



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 350 United Methodist churches in the state.

- **Spiritual growth resource:** How are you growing in your faith outside of worship each week? “Vine and Branches: Digging Deeper” is a great resource for individuals, small groups, or committees, and congregations to do just that. Each month of the latest (Dec.-Feb.) booklet is focused on a different theme and scripture and offers a variety of spiritual practices, exercises, and discussion questions to help you discover joy and live deeply in connection to Jesus. Check it out: <https://tinyurl.com/vine-branches-winter>
- **The ELI Project wants you:** In 2019, for the fifth consecutive summer, up to 12 college students will be selected to participate in a hands-on learning experience at a host church through the Minnesota Conference’s Exploring Leadership Internship (ELI) Project, for those exploring a call to vocational ministry. This is a great opportunity for young adults to try out ministry, and for churches to mentor the next generation of leaders and deepen a culture of call. Applications for 2019 interns and host churches are due March 1. Learn more and apply: www.eliprojectmn.com.
- **Evangelism as listening, learning:** The first conversion Jesus made was not someone to him, but him to us. “So what would it look like if we understood the evangelistic task as seeking to be converted rather than seeking to convert?” asked Rev. Fred Vanderwerf, superintendent of the Minnesota Conference’s

Southern Prairie District. What does this look like? Engaging people as a learner, understanding “sharing faith” as truly sharing, and trusting that people already have a faith system to help them understand the world. “Our evangelistic task begins not so much in teaching our faith system, but seeking to genuinely understand another’s,” said Vanderwerf. “The evangelistic task is about discovering how God’s grace is already at work in others and helping them do some self-discovery while we listen in deeply.”

BRIGHT SPOTS IN OUR MIDST

- **Wesley Foundation in Mankato gives students space to practice faith:** In October 2017, Hilltop UMC in Mankato launched the Wesley Foundation (a campus ministry) at Minnesota State University, Mankato, to form a supportive faith community for college students. It has made meaningful connections with more than 65 students in its first year. Each Sunday evening, it brings together 20 to 25 students for dinner and fellowship, and each month it hosts a student-led worship service. One student says the Wesley Foundation has given her a purpose and a chance to live out her faith, and another reported that the worship services have become “a means of grace in my life.” Thanks be to God!
- **Youth explore purpose, call at ‘The Event’:** On Nov. 2-4, 333 fifth- through ninth-grade youth (and chaperones) from 33 Minnesota United Methodist churches gathered for 36 hours of fellowship and fun at “The Event” at Cragun’s Resort in Brainerd while exploring the unique call God has placed on their lives. The theme of this year’s gathering was “You are not a rubber chicken.” (Unlike a rubber chicken, you were created on purpose for a purpose as a child of God!) Students were asked: How is God shifting my perspectives? What passions has God given me? What possibilities should I be noticing? And what will I pursue?

STAY CONNECTED!

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