

# THE CONNECTING LINK

NORTH STAR DISTRICT MARCH 2010

Dear Friends,

A recent decision was announced about the future leadership for the Minnesota and Dakotas Annual Conferences. Many of you have already heard about this, but perhaps many have not. For that reason we are sharing Bishop Dyck's recent article about this change, which will take place in 2012.

May you all experience the power of Jesus' love and grace as you examine your heart and soul during this Lent season.

Peace in Christ,

Alan

February 22, 2010

Barely a ripple of conversation or concern seemed to cross the Minnesota Annual Conference after the January announcement that the Dakotas and Minnesota Annual Conferences will become one Episcopal area starting September 2012. The annual conferences will remain separate but will be served by one bishop with one share of the Episcopal Fund to support the services of the two annual conferences.

This is not a merger, but more like a two-point charge. A transition team will meet in mid-March in Fargo to begin conversations about how the Dakotas and Minnesota will share a bishop. Members of the transition team from Minnesota include Jim Perry, director of ministries; Barbara Carroll, treasurer; Judy Zabel, a member of both the conference and jurisdictional episcopacy committees; Diane Owen, a consultant who has assisted the conference with strategy over the past few years; Cindy Gregorson, director of congregational development; Sheilah Kyburz, the Minnesota bishop's administrative assistant; and me. We will report pertinent information to the annual conference for decision-making.

I suspect that after General Conference 2008 mandated that each jurisdiction reduce by one Episcopal area, most people in the Minnesota and Dakotas's conferences supposed they'd be the ones sharing a bishop. Some people have rightfully asked me about rationale behind the decision of the North Central Jurisdiction College of Bishops (who are charged to make this verdict) to pair Minnesota and the Dakotas under one bishop. I can give you the rationale—as the Dakotas' bishop, Deborah Kieseey, and I did throughout the discussion with the college of bishops—as to why our conferences should *not* share a bishop. We have the least amount of staff and have minimal infrastructure. And of course you are immediately aware (unless you flunked geography) that this will create an immense geographical area (234,753 square miles; almost as large as the state of Texas) for one bishop to oversee.

Other conferences had their own reasons for why they should not have to share a bishop. The other pairing under consideration, when the decision was narrowed to two, was Illinois Great Rivers and the Northern Illinois Conference. This would have made an Episcopal area of one state (a mere 58,000 square miles). Illinois Great Rivers argued that because it is the result of a relatively recent merger (1996), it still needs time to work out its life together. Competing needs and rationales finally resulted in the bishops' voting for the Dakotas and Minnesota option.

Many decisions about this new relationship will be made in the months and years ahead. The one thing that no one will know for sure until Jurisdictional Conference in July 2012 is *who* will be the bishop of this large Episcopal area. Both Bishop Kieseey and I are completing eight years in our respective areas and will most likely move to other areas. The biggest questions in the minds of Dakotans and Minnesotans include, "Will we ever see the bishop? How will the bishop cover this area?" Those questions can't be answered until the new bishop is assigned. That means the Dakotas and Minnesota representatives on the jurisdictional episcopacy committee (Mary Jo Dahlberg and Judy Zabel represent Minnesota) will need a clear sense of what this new area should have in a bishop. Mary Jo and Judy will be talking with both the Dakotas and Minnesota episcopacy committees to determine what will be needed and how to articulate that to the jurisdictional committee.

Most of conferences' work will continue on without much difference, without much of a ripple. At least I hope that Minnesotans will continue to cultivate spiritual vitality and reach new people. We make disciples at the local church; thus local churches with their clergy are called to keep the mission of the church in each community, no matter what organizational changes might develop.

I also hope that Minnesota's clergy will value all the more the collaborative culture that the Gateways (and now the Eightways) groups have instituted across Minnesota. Peer learning and support has become all the more important in our building up the body of Christ, nurturing disciples of Jesus Christ, and making a difference wherever we have a United Methodist faith community.

Likewise, Minnesotans are resilient and creative. That's what others say about you! Do you believe it about yourselves? You are resilient in the sense that when faced with this change, you will make the most and best of it.

You are creative in the sense that you will work with each other and the bishop toward new ways of being in relationship with each other, including an increased use of communication technology. In the next two and half years that I am in leadership here, I resolve not to let us get distracted by this change and to keep our efforts focused on our mission. I will do my part to position this annual conference to be healthy spiritually, financially, relationally, and missionally for the sake of the gospel of Jesus Christ in the United Methodist way here in Minnesota.

I think we'll have a few ripples along the way in the next two-plus years as we make decisions and as you come to live into this new relationship with the Dakotas Annual Conference. More important, I hope we make really, really big waves in sharing the gospel that far surpasses any ripples of organizational change!

Bishop Sally Dyck

### **CHURCH / DISTRICT NEWS**

#### **Nominate a winner this spring!**

Help celebrate our excellent Minnesota ministers, both lay and clergy, and churches. Nominate someone for the Denman Evangelism Award, the Francis Asbury Award for Fostering United Methodist Ministries in Higher Education, the Jeanne Audrey Powers Award for Ecumenism, or the Rural Church Award for Outstanding Rural Ministry. Nomination forms are available in Forms & Documents. Select the "Awards" category and click on the search button. Award nominations are due April 15. Award winners will be announced and the awards presented at annual conference session in June.

**Minnesota Annual Conference:** The 2010 session convenes from 1 p.m. on Wednesday, June 2, through Friday, June 4, at the St. Cloud Civic Center. Please note that session will be shorter and will start a day later than usual. Lunch will NOT be served on Wednesday or Friday. Registration is \$215 online; \$240 after April 15 or for paper registrations at any time; free for retired clergy and equalization members (\$25 late or paper fee).

**Pages Needed for Annual Conference Session:** June 2-4, Saint Cloud Civic Center. Help behind the scenes at conference session. Meals and lodging stipend included. Contact [Loren Bergstedt](#) at 612-230-6125 for more information.

### **MISSIONS**

#### **UMCOR Update**

- **One Great Hour of Sharing is March 14:** When a massive earthquake leveled the capital city of Port-au-Prince in Haiti and decimated outlying areas last month, UM Committee on Relief (UMCOR) was there to bring comfort to survivors and set a direction for long-term recovery efforts. UMCOR is using 100 percent of donations to respond to the tragedy, just as it did after a series of typhoons struck the Philippines last fall and when a tsunami devastated Indonesia in 2004. When you give to One Great Hour of Sharing this spring, your gift will help cover UMCOR's cost of doing business and allow us to keep our promise that 100 percent of every other contribution you make to a specific UMCOR project will be spent on that project and not on administrative costs. Order your free offering envelopes or posters by calling (888) 346-3862. Check the [UMCOR web site](#) for worship materials in support of this important offering. Gifts to this fund can be made all year long. Please give now.

#### **Mission Opportunities**

Collection sites across Minnesota for Health Kits for Haiti have been identified. There is at least one in each of the five districts. Three camp sites - Decision Hills, Kingswood Retreat Center and Koronis Ministries - are also collection sites.

Information and a Minnesota map identifying the collection sites is found on the conference web site. "Quick Links," - "Disater Response: How You Can Help" - "Current and Ongoing Needs" - "Relief Kits Collection Sites in Minnesota."

Three TC area churches are trying to assemble at least 1,000 kits - Plymouth: Messiah UMC, Anoka UMC, and Eagen: Advent UMC!

Are there churches (alone or with neighboring churches) in your district that could assemble 250 or 500 or even 1,000 kits?

The kit's (a one gallon zip lock bag) contains eight items. The list can be accessed at [umc.org](http://umc.org). Assembly information is also provided. Completed kits should be taken to one of the collection sites as soon as the kits are assembled.