new to enhance the missional impact, outreach, and connection within their communities. These are the churches and projects that received grants totaling:

\$16,225

Huron UMC	Back-to-school community day—new ministry
Turtle Lake UMC (Gathering)	Worship event for de-churched—new ministry
Kenmare Renew	After-school program—new ministry
Beresford Zion UMC	Shoes for kids (back-to-school)—ministry expansion
Out in Faith Ministry—Williston	Gas cards and outreach—ministry expansion
North Highland UMC—Aberdeen	Snow pants outreach to schools—new ministry
Salem United Church	VBS outreach in community—new ministry
Washburn UMC	Small group ministries and meal program—new ministry
Beresford Zion UMC	New daycare endeavor—new ministry
Wesley UMC Sioux Falls	New project in existing after-school program—ministry expansion
Wimbeldon UMC	Increase impact of meal program—ministry expansion
Burke Larger Parish	Worship and music community outreach—new ministry
Faith UMC Fargo	Food pantry enhancement—ministry expansion
Vincent UMC Minot	Quilt-making outreach—ministry expansion
Mohall UMC	Community youth outreach—new ministry
Epworth UMC Valley City	Community meal—new ministry
Claremont UMC	Weekend backpack meals—ministry expansion
Grace UMC Piedmont	Tiller for Community Garden Project—ministry expansion
Groton UMC	After the Bell youth outreach—new ministry
First UMC Watertown	Free clothing store—new ministry
Canyon Lake UMC Rapid City	Connect Ministry—new ministry
First UMC Vermillion	Refurbish bicycles for redistribution—new ministry

DAKOTAS CONFERENCE MISSIONS MAKE A DIFFERENCE

The number of Dakotas United Methodists in mission grew from 4,417 in 2014 to more than 5,000 in 2015, a 13% increase. That's after a 39% increase between 2013 and 2014.



Bakken Oil Rush Ministry—Watford City

- Assisted more than 1,100 families with more than 25,000 items, including coats, hoodies, caps, gloves, boots, blankets, and small kitchen items.
- Held four community-wide events with more than 200 people at each.
- Held a bi-weekly gathering with food, fellowship, and devotions that averaged 40 people.



Out in Faith Bakken Oil Rush Ministry—Williston

- Gave away more than 200 items (blankets, winter coats, hoodies, and other items) each month.
- Hosted God in Faith Tonight meal and worship every Saturday evening with 40-60 guests attending.



Spirit Lake Ministry Center

- Food pantry distributes in excess of \$10,000 worth of food per year and meets the needs of more than 600 people per month.
- Provided Shoebox Christmas Gifts for 6,535 children in poverty.
- Provided emergency clothing and temporary housing for 63 children affected by a life-changing event.
- Hosted more than 450 Volunteers in Mission in 2014; volunteers from across the country built 10 wheelchair ramps and two decks, roofed five houses, painted two houses, and rehabbed seven houses.
- Welcomed 47 people to the first-ever Easter worship services and fellowship in the new Arthur Hall.



Solar Oven Partners

- Provided 15 years of service to Haiti —resulting in nearly 10,000 solar ovens distributed.
- Started work in the Dominican Republic in partnership with church body of the Iglesia Evangélica Dominicana (IED) and Gordon and Ardell Graner, United Methodist Global Ministries missionaries.



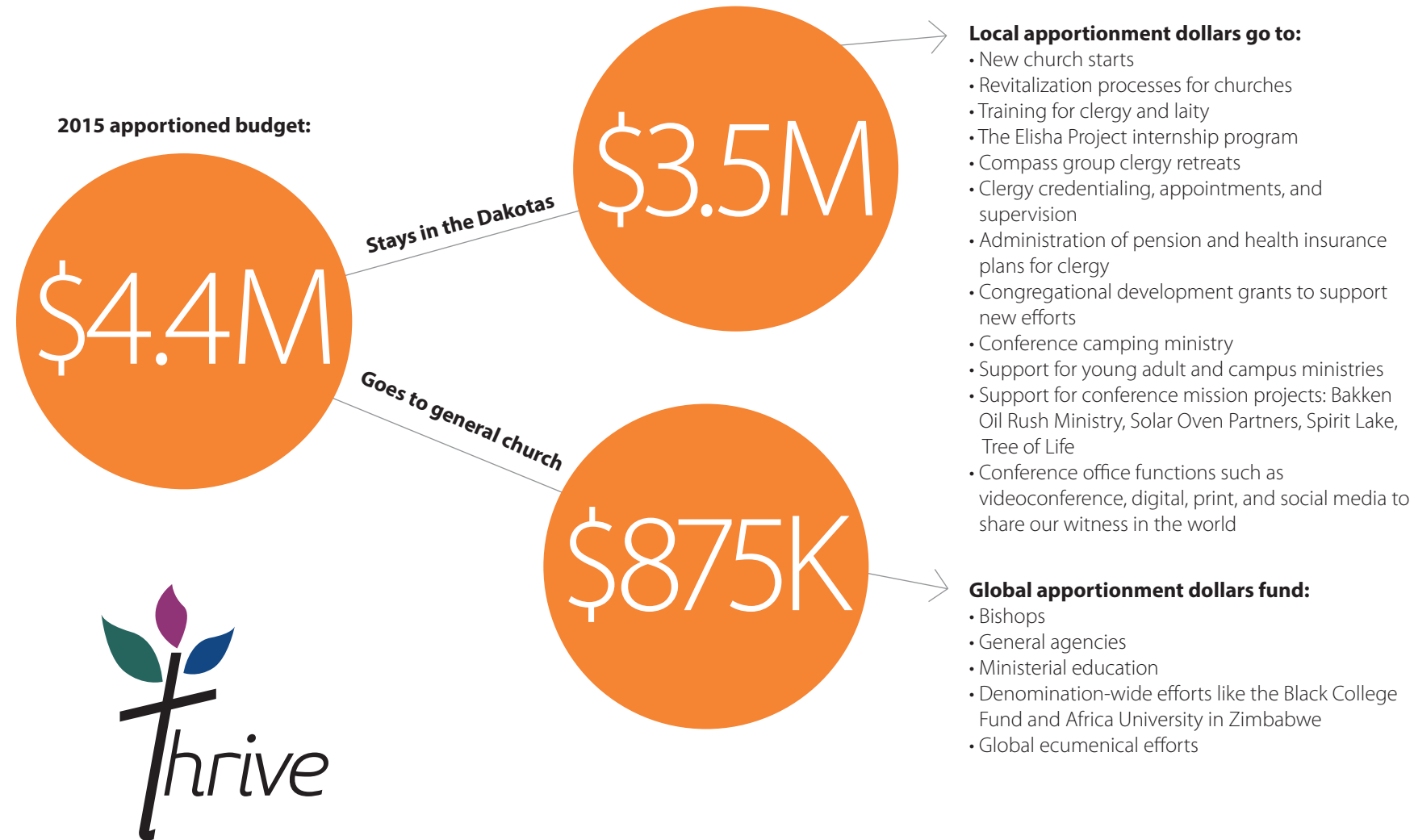
Tree of Life Ministry

- Warm Welcome provided and served 35,520 hot meals, gave out 3,180 elder boxes, and distributed more than 35,520 boxes of food to help supplement the evening meal; it also provided 400 Thanksgiving dinners and 600 Christmas meals.
- Thrift Store welcomed 12,480 patrons this year; it provides low-cost items like household goods, furniture, appliances, and clothing.
- Completed 40 construction projects, including working on homes that needed repair, and worked on health and wellness issues.

APPORTIONED GIVING & SECOND MILE GIVING

Members and churches of the Dakotas Conference have given over \$1 million dollars to special Sundays, UMCOR, Dakotas Conference Missions, Miracle Offerings and the Thanksgiving Offering. Dakotas Conference churches gave generously to the denomination in 2015, and those gifts enabled life-changing mission and ministry around the world.

In 2015, 95.4% of the Dakotas Conference churches gave towards the 16% apportionment requested. This represents an increase from 2014, when 95.1% churches contributed apportioned funds. In total, \$3,840,085 was given as of January 31, 2016. The figure is a \$3,023 increase from 2014.



The Dakotas Conference has the past year to raise over \$3.8 million through Thrive: Strength for Today, Hope for Tomorrow, a capital campaign to start new churches, strengthen existing churches, and raise up the next generation of leaders. Over a seven-year period, the campaign will enable the conference to: start 10 new churches, assist 70 churches in revitalizing their ministries, and sponsor 70 young people for internships to help them discern their call.

DAKOTAS UNITED METHODIST FOUNDATION

\$20.1 M

in assets

\$329,000

distributed to churches, ministries, and individuals

17

new accounts

5

endowment and

12

investment accounts

7

churches and

1

ministry were beneficiaries of these accounts

Bremer Mission Grant recipients

Bremer Mission Grants allow churches to try a new mission outreach beyond current efforts. Recipients:

- Clark UMC—Christmas gifts for residents of the Buffalo Calf Women's Society Shelter in Mission, SD
- Sunnycrest UMC—Urban Plunge Denver youth mission trip
- Beresford UMC—Dakotas Mission Trip

Ministry Development Grant recipients

Ministry Development Grants equip lay leaders to provide leadership and ministry in their local congregations, connecting the unchurched with outreach programs.

- Kenmare Renew UMC—New administrative assistant position
- Sioux Falls Wesley UMC—New staff position
- Washburn UMC—Wednesday night ministry
- White River UMC—Wednesday night Christian education program
- Beresford Zion UMC—Early learning center
- Linton UMC—12-step Bible study
- Turtle Lake UMC—The Gathering young adult ministry
- Brookings First UMC—Witness Wear
- Sioux Falls Sunnycrest UMC—Hayward Elementary ministry
- Groton UMC—Middle and senior high school youth group
- Wagner UMC—Contemporary worship service
- Bismarck Legacy UMC—Online campus



Dakotas Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church

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