



## Tiffany Ortman confirms call at seminary

“Seminary has confirmed my call. It is where I should be right now,” says Tiffany Ortman, Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary student and a member of Canisota UMC.

Tiffany first felt her call to ministry at the age of 12. Rev. Phil Lint recognized her gifts and passion at Storm Mountain Center during a camp that summer. “He talked to me at camp and shared how he saw my passion for people and God,” she says. “After I got home from camp, he wrote me a letter and affirmed my gifts. I still have that letter.”

She explored her call throughout her middle and high school years through Bible studies, working at and attending camp in the summer. Ortman went on mission trips to the help with Hurricane Katrina recovery in Mississippi and helped with flood clean up in Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

Her journey to seminary was affirmed at West Fargo Flame of Faith UMC where she served as an Elisha intern with Rev. Sara McManus. “I stepped out of my comfort zone. It was a leap of faith. My relationship with Pastor Sara led me to ask questions, dig deeper into the Bible. I explored why and

how, realizing my gifts,” Tiffany states.

Today, in her first year of seminary, she is being supported financially by the Phil and Mary Lee Lint Scholarship. Seminary is going well for her. “I am meeting a lot of different people from throughout the country,” she says. “It is a true learning community with diverse theological viewpoints.”

“I am growing in faith and learning how I relate to God and others,” says Tiffany. She is being challenged at seminary by the differing perspectives. “It is humbling and interesting to learn from others. I was able to learn from a classmate from India that practicing Christianity is not always safe. People in India worship in secret houses.”

Tiffany has been challenged to think about issues that The United Methodist Church is currently facing during her seminary classes. “We can dive deep into issues the church is facing. We can explore how we interpret scripture. We discuss how scripture has been or can be used to hurt people. We are experiencing how scripture can be uplifting in people’s lives,” says Tiffany.

This semester, she is participating in a field experience and will continue to work with

her vocational mentor. “It is great to work with a Garrett graduate. I meet with her, and we discuss how things are going and share stories,” Tiffany says.

Her gifts and desire to be in ministry have been affirmed in the first semester of seminary. Tiffany has learned that shepherding is one of her gifts. She looks forward to becoming a pastoral leader in a church and shepherding her flock.



Tiffany spends some time talking things over with her colleagues. Photo by Dave Stucke.

## Looking back on what we have accomplished together in 2018

- 17** New clergy in ministry in the past year.
- 9** New worshipping communities.
- 30** Congregations have started a new life cycle of ministry through MCCI and the Journey Renewal Partnership.



Friends,  
 It's amazing what can happen when people come together for a common cause. The Thrive capital campaign has done just that. It has brought us together to strengthen the ministries across the conference.  
 Because of your support, prayers, and the resources you have shared, programs are stronger, new worship services have started, and people's lives are changing as they meet Jesus.  
 Great things are happening in the Dakotas. Every day we're seeing signs of the Holy Spirit giving us strength for today and hope for tomorrow.  
 Thank you for all the ways you have helped make this happen.  
 Sheri Meister  
 President/CEO  
 Dakotas United Methodist Foundation



The Thrive campaign is enabling the conference to: start new faith communities, assist churches in revitalizing their ministries and develop leaders for the future. In 2018, **\$243,000** of Thrive funds were spent on establishing new churches (**\$178k**), coming alongside existing churches to enter a new era of growth (**\$32k**), and raising up and developing leaders (**\$33k**).

|                  |        |
|------------------|--------|
| Total Pledged    | \$3.6M |
| Total Collected* | \$2.1M |

\*as of January, 2019





## The Journey at Spirit Lake

"I have a joy to share," says one of the women during the time of worship when people share joys and concerns, at The Journey, a new worshipping community at Spirit Lake. "I am happy that I can come to a church where I can be Indian and Christian too."

The Journey, in Sheyenne, North Dakota is reaching out to Native American families across Spirit Lake Nation. Worship is held Sunday evenings at 5 p.m., with an average attendance of 45.

"What happened was that we were connecting with people all around Spirit Lake Nation through our work with Volunteers in Mission (VIM) teams," says Pastor Mike Flowers, who serves as the pastor to The Journey. "People started asking, 'Do you have worship?'"

One small group of people grew to several small groups. Mike and Libby Flowers, who serve as co-directors of Spirit Lake Ministry Center, began having a monthly meal and conversations of faith. Mike says, "We would ask questions like—What is happening in your life? How is faith affecting you and the people around you?"

It all morphed with the remodel of Arthur Hall, a Quonset, that was rebuilt to provide a kitchen, showers, and meeting space for VIM teams. Everyone quickly realized that the remodeled Arthur Hall was not just a place for VIM teams, but a space to start a new worshipping community.

Worship is a casual, comfortable setting. People sit at round tables, in family groups.

Sunday School is conducted in the back of the room, during the sermon. Libby Flowers leads the children in an activity while Pastor Mike Flowers delivers the sermon.

"The children are really engaged," says Libby. "They are involved in the activity, but we have found that they are also listening to the sermon."

In fact, one Sunday, a child, was so eager for the message he started leading the prayer. Pastor Mike usually starts the sermon with a



Pastor Mike Flowers (left) invites family members to participate in the baptism during worship. Photos courtesy of The Journey at Spirit Lake.

prayer that begins with the words, "Creator God." The child headed to the back of the room, and started praying out loud, "Creator God." Giggles flowed from the back of the room. The child told Libby, "I want to start my picture to color Peter." Peter was a key part of the message that day.

The first service was held in 2017 on Easter Sunday. There have been seven baptisms. A youth group has sprung up on Wednesday evenings. Last summer, the youth headed to Wesley Acres Camp for a week.

The congregation also hosts Summer Jam, a Vacation Bible School program, held in the afternoon for children ages 6-12. Summer Jam also takes place in the evenings for youth 13-years and older.

The Journey at Spirit Lake is a congregation in service to their community. Each month there is a service project or mission focus. Outreach efforts include: baking cookies for elders and delivering them, making blankets, going Christmas caroling, and winterizing 12-14 homes.

This new church start has been supported by Rev. Ben Ingebretson, Dakotas-Minnesota director of new church development, and conference programs like the Children's and Youth Ministry cohort.

"Ben has been there to guide us. He has provided resources and support in our efforts," says Pastor Mike. "Five members of the congregation attended REACH in Sioux Falls last fall. One young couple, who attended, got excited from what they learned and took over the food pantry."

The congregation recently decided on the name, The Journey at Spirit Lake. The name is based on the Dakota name "Wanagi Can Ku," which means Spirit Road.

"Twelve years ago, we were called to serve the people of Spirit Lake," says Pastor Mike Flowers. "We had no idea what God had in store for us. There is no way we would have ever imagined a new church."



Children pose for a photo at the Christmas program at The Journey at Spirit Lake.

## New approaches to ministry at Plankinton and White Lake

On Wednesday, you will find the United Methodist Church buildings bubbling with activity in Plankinton and White Lake, South Dakota. Three children at White Lake UMC shout out: "I want to be a famous wrestler." "I want to be a famous dancer." "I want to be like Jesus."

Pastor Randy Hedge, who serves as the pastor at Plankinton and White Lake United Methodist Churches asks, "If you were famous, what could you do to help people see that God is great?" The activity is just a small part of the road to revitalization that both of the congregations are on.

The United Methodist congregations in Plankinton and White Lake are praying for the Holy Spirit to enter into their lives and bring new ideas, new people, and new resources for the ministry. "We have identified champions that will lead us on our journey," says Hedge. "Our champions are lay members leading us to experience a new life in prayer, first impressions, loving our kids, and conquering financial fears."

These two churches are part of the Journey Renewal Partnership. Currently the congregations are working on their prescriptions or next steps in ministry. That is where the champions come in. Each of the champions is leading a team to implement strategies for their prescriptions—surrounding ourselves with prayer, creating a good first impression, loving the kids in our community, and conquering our finances.

At 2:45 p.m. each Wednesday, 33 children in grades K-6 hop off the bus and rush into the White Lake UMC building. Seven adult volunteers are waiting to lead the students through snack time, singing, a Bible story, and a craft.

"It is so awesome when you see their faces light up," says Dona Cherry, coordinator for the White Lake children's program. "That's when you know they get it!"

At Plankinton UMC, preparation of a meal is underway for the 30 youth, in grades 6-12, that show up each week for worship, singing, praying, and learning. "We have an average of 25-30 youth that attend each week," says Tara Bush, who serves as the youth coordi-

nator, office administrator, and custodian for the Plankinton congregation. "Pastor Randy has put a challenge out there. If we have 40 youth come, he will do something wacky with his hair."

Bush explains that the excitement of the youth is contagious and growing. The program consists of mission trips, guitar lessons, worship led by the youth and adult volunteers, offering funds that are governed or distributed by the youth, and participation in Dakotas Conference activities like DakYouth. "We had a bus load of students that attended student night at Dakota Wesleyan University. We are growing and looking at dividing into two groups—middle school and high school," she says.

There is a team of adult volunteers who are participating in the Dakotas Conference Youth Ministry Cohort, with Stephanie Caro, from Ministry Architects. "We have got a lot of resources from the training," says Bush. "We have some adult volunteers that are making things happen. We consistently have 4-6 adults here for the kids on Wednesday and a lot of other times."

It is a joint program—for both Plankinton and White Lake—youth. Three weeks each month a bus brings the youth from White Lake to Plankinton. The fourth Wednesday of the month, Plankinton youth travel to White Lake.

The youth have elected officers and recently proposed a "designated hang out" or lounge with some casual furniture, soft drinks, snacks, and more, for all middle and high school students in each of the communities. "We hope to have a safe place for youth just to come," shared two of the youth representatives. "We would use the funds from our offering that we collect each month for this project."

"Our officers are dedicated. They are leaders and want to have a voice in our congregation," Bush says.

Angela Bosworth, a member of Plankinton UMC, is the champion for "facing our financial fears." She is facilitating Financial Peace University (FPU) for 15 individuals. "I was nervous that we would not get people to come," she said. "We had four people sign-up, and then 15 people showed up."

FPU is held every Monday night for nine weeks. There are babysitters for families with young children. "It is great to see people sharing and opening up during the sessions," says Bosworth. "I am excited for people to take this step and change their future."

Bosworth sums up the journey of the congregations this way, "I feel like I am part of the church now. I feel like I am part of making things better and that we are really trying to meet the needs of people around us."



Youth hanging out learning and loving Jesus on Wednesday nights at Plankinton and White Lake. Photos by Doreen Gosmire.