



Minnesota Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church

CONFERENCE CONNECTIONS

All United Methodist churches are connected through shared mission and ministry and united in their efforts to grow in love of God and neighbor, reach new people, and heal a broken world. Check out these news tidbits from the Minnesota Annual Conference, which serves all 360 United Methodist churches in the state.

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- **Living into our inclusive vision:** At the Minnesota Annual Conference Session in June 2019, we adopted an inclusive vision that names a commitment to the full inclusion of LGBTQIA+ people in the life of the church. But how do we live into that vision? “We commit to seeing all persons as beloved children of God and treating one another with mutual respect at all times; we listen to one another’s stories; and we honor and seek to understand each other’s perspectives and experiences rather than trying to convince others to see it our way,” said Rev. Cindy Gregorson, director of ministries. “This vision gives space for churches and individuals to determine how to live out the great commandment of loving God and loving neighbor in their own contexts. I have been asked: So do we need to become a reconciling congregation if we aren’t one? And is our pastor required to preside at same-sex marriages if that does not fit with our understanding of scripture? The answer is no. Clergy within our tradition have always had the right to determine whether to preside at a wedding of a couple. This vision doesn’t change that. Instead, it affirms the discernment of each clergy and congregation in prayerfully offering the fullness of the ministry of the church to all persons. It invites each clergy and congregation to thoughtfully and faithfully determine how to best live out our baptismal vows in their particular mission field.”

- **Nonprofit Church Leadership Program makes impact:** Earlier this month, nine Minnesota clergy completed and graduated from a year-long Nonprofit Church Leadership Program at Dakota Wesleyan University (DWU)—and 11 Minnesota pastors entered the program, now in its second year. Each participant completes two applied projects that benefit their local churches, and the first class of graduates tackled everything from creating a culture of generosity to simplifying committee structure to introducing electronic giving. “It was very rewarding and helpful in that it facilitated really intentional learning and development,” said Rev. Jeff Ozanne, a recent graduate who serves Willmar UMC.
- **Breakthrough Renewal Institute:** On Sept. 12-13, Hubbard UMC is hosting a leadership and training program designed to motivate and inspire clergy and laity through worship, inspirational speakers, great music, fellowship, and practical breakout sessions on topics including evangelism, breakthrough prayer, lay ministry, preaching, community connections, and social media. Don’t miss this event that two years ago drew more than 200 people from 70 churches. Learn more: <https://tinyurl.com/breakthroughrenewal>.

BRIGHT SPOT IN OUR MIDST

- **Holy Spirit breakthroughs reported across Minnesota:** At Annual Conference 2019, those present were invited to share one way in which their congregation is daring to reach new people or loving boldly. Among the dozens of breakthroughs shared: grocery giveaways, community events, new worship services, after-school programs, a backyard Bible club, the opening of a childcare center, a Dementia-friendly worship service, and mentoring those in a local treatment court. Thanks be to God!

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