

2024 Dakotas Annual Conference

The 31st session of the Dakotas Annual Conference was held June 8-10, 2024, at the Legacy and McCabe United Methodist Churches in Bismarck, North Dakota. More than 430 United Methodists from North and South Dakota conducted business and experienced inspiring worship and meaningful learning.

Bishop Lanette Plambeck, resident bishop for the Dakotas-Minnesota Area of The United Methodist Church, presided. Drawing on Isaiah 43:1, attendees explored this year's gathering theme, "Jesus. Redeemer."

In 2019, Bishop Lanette Plambeck took a trip to Scotland seeking renewal, rest, and redemption—and as she was stepping onto a bus, the driver instructed her to "mind the gap." At that moment, God gave her a dream to mind the gap between the brokenness around us and the world we are called to help bring about. "You and I, laity and clergy all across the Dakotas Conference, can be engaged in the work of closing the gap, minding the gap, that separates the kingdom of heaven from what we are experiencing here on earth," she told those gathered in her 2024 Episcopal Address. [Watch the Episcopal Address.](#)

Four speakers shared how ideas might hold promise for us in ministry and our faith journeys. Speakers challenged us to wrestle with our questions, surrender to God's call for each of us, and impact the world by making disciples. Leander R. McDonald, President of United Tribes Technical College, shared how together we become stronger as we learn and value our cultural differences and connect. Rev. Howie Baird spoke about the challenges of addiction and the opportunities the church can offer through recovery ministry. Stacy Schaffer provided insight into human trafficking and how we can impact the problem. Katie Meeks challenged everyone to step up and out into the mission field. [View the live stream from Thursday, June 6.](#) [View the live stream from Friday, June 7.](#)

The 2023-24 Missional Report encouraged and reminded Dakotas United Methodist that they need not fear, as God is with us. Lay and clergy persons across the Dakotas Conference are living out their call from God. In the past year, United Methodists across the Dakotas have grown in their love of Jesus and shared that love with others. The report is framed around Isaiah 43:1, and this year's annual conference theme is "Jesus. Redeemer." [View the 2023-2024 Missional Report.](#)

Voting members approved all legislation before them, including everything on the consent. Voting members of the 31st Session of the Dakotas Annual Conference affirmed all the legislation before them, including the 2025 Budget Proposal, an addition to the Clergy Leave Policy, and a new Clergy Move Policy. [View the legislation for the 2024 Annual Conference.](#)

The body approved an apportioned budget of just over \$3 million, a decrease of \$52,000 from the 2024 spending plan. The budget shortfall for 2025 is approximately \$700,000. The local church apportionment percentage to be remitted to the Annual Conference will be reduced from 13.5% of church operating income in 2024 to 13.0% of church operating income in 2025.

The 2025 budget includes:

- A decrease of over \$40,000 for developing missional leaders. This decrease is primarily due to a reduction in the Board of Ordained Ministry budget and a decrease in apportionment allocations to camp operations as camps continue toward self-sufficiency.

- The reduction of over \$44,000 for Equipping Missional Congregations is primarily attributed to reducing the budget for new churches by \$31,000 and large church revitalization by \$12,000. Thrive funds will be utilized to cover most of the costs related to these two areas.
- The Extending Missional Impact budget decreased by over \$80,000. This reduction is partially attributed to a decrease in the General Church apportionment of the base rate percentage from 3.29% to 2.6% of local church expenditures. This new base rate was recently passed at the General Conference. Spirit Lake Ministries and Solar Oven Partners have strong reserve balances. Both are nearly self-sustaining, thanks to individual and church donations.
- Cabinet expenses will increase in 2025 as the conference moves from a part-time salary for the Southeast District Superintendent to a full-time salary. Previously, the salary was split between the District Superintendency and the Director of Ministries positions.
- The budget for support services will increase by \$80,000 to upgrade our website and database.

The Clergy Leave Policy was affirmed, and Personal Wellness Leave was added to it. Sometimes, unexpected circumstances necessitate a short time of leave for a pastor's health and well-being. This leave category, approved by the district superintendent, allows for a more immediate response to address those needs.

After the amendment, the clergy move policy was approved. The new policy outlines how expenses for moving clergy and their families shall be administered.

Special guest Bishop Carlo Rapanut preached on Friday, June 7, 2024. "The earth is the Lord's and everything in it. God gives us the right and responsibility to say and name, 'You are mine.' God gave everyone a name and purpose," shared Bishop Carlo Rapanut of the Phoenix Episcopal Area. "Let us be reminded that every time we do something to strip someone of who they are, we are subduing," said Bishop Carlo. "God's redeeming act is reclaiming us. God is asking us to restore value in each other." Giving to the 2024 Miracle Offering means saying, "You are mine," noted Bishop Carlo. [Get more details](#). Watch Bishop Carlo's [sermon here](#).

More than \$37,000 has been collected for the 2024 Miracle Offering. The Miracle Offering is divided among the 31:8 Project, Abbott House's Bridges Therapeutic Foster Care, recovery ministry grants, and the Clergy Sustentation Fund. Pledges and donation will continue throughout 2024.

On Saturday, people gathered at McCabe United Methodist to honor and thank four clergy entering retirement and celebrate two pastors ordained as elders, four commissioned as provisional members, three local licensed pastors who completed their educational requirements, and three people authorized to serve as local pastors in the congregations and ministry areas in which they are appointed. [View the Celebration of Life in Ministry Service](#). [Access the Celebration of Life in Ministry booklet](#).

Statistically, in the Dakotas Conference, Membership stands at 34,536, down 915 from the previous year. Weekly worship attendance stands at 10,980, down 1%. Weekly online worship attendance reaches 7,997 people. Church school attendance stands at 5,745, up by 120. Professions or reaffirmations of faith for 2022 stand at 684, up by 1%. Adults and young adults in small groups were reported at 8,296, up 33% from 2021. There were 4,416 members engaged in mission serving

287,806 people.

—Doreen Gosmire, director of communications, Dakotas Conference